OBITUARY

Theodore “Ted” Dreier

“Farmer Ted”

1938 – 2026

Theodore “Ted” Dreier, known far and wide in his signature overalls and cowboy hat as “Farmer Ted,” died peacefully on November 17, 2026, in Franklin, Tennessee, at the age of 88. A lifelong champion of empathy, education and human connection, Ted spent his life proving that a little kindness can change the world.

Ted was born in 1938 in Newton, Kansas, to Kenneth and Velma Dreier, and grew up on the family dairy farm. There he learned the value of hard work and community, and how to care for animals and the earth. In 1960 he married Karen, beginning a partnership that would last nearly 66 years.

In 1962, Ted and Karen went to Malawi in southeastern Africa with the Mennonite Central Committee, and Ted taught mathematics there until 1965. They arrived while the country was still Nyasaland and were there when it gained independence as Malawi in 1964. Their years there gave them a deep and lasting affection for Malawi and its people that stayed with them for the rest of their lives.

After returning home, Ted built a varied career centered on understanding people. For 27 years he was a nationally recognized speaker and a pioneer in customer relations. He founded a nationwide mystery shopper service and wrote four books, including *Take Your Life Off Hold*. He also developed the “LEAR Approach” (Listening, Empathy, Ask, Respond).

Yet Ted’s most beloved chapter came after he retired from that career. The damaging effects of bullying troubled him deeply. Moved by his friendship with a young man serving a life sentence, he began to wonder how different young lives might be if children learned empathy early. So the former Kansas farm boy went to work in his garage and built a life-sized, talking robotic cow named Moozie.

In 1998, at age 60, Ted and Karen founded the Children’s Kindness Network (CKN), a nonprofit dedicated to stopping bullying before it begins. Moozie became the “Ambassador of Kindness,” and Ted stepped into the role of “Farmer Ted.” Together they traveled to schools, Head Start

programs and community events across the country. Through books, classroom puppets, music and assemblies, they taught young children four simple lessons: be kind to yourself, be kind to others, be kind to animals, and be kind to the Earth. Over more than two decades, Farmer Ted and Moozie reached thousands of children, and the compassion they taught spread through classrooms and playgrounds nationwide.

Those who knew Ted will remember his relentless pursuit of creativity, his love of learning and his huge heart for people. He never stopped imagining new ways to make someone's day a little better.

Ted is survived by his wife of nearly 66 years and partner in kindness, Karen Dreier; his sons, Kent Dreier (Kelly) and Kyle Dreier (Amy); his grandchildren, David, Kelsey, Blake, Jacob and Matthew; his great-grandson, Cooper; his sister, Alma Heppner; and the extended family of board members, educators and volunteers of the Children's Kindness Network. He was preceded in death by his parents, Kenneth and Velma Dreier.

A celebration of Ted's life will be held Friday, November 20, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. at Brentwood United Methodist Church in Brentwood, Tennessee. Visitation begins at 10:00 a.m. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that memorial donations be made to the Children's Kindness Network (moozie.org) so Moozie's message of kindness can keep reaching future generations.

The family invites everyone to honor Ted's memory today with an unexpected act of kindness.