



August 2020

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# FAIRFIELD FEATURES

The Fairfield Features is published quarterly by the Fairfield Soil & Water Conservation District  
831 College Avenue, Suite B, Lancaster, Ohio 43130 (740) 653-8154

## FAIRFIELD SWCD “DRIVE-THRU” VOTING EVENT

This year the Fairfield SWCD is celebrating its 77th year, however, due to COVID-19 we are unable to celebrate in our usual way with an Annual Meeting/Banquet. This year we will be holding a “Drive-Thru” event which will allow our annual Election of Supervisors to take place. This event will be held on **Thursday, September 10, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the Fairfield County Ag Center** located at 831 College Avenue in Lancaster. We have three candidates for two open positions. Our candidates are Jon Gerken of Carroll, David Ochs and Gregg Pontius, both of Lancaster. Absentee voting begins on July 29th. More information on each candidate and how you can vote can be found inside.

## 2020 SWCD SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Ethan Kaper of Baltimore and Trevor Spence of Stoutsville were both chosen to be the recipients of the Fairfield SWCD 2020 annual college scholarship.

Ethan is a graduate of Liberty Union High School and will be attending The Ohio State University where he will be majoring in Agricultural Engineering.

Trevor is a graduate of Amanda-Clearcreek High School and will be attending Hocking College where he will be studying Forest Management.



*Trevor Spence*



*Ethan Kaper*

Congratulations  
Ethan and Trevor!



The Fairfield County Fair is scheduled for October 11-17. Please check our website for more information regarding the status of the AgMazing building.

## COME RAIN OR SHINE

Have you ever experienced the phenomenon of seeing rain falling in the distance but never feeling a drop in your location? If so, you know how variable precipitation can be! Case in point, through June 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> of this year some areas of Fairfield County experienced quite the gully washer with 24-hour totals of over 1.5", while other portions of the county saw only 0.2". That's the difference between needing to water your garden and having a few minutes of free time!

This variability can make it especially difficult to measure the amount of precipitation entering a particular watershed. Data sources are few when rain gauges are far apart. Here at Fairfield SWCD, we know how valuable this localized rainfall information can be to agricultural producers, construction workers, public utilities, emergency managers, and even insurance adjusters. As a result, we've recently collaborated with Fairfield County community members who are hosting designated rain gauges in their own backyards. These Precipitation Monitors observe and submit rainfall measurements each morning to an online platform known as CoCoRaHS, where this data becomes available to the public.

CoCoRaHS, Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network, is a national grassroots, non-profit, community-based group made up of volunteers of all ages and backgrounds. These citizen scientists take daily precipitation measurements in their own backyards using low-cost measurement tools, including a 4" diameter high capacity rain gauge. Once trained, volunteers report their daily observations to CoCoRaHS. These rainfall measurements are displayed on maps on the CoCoRaHS website. With over 20,000 active contributors across North America, Precipitation Monitors make a big impact.



The measurements collected by Precipitation Monitors have many applications that help the public better understand weather and climate, and the collected data are used by many organizations each and every day. Examples include:

- The National Weather Service forecast offices use the submitted rainfall measurements to verify (or negate!) their weather forecasts.
- The National Weather Service River Forecast Centers use CoCoRaHS data to predict river levels and potential flooding across the country.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture looks at CoCoRaHS data regularly to assess crop development, potential drought stress, and possible crop damage and erosion from flooding or from drought.
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Hurricane Center uses precipitation accumulations to analyze the overall impacts of a tropical cyclone event.



On a more local level, CoCoRaHS measurements can be used by farmers and gardeners to help pinpoint areas most affected by drought and to help guide pest control. Emergency managers can employ data to identify areas most affected by large rain events. And people who live along rivers, creeks, and lakes can use upstream precipitation amounts to forecast areas of potential flooding.

We are currently recruiting Precipitation Monitors in areas of Violet and Liberty Townships and may expand to other parts of Fairfield County in the future. Interested in learning more? Visit [cocorahs.org](http://cocorahs.org) or email [cbrown@fairfieldswcd.org](mailto:cbrown@fairfieldswcd.org) for more information.

### OFFICE UPDATE

The Fairfield County Ag Center is currently closed to the public; however, SWCD and NRCS staff are working and are available by appointment. For an in-person meeting, we ask that you follow all Ohio Department of Health, Center for Disease Control, and Fairfield County Health Department recommendations and guidelines. Please call our office at 740-653-8154 to schedule with staff members.

## SUPERVISOR ELECTION INFO....CAST YOUR VOTE

The Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission will cause an election of Supervisors of the Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to be held in accordance with Chapter 940 of the Ohio Revised Code. Individuals who own or occupy land within the Fairfield SWCD; own a corporation, partnership, association, or other entity registered with the Ohio Secretary of State in Fairfield County; and are 18 years of age or older may vote for supervisor.

There are three (3) ways an eligible voter can cast a ballot:

1. At the Fairfield SWCD office from August 28 until September 10 during normal business hours; or
2. At the “Drive-Thru” event, which will take place at the Fairfield County Ag Center on September 10 from 5:30 p.m. - 7 p.m.; or
3. Voting absentee from July 29 until September 10, by requesting the Ballot Application and Election Ballot from the Fairfield SWCD office at 831 College Avenue, Suite B, Lancaster, OH 43130, by calling (740) 653-8154, or by emailing [boardelection@fairfieldswcd.org](mailto:boardelection@fairfieldswcd.org). When submitting the Ballot Application and the Election Ballot, submit both together in the official **SWCD Election Ballot** envelope provided. Absentee ballots (mailed or delivered in-person) must be received by the Fairfield SWCD office by 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 10.
  - Eligible voters must complete a Ballot Application in its entirety for validation. Information provided will be used for the sole purpose of validating ballots.

Two Supervisors will be elected to a three-year term commencing January 1, 2021, and ending December 31, 2023. Nominees are: Jon Gerken, David Ochs and Gregg Pontius (see bios on next page).

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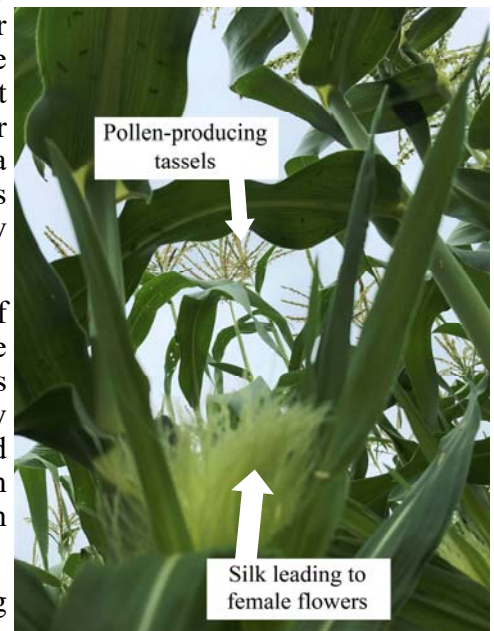
## GETTING FRISKY WITH CORN

Many would agree that one of the most pleasing sights that Fairfield County has to offer are the seas of green presented by fields of growing corn. In mid-July, however, the careful observer will notice the emergence of yellow plumes reaching for the sky from the very top of the plant. Known to most as corn tasseling, these golden strands mark the commencement of corn reproduction. Each tassel houses a plethora of pollen grains, between 14 million and 18 million, resembling a fine yellow powder that is easily dispersed by the wind. These grains contain the male corn genes, half of what is needed for a new corn kernel.

Meanwhile, a few feet below await the female components needed for procreation. Hundreds of minuscule flowers are aligned on tiny, sheathed cobs, jutting upwards towards their male counterparts. Each of these tiny female flowers have the ability to develop into a kernel of corn...but only if a grain of pollen can find its way to it! The process is further complicated by the fact that these female flowers and their cobs are enveloped by a husk and completely sheltered from the world, thus not allowing the pollen to make direct contact. Instead, each female flower sends out a single, sticky strand of silk with the purpose of securing a floating grain of corn pollen. It's no coincidence, that these silky strands emerge on the very same day the tassel is set to release its powdery pollen.

The story only gets stranger when a grain of pollen aligns with the tip of a strand of silk. Once recognized, it tunnels its way down through the thread to finally unite and fertilize the female flower. This entire process can take several hours to complete, and upon achievement the silky threads almost immediately begin to dry up. The small, underdeveloped kernels you often find towards the end of an ear of corn resulted from flowers that were unsuccessful in engaging male suitors to venture down their tubes of silk, thus were not successfully pollinated.

So, the next time you smell that wondrously bright, musky odor emerging from a neighboring corn field, you'll know that love is, indeed, in the air.





## MEET THE CANDIDATES

### JON GERKEN

Jon grew up on a farm in Northwest Ohio where he participated in 4-H and FFA, with dairy and sheep projects. He graduated from The Ohio State University with a B. S. in Agriculture, majoring in Agronomy. Jon worked for the Natural Resources Conservation Service for 42 years, working in the Soil Survey program.

Jon and his wife, Diane, have been Fairfield County residents for 41 years. They have two grown sons, Mark and Matthew. They live on 13 acres in Greenfield Township where Jon spends time planting trees, gardening and tending to their pond.

Jon's activities have included being active in their church, numerous professional conservation and soil science organizations, OSU College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, and School of Environment and Natural Resources Alumni Societies, serving on Bloom Carroll Board of Education, and Board of Directors of the Columbus Federal Employees Credit Union. Jon is a member of Farm Bureau and the American Legion.



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### DAVID OCHS



David is a graduate of Ohio University with a B.S. in Business Administration. He worked for a large landscape company and managed a greenhouse. He currently owns Orchard Gardens landscaping company and runs that in addition to Ochs Fruit Farm. David is a 5th generation orchardist. He has been involved in operating the family farm for most of his life and took over all operations in 2017.

David has been a Fairfield County resident for 45 years. He and his wife have two children and two grandchildren. Together they share their passion for food, flavor and plants with friends and customers.

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### GREGG PONTIUS

Gregg has been a lifelong resident of Fairfield County in Amanda Township where he still resides with fiancé Marilyn Evans. He is a graduate of Amanda-Clearcreek High School and The Ohio State University with a Bachelor's degree from the Ag School. Gregg is a military vet having served during 1971-1977. He has been a 4-H advisory and a supporter of FFA and Young Farmers, and has been involved with and participated in many programs directed by the SWCD.

Working in the ag industry and farming for over 50 years, Gregg has strong beliefs in no-till cropping. Having done custom work for other farmers, he is open to ideas in different ways to accomplish conservation.

Gregg is currently leasing his land to a first generation farmer.



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## 27TH AG EASEMENT SIGNED



In mid-March the Board of Fairfield County Commissioners closed their 27th Agricultural Easement with the Ohio Department of Agriculture-Clean Ohio Fund on the Tilley Farm in Hocking Township.

The farm has been in their family since 1828! The protection of this 164.912 acre farm was the first in 18 years closed without much “fanfare” due to the corona virus but we will celebrate their family’s commitment to agriculture for generations to come.

## 2020 PLAT BOOKS AVAILABLE

The Fairfield SWCD is now selling the 2020 Fairfield County Plat Directory. They are \$20 and are available at the Fairfield SWCD office.

Due to the Ag Center being currently closed to the public, please call 740-653-8154 when you arrive. They can also be purchased by mail with an additional fee for postage.

### FAIRFIELD COUNTY, OHIO 2020 Plat Directory



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Linda Claypool  
Wendy LaRue  
Matt Reese  
Tim White

### DISTRICT PERSONNEL

Carrie Brown  
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