

## Coal Man of the Year



Our **KMI Coal Man of the Year** for 2017 is **Pearl Farler**. Pearl was born on April 26, 1955 in Hazard, Kentucky, into a coal mining family. His grandfather and uncles operated pony mines in Perry and Breathitt counties at that time. Those mines closed in the early 60's with the last one being in Frozen Creek in Breathitt County. He now resides in Laurel County with Deborah, his wife of 33 years. He has two sons, Jeremy and Matthew, and one granddaughter, Kylie.

Pearl graduated from Breathitt County High School in 1973 and joined the Marine Corps shortly thereafter. After being honorably discharged, he attended Hazard Vocational School studying underground mine machine repair. While in school, he received a job offer from Interstate Coal Company in February of 1979.

He began work in the mines as a mechanic/electrician at the Jacks Creek Mine in Clay County. In 1983 he moved into the Safety Department as a Safety Inspector for Interstate Coal. He was promoted to Safety Director for Bledsoe Coal Corporation and worked at Bledsoe for ten years before advancing in 2005 to Corporate Safety Director for James River Coal Corporation. He oversaw the safety performance of mines in Kentucky, Indiana and West Virginia.

Pearl's introduction to mine rescue came in late 1980 when a friend asked him to interview for the rescue team at Interstate Coal. His first position on the team was map man. At that time he really did not know exactly what that meant. Since that time he has worked almost every position on the team, including captain. He has been a working team member on five National Championship teams: 1981 (Map Man) 1983 (Map Man) 1985 (Captain) 1991 (Briefing Officer) 1993 (Briefing Officer). In 2005 he officially became trainer for the James River Coal rescue teams. The teams experienced much success through the years, and in 2007 the Blue Team finished in second place at the National Contest. His mine rescue drive stems from his competitive spirit and knowing that lives depend on the rescue teams to help the miners working underground if and when an emergency arises.

In October of 2014, after working at the mines for 35 years, Pearl retired. He still keeps in touch with rescue events and helps by judging the Kentucky state teams at their annual contest at Jenny Wiley State Park. We congratulate Pearl and his family for this deserving award.