

Mother of the Year is a title deserving for my mother-in-law, Janet Cruse. She lives in Dongola, IL and is served by the Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative.

She has been married to my father-in-law almost 47 years and she is an amazing, faithful woman who puts God, her family and church family first. She has served at the First Baptist Church in Dongola for over 40 years. You can find her each Sunday morning in the nursery where she cuddles each baby that comes through the church whether it be for Sunday school, which she has taught for over 20 years, or during the morning service. Also, she and approximately 5 others have been instrumental in implementing our church's food pantry. This service is extremely important to our community and she is there packing and distributing boxes twice per month. Each year, she also packs shoe boxes for Samaritan's Purse, Operation Christmas Child and has gone several years to Atlanta, GA to the distribution center. During funeral dinners, potlucks, or banquets, Janet can be found helping wherever she can.

Before retiring in 2009, she worked as a type setter for our local newspaper for over 28 years. This job blessed her with working close to home and with her schedule, she was able to have warm meals on the table as well as share in the farm chores. She did not miss an activity that her children were involved in while in school and now she does the same with her 5 grandchildren. Whether it be a Christmas or Spring concert, basketball or soccer game, she is there cheering them on. But, prior to watching them in sports, she was able to babysit them while they were small which was a blessing for us as parents.

Janet also helps with our community and local school activities. She dips ice cream at our yearly town's homecoming, makes cotton candy for the school's open house as well as helps with the school's PTO spring fling each year.

The final reason why I feel that Janet deserves this honor is an activity that she and my father-in-law have become involved in and are very passionate about. They are trained and participate in Southern Baptist Disaster Relief. Over the last 7 years, Janet has been on multiple disaster relief missions which have included mudding out homes following floods in northern and southern Illinois as well as Colorado and Louisiana. She has been on a feeding unit that traveled to New York following Hurricane Sandy as well as working on tree/brush clean up following tornado/wind damage in both Harrisburg and Massac County, Illinois. I have not listed all of the missions that she has been on but as you can see she is very dedicated in helping others through this organization.

Janet Cruse is a wonderful mother and one that I feel would be an excellent choice for Illinois Country Living Mother of the Year 2017.