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2012 Alaska State Fair Farm Family of the Year Announced

(Palmer, AK)– The Carrol and JoAnne Martin family from the Kenai Peninsula has been selected as the 2012 Farm Family of the Year by the Alaska agricultural community. The Martins, owners of the Diamond M Ranch in Kenai, will be honored at the Alaska State Fair on Thursday, August 23.

JoAnne and Carrol Martin met in a Cooperative Extension Service (CES) office in Alamosa, Colorado in 1961. They married in 1962 and moved to Metlakatla, Alaska in 1963. The Martins always wanted to settle on the Kenai Peninsula and started Diamond M Ranch in 1975, where they raise horses and cows and also have had sheep, pigs and goats for 4-H projects. Most of the horses on the ranch are registered quarter horses, and their beef cattle have earned grand champion ribbons at several Alaska State Fairs. The Martins are currently expanding their operation by experimenting with fish waste, wood chips and other materials in their gardens to improve and produce a high-quality top soil.

The Martins' four children were very involved in 4-H, as are some of their 10 grandchildren. JoAnne worked as a CES agent for 25 years. Carrol has been a 4-H member for 10 years and volunteered as a 4-H leader for more than 50 years. Their children have been involved in 4-H at the national level, attending 4-H Congress in Chicago, Ill. and Citizenship Washington Focus in Washington D.C.

For the past 36 years, Carrol has spearheaded a barbeque at the Ninilchik State Fair, donating all the profits to 4-H. This October, he will be inducted into the National 4-H Hall of Fame at the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, Md. He is only the fourth Alaskan and first Alaskan volunteer leader to be awarded the honor.

Carrol has also been involved in many other organizations, including the Ninilchik State Fair Board, the Alaska Board of Agriculture and Conservation, the Matanuska Maid Creamery Board, the Soil and Water Conservation District Board, and the local Grange and Farm Bureau. Carrol said that he has always volunteered for these positions. "His whole life is agriculture," JoAnne said.

The Farm Family of the Year award, sponsored by the Matanuska Valley Federal Credit Union, was established by the Alaska State Fair in 2000 to honor an Alaska farming family and show appreciation for all the hard working Alaskans committed to agriculture.

“The Alaska State Fair is proud to be involved in this important program that recognizes and celebrates hard-working, Alaska farm families, who are truly the backbone of our Fair. We congratulate the Martin family, who are very deserving recipients of this prestigious award,” said Ray Ritari, the fair’s general manager.

After reviewing nominations, an awards committee chaired by the Alaska Division of Agriculture selects the winning family based on production of quality Alaska Grown products, community and agricultural organization involvement, and overall image.

“Alaska was very fortunate 49 years ago when Carrol and JoAnne chose to move to and call Alaska home,” said Division of Agriculture Director Franci Havemeister. “Their family continues to have an active role in both community and agriculture endeavors.”

Previous Farm Family winners include the Brad Lewis Family (2008), the Oberg-Kenley Family (2009), the Pyrah Family (2010), and the Baker Family (2011).

For more information, please visit www.alaskastatefair.org or contact Dean Phipps, Director of Marketing at (907) 745-4827 or dean@alaskastatefair.org.