Fall 2009

TLT AWARDED
NATIONAL
ACCREDITATION

VARNER FAMILY
DONATES
EASEMENT

TLT RECEIVES
GENEROUS
PLANNED GIFT

BROWN & AUSTRIA
SUPPORT
EASEMENT BILL

2010 CALENDAR
OF EVENTS

EBEN FAMILY FULFILLS
PRESERVATION DREAM

Heroes come from many walks of life and too often go unnoticed. Jay and Kathleen Eben of Clark County are two such heroes. They have dedicated the last 40 years of their lives to preserving Ohio’s precious farmland, restoring historic buildings and sheltering animals. Jay, age 67 and a retired physics teacher, works tirelessly to maintain the farm and animals. Jay’s love for teaching and history manifests in his participation in civil war reenactments. Hand crafting his own tools and clothing, Jay appeared in Mel Gibson’s “The Patriot.” Kathleen is devoted to the care of their horses, dogs, cats, cattle and even a mother deer. The Ebens share the responsibility of caretaker for these unique historical properties, a job that seldom receives the recognition it deserves.

Whether it’s a weekend in their log cabin or an afternoon with the horses around the property the Ebens still manage to enjoy their accomplishments amidst a rigorous schedule. The Ebens own over 50 acres of land, much of which is preserved forever with the help of Tecumseh Land Trust.

When asked their opinion on selling land to developers, Jay and Kathleen have a hard time understanding why anyone would ever consider that as a possibility. “Once the land is sold and their money is gone, what do they have to show for it?” Jay adds, “It’s not just about preserving the land, it’s about saving our history and character. Everything is connected in some way, from the original farmhouse and the animals that depend on our farm to our streams and rivers.” Despite repeated attempts from developers to buy their land, the answer remains the same, “You don’t have enough money because no amount of money is enough. Once the land is sold, it is gone forever.”
FEDERAL EMPLOYEES SUPPORT TLT

In October, TLT staff and Education Committee representatives met federal employees at the Miami Valley Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) open house at the Nutter Center. The CFC provides an easy way for federal employees to contribute to local charities either through a payroll deduction or cash donations.

In the Miami Valley there are over 22,000 federal employees working at post offices, the VA, and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, which alone employs 16,500 personnel. Thirtyfive percent of Wright-Patterson personnel donated to the CFC in 2008.

Over 321 local, regional, and national charities are listed by the Miami Valley CFC. On October 7, 2009, 135 of those charities were at the Nutter Center, including TLT. Our booth was visited by the commander of the Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) Lieutenant General Owen and the commander of the 88th Air Base Wing (88ABW) Col. Bradley Spacy.

The Tecumseh Land Trust receives in excess of $3,200 each year in CFC donations from Wright-Patterson AFB, averaging $454 in payroll deductions. TLT appreciates all of the donations we get through the CFC. If you are a federal employee please consider us, CFC #97774.

REP. AUSTRIA AND SEN. BROWN CO-SPONSORS EASEMENT BILL

At the close of 2009, the expanded income tax benefit for conservation easements is set to expire, unless Congress passes House Bill 1831 and Senate Bill 812. These bills will make the expanded income tax benefit for conservation easement donation permanent! These tax benefits are a very cost effective way to help preserve farmland for future generations.

Please take a minute to contact US Representative Steve Austria (202-225-4324) and US Senator Sherrod Brown (202-224-2315) to thank them for co-sponsoring the bills. Ask Senator Voinovich (202-224-3353) to join his colleagues on this important issue as well! Let them know how important it is to pass their respective bills before the expanded benefit expires at the end of 2009. For further information, including where other representatives stand, go to http://www.landtrustalliance.org/policy/taxincentives/federal.

TLT Executive Director, Krista Magaw adds “Thanks also to our Clark County Farm Bureau for their endorsement of this important legislation!”

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Ohio map of Co-sponsors of HB1831.
Imagine living on a farm with a large pond where for years you witnessed the migration of toads and turtles headed for the water to lay their eggs for future generations. This is one of the stories Ruth Varner likes to tell about her life with husband, Guy, on their eight-acre Meredith Road property just outside of Yellow Springs.

Ruth and Guy shared fond memories of growing up on family farms, so 40 years ago, to “reestablish their roots,” they purchased the property. Originally a 13-acre parcel, the Varners sold five acres to the Peifer family next door so they could expand their orchard business.

Birch Creek runs through the property creating a substantial wetland area. The large pond is stocked with bass and blue gills. Over the years, the Varners generously invited their friends and family to enjoy the fishing and explore the stream, as well as and the rest of the property.

The Varners never intended it to be a commercial livestock or crop farm, but simply a place of quiet pleasure. However, Ruth says there were always animals of one kind or another running around the place such as chickens, turkeys, peacocks, and even a blue heron who visited the pond regularly for breakfast or dinner. Guy, who loved horses, had two strong draft animals he would hitch to a plough to till an area large enough to grow a hay crop or the family garden.

Today, Ruth Varner and daughter, June, live on the farm. Concerned about the future and to protect it from the threat of development, the family decided to donate a conservation easement. With the help of TLT the property will retain its serene rural character in perpetuity.
First in Ohio
TLT
Earns National Accreditation

In May 2009, the Tecumseh Land Trust became the first accredited land trust in Ohio and one of only 92 nationwide.

The national Land Trust Accreditation Commission was created in 2006 as an independent program dedicated to strengthening land conservation across America. Land trusts applying for accreditation are submitted to a rigorous review process. The Commission interviews each member and evaluates multiple sources of information, including comments from the public.

Accreditation demonstrates an organization’s commitment to land conservation and provides its donors assurance of the quality and permanence of the land trust. Becoming accredited represents the next step by Tecumseh Land Trust to uphold public trust and ensure that conservation efforts remain permanent.

Enthusiastic about sharing TLT’s experience with the accreditation process with other nonprofits, Executive Director Krista Magaw says, “By collaborating we can get more attention on conservation efforts generally and build greater support for conservation. This has always been TLT’s philosophy and it’s more important than ever.”

1850s Clark County Farmhouse Welcomes Overnight Guests

The last house on the preserved Folger Howell farm needed to be improved, so about 4 years ago my son and I began working on it. As a family we feel it’s important to keep our historic buildings when possible, and to share them with others as long term rentals or in the case of this house, an overnight, weekend, or monthly rental.

Our farm has been in the family since 1848 and 1854. I did an Ohio Historic Inventory on the 3 houses and farmstead, which is very important so that there is a historical record of our past at the Ohio Historical Society.

The two story brick section of the house was built by Adam Eppley in 1826 and the one story brick kitchen was attached in 1835, according to the Clark County auditor’s records.

Upon seeing the house for the first time, a friend gave me the best advice, perhaps without meaning to, she said “oh, you never see houses like this before they’ve been altered by several people.” My son wanted to keep the house as it may have been originally, so, these were my guiding principles when we started restoration.

In the restoration we were able to use all of the original woodwork, windows, and walls. It is important to reuse and recycle parts of old houses -- the kitchen floor in the Eppley house was salvaged from a 1830s house that was being torn down. In keeping with the time period, we scraped down all of the walls to get to the original colors. Bright colors were very popular in the early 1800s. We chose to use coppers, greens, ochers, greys, and interesting shades of cream.

Visitors to the guesthouse have been primarily bicyclists because the bike path runs through the farm. They enjoy the quiet, scenic views, and getting off the beaten path.

People are getting futher and futher away from their rural roots and this house gives people the chance to go back in time.

- Julia Cady
Auction Goers Rally for TLT

The 2009 Harvest Auction raised over $27,000, a $5,000 increase over last year. Attendees enjoyed food from Current Cuisine while perusing the numerous silent auction items, donated by local businesses and individuals. Fresh flowers were placed throughout the Springfield Museum of Art, perfectly complementing the musical stylings of Wildwater. The evening concluded with a live auction conducted by Clark County auctioneers Ron and Curtis Mumma. Many thanks to everyone who made this event such a success.

New Family Businesses Join 1% for Greenspace

Two more shops have joined the cadre of village businesses sharing their profits with the Tecumseh Land Trust. Asanda Imports and Brother Bear’s Café have both signed up for TLT’s 1% for Green Space program, which raises money for the preservation of farmland and other open space in and around the village.

“I’m in favor of anything that holds back sprawl,” says Lee Kibblewhite, co-owner of Asanda. Kibblewhite, and his wife, Molly Lunde from Yellow Springs, met in Thailand while studying Yoga.

Asanda, a Sanskrit term can mean “basket work,” according to Kibblewhite, but may also have other definitions such as “prosperity.” In any case, Asanda sells beautiful baskets, along with jewelry and many other imported items. Prosperity may be a good match too. Despite a shaky business climate, Asanda Imports is doing well.

Business is bustling at Brother Bear’s Café as well, where Mindy and Patrick Harney dispense a variety of espresso coffees by the cup or by the pound and pastries to boot. The eclectic decorating scheme, which features purple, blue, and rose carpeting, squashy sofas, chairs and tables of every size, and toys for children and adults, brings in customers of all ages.

Calendar of Events

January 23, 10am-12pm
Volunteer Orientation
Whitehall Farm
Yellow Springs, Ohio

We need your help. Learn more about TLT and how to get involved.

February TBA
Local Food Networks Meeting
Yellow Springs, Ohio

Another chance to connect local food producers with local food buyers. This event is free and open to anyone interested in local food networks.

February 27, 2-4pm
Sugarshack Open House
Flying Mouse Farms
100 Yellow Springs-Fairfield
Yellow Springs, OH

Join us for an afternoon of maple syrup production. This event is weather dependent. Alternate date is March 6. Dress in warm, work clothes.

April 15-17, 2010
Land Trust Alliance’s Midwest Regional Conference
Columbus, OH

This is a great opportunity to become more involved with the land trust movement. Call our office for more information or to register.

For information on these events and our 20th Anniversary Speakers Series, please contact the TLT office at (937) 767-9490 or visit www.tecumsehlandtrust.org
LANDOWNERS' STORIES -
MANY PATHS TO PRESERVATION

Shawnee once lived on the farm just west of Route 68 behind the Tecumseh Motel in Oldtown and, as Barbara Plummer tells it, delegations of Shawnee came back every spring to pray to the Great Spirit for enough water and sun to keep the land productive.

Plummer’s sister, Jeanette Knick, who owned the farm felt just as strongly about it. “Developers were sniffing around making nuisances of themselves,” Plummer recalls, and her sister wanted to find a way of ensuring that the property would always remain as farmland.

The sisters had heard of families in Clinton County who had given their farms to a local college only to have the land sold off at a later time. They were looking for something more “trustworthy,” Plummer says. Enter Julia Cady and the Tecumseh Land Trust.

Plummer believes it was Rick Miller, the now current owner of the farm, who introduced them. Knick, one of nine brothers and sisters, donated a conservation easement to the land trust in 2002 with the hearty approval of her surviving siblings, and subsequently sold the farm to Miller.

Julia Cady played a role in steering Delmar and Lou Augustus to the Tecumseh Land Trust as well. Their cattle farm in Clark County near South Charleston has been in the Augustus family for almost 100 years. Delmar grew up in the house in which they still live, as did his father.

As many farmers do—and as his son does today—Augustus spent his whole adult life working two full-time jobs—one away from the 177-acre farm, and one on it. There was never a question that he wanted to preserve it for the generations to come.

“Among other things, we wanted a place for the kids to come home to,” Lou Augustus says, meaning their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Their chance came with the Clean Ohio AEPP program, a highly competitive state program that provides funds through certified agencies, such as TLT, for the preservation of productive farmland. AEPP paid for 70% of the conservation easement on the Augustus farm and Delmar and Lou donated the rest.

The Lowry farm did not come down to them through generations. In fact, Suzanne Lowry says, laughing, “we just went to look at the house out of curiosity.” After the backbreaking work of restoring two old homes in Xenia (while raising six children) “doing another one was going to be over my dead body.”

But things didn’t work out that way. The wreck of an old house didn’t much impress them when they first saw it 17 years ago. But they fell in love with the 150-acre property and they’ve been busy since then, rebuilding the house, and constructing a stunning series of formal gardens reminiscent of the palace grounds in Versailles, a large pond, walls, and a rock garden made from stones dredged from the fields where glaciers left them centuries ago.

Massie’s Creek, which meanders back and forth, along the northern border of the farm, was the key to qualifying it for a Clean Ohio Conservation Fund grant to pay for a conservation easement. This program provides funds for protecting wildlife habitat and water resources.

“We love this property so much, we never wanted it to be divided,” Lowry says. “And,” she adds, “we never wanted to provide an opportunity for our children to fight over it.” TLT Executive Director, Krista Magaw, says “Good estate planning, including conservation easements, goes a long way toward preserving good family relationships.”
WALKING THE LAND -
50 FARM VISITS IN 2009

I after fifteen months I am no longer a rookie; but, still learning from my mentor, George Bieri, and my boss, Krista Magaw. It truly is a pleasure to work with people who share my passion for farmland preservation. FDR said in 1937, “A nation that destroys its soil—destroys itself.”

I know first-hand that all soils are not created equal. I grew up in Brown County where one acre of level land was treasured because it was a rare sight. I did my undergraduate work at the University of Kentucky where the land was all rolling. Then I got a job with OSU Extension in Clark County where the soils are among the best in the world. What a treasure!

This year I monitored 50 farms including all 23 farms with Ohio Department of Agriculture’s AEPP easements. My undergraduate training in soil conservation coupled with 28 years as the Agricultural Extension Agent, mainly working with farmers, is the reason TLT assigns the straight agricultural easements to me to monitor. George Bieri monitors all easements which have natural resource significance such as wetlands, forests, or prairies in addition to the farms he has done for years.

I try to monitor all my easements in the spring and fall and wrap-up by early November. If the farm is in all corn I will probably visit in the spring when I can take better pictures of the landscapes.

I phone all landowners and hope to meet with them in person. I prefer to walk the land with the landowner, but I realize it is not always practical. I always try to schedule the monitoring visits when a nice day is predicted. I read the easement and look at recent correspondence and past monitoring reports before arrival at the farm. I probably average ten pictures of the land but only 4 to 6 end up in the final report that I write which is then copied and sent to the landowner.

When I walk each farm I look for changes in the landscape, prohibited uses in the easement and erosion. Remember, this is a conservation easement. Top soil is a precious commodity. Major landscape changes such as a waterway will always end up in the report.

Some of the land’s history is awesome: Tecumseh’s home is one example. I’ll close with the Great Law of another Native American tribe, the Iroquois Confederacy, “In every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.” I truly appreciate working with landowners who share my vision of farmland preservation.

- Mike Haubner

How to Be A Conservation Buyer

The land trust is fortunate to have a small group of supporters who are conservation buyers. Conservation buyers are individuals or a group of individuals who buy property, put an easement on it for the tax deduction, then resell it or continue to farm it. Another approach is to buy the land, then resell it to a farmer who will then place the easement on it and take the tax deduction.

In 2000, Julia Cady and Charles Swaney went in together to purchase a small wooded lot at auction. Right after purchasing the property, they placed a conservation easement on it. They are selling it to a family on land contract.

Charles said his motivation was to “preserve a piece of land that I pass by everyday.” Julia feels that there are many motivations for being a conservation buyer including “to preserve a unique property, a property with a strong attachment to the community, or a property that supports community agriculture.”

TLT is always looking for conservation buyers who may be willing to purchase a parcel of land or contribute to TLT’s land acquisition fund. Please call Krista if you are interested in being a conservation buyer at 937-767-9490.
BENTONS GIVE BACK TO A PLACE THEY LOVE

From the first handshake you know Bob Benton is an unusual person. He says what he means. He takes life seriously and he is used to making decisions that matter, in his business and his life. Bob believes Tecumseh Land Trust matters, so he and his wife, Petronella, took action to secure TLT’s future. Last year, Bob and Petronella made a generous planned gift to TLT.

The Bentons came to know and love Yellow Springs and TLT as a result of their friendship with local resident and clay artist, Lisa Wolters. The Bentons began summering here, enjoying the green space, the trails, the potters, and the people.

While here, the Bentons volunteered to sell tickets and bartend at TLT’s Harvest Auction. They also donated two weekend stays at their secluded Sopchoppy River cabin in Florida for the fundraiser.

This spring, Petronella lost her fight with a very invasive cancer. Bob returned to visit his friends in Ohio for a period of healing and remembering Petronella, often sharing photos of the couple’s many outdoor adventures around the world.

"Nobody plans on dying," says Bob. "But you have to plan ahead." His advice to anyone on the fence about making a bequest to TLT, "It’s important to do it. The folks at TLT do a great job and really make a difference." Simply put, "You need open land to have a decent life."


Tecumseh Land Trust
Founded in 1990, we are a private non-profit conservation organization serving Clark and Greene Counties. Our mission is to preserve agricultural lands, open spaces, and historic structures in voluntary cooperation with landowners and their heirs, and to educate the public about methods of private land conservation.

TLT is a member-based organization. We rely on our members to support our annual operations.

Become a Member!

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If you are interested in placing an easement on your property, or making a bequest to TLT in your will, please contact us at 937-767-9490.