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Ohio Country Messenger

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Dependence on Foreign Oil

By *OFU Vice President William Miller*

Looking at the current gasoline prices and the prospects for even higher prices in the near future, we can easily understand the urgency to invest in clean energy, energy efficiency and alternative fuels. We cannot continue to allow the big oil and natural gas lobbies to dictate our local and national agendas, collect massive subsidies, and stifle the emerging, environment friendly, clean energy initiatives. The elimination of our dependency on foreign oil by developing and utilizing clean energy technologies needs be a

local and national priority.

While almost everyone agrees with the need to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, there are those who argue that our nation has significant natural gas and coal resources that can be utilized to help meet this goal. The problem is that, while they do exist, there is no known technology to allow these sources of energy to be extracted from the ground and utilized without significantly damaging the environment and the health of current and future generations of Americans. Extracting these resources from the ground has serious negative environment

impacts, and burning fossil resources only contributes to the greenhouse gas crisis.

“Spaceship Earth” provides a very complex and fragile environment for mankind. Science is just beginning to understand all its complexities and provide us with some guidelines as to what we need to do (or not do) to provide for continued survival. Science, however, may not be able to come up with the answers to save us from ourselves if we don’t start now to take appropriate steps to stop harmful practices such as injecting dangerous chemicals (fracking)

into the earth, potentially destroying our clean water supplies, and spewing harmful greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, drastically altering the sea levels and world weather patterns.

We do need affordable energy for our homes, farms and businesses and we want to continue to be able to grow and provide plentiful and healthful food for ourselves and the nation. We can and will persevere in the matter by developing and utilizing green technologies for our own well being and that of future generations. Family farmers can play a vital, practical role in this important endeavor.

OFU Family Featured in Farm Magazine

Ashtabula County Farmers Union President, Mardy Townsend of Windsor, was the subject of a feature story in the Mid-May 2011 edition of Ohio’s Country Journal. The farm was first purchased by her parents, Norman and Marge Townsend in 1972, the 226 acres became a grass farm operation for the “black baldy” calves that she raises.

The article written by Kyle Sharp, tells how Mardy’s operation was started and progressed to the 135 head grass-fed cow calf to finish operation. Marshy Meadow Farms became certified organic through the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA). The land has been certified organic since 1997 and the beef cattle certified in 2011. Marshy Meadow Farms is featured as one of the 40 stops on the 2011 Ohio Sustainable Farm Tour and Workshop series, sponsored by OEFFA and other farm groups. Save the date – Saturday, September 10 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. to visit Marshy Meadow Farms. For additional information on the farm tours, visit www.oeffa.org/farmtour/.

Mardy is a graduate from Wilmington College with a degree in animal science and biology and a master’s degree from The Ohio State University in agronomy.

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From the President



Roger Wise

Time passes by so quickly. Springtime has nearly given away to summer. One of our latest and wettest planting seasons on record is finally nearly complete. At least the late planted crops are getting off to a quick start. With good weather for the remainder of the growing season, there is still a good opportunity for a bountiful harvest, and farmers will again demonstrate their ability to produce an abundant crop for food fiber and energy.

Much has happened in the organization since the last time you heard from us. County meetings are taking place. I attend as many as possible. Members get insurance updates, hear about the state activities and are planning summer membership drives.

The state convention was a huge success. Senator Sherrod Brown attended, visited with members and got the event off on a festive note. Other special guests over the two day affair were State FSA committee members (and OFU members) Jim Rex, Chairman, Jim Zumbrink and John Bressler, State Director, Steve Mauer and Assistant Director David Drake. The Ohio State University Dean of Agriculture, Bobby Moser, USDA Rural Development Director Tony Logan also attended. David Hutchins brought remarks about the state of the beef industry, and members were updated on the improved condition of

the organization.

Vice President Bill Miller and I attended and manned an OFU booth at the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA) annual convention. This is the organic farm organization that OFU is affiliated with and each of us has members in the others organization. A good thing.

March brought the national convention; always a highlight of the year and this one was no exception. Wes Sims, Texas Farmers Union President hosted us in beautiful San Antonio. All enjoyed the superb weather, and the lineup of speakers was excellent. Retiring Senator Byron Dorgan was most inspirational and insightful talking about his career in public service and advocacy for rural America and family farmers and ranchers. Jim Hightower, former Texas Ag Commissioner, is always witty and provocative. Dallas Tonsager, USDA under Secretary for Rural Development, and Farmers Union member talked about challenges agriculture will face in coming years regarding budget issues and crafting a new farm bill. Special Issues debated in policy dealt with Dairy, Biotechnology, the Farm Bill, Health Care, Taxes, Energy and Environment.

On March 22, the annual OFU Legislative day was held in Columbus. Eighteen members visited legislators and were well received. Issues discussed included the state budget, Ohio Consumers Council funding (non General Revenue), hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") and CAUV. After, we hosted a reception in the Capitol "crypt" and

it was very well attended. The day was very positive for the Ohio Farmers Union and thanks to all of the legislators. They were most cordial.

This year's summer picnic will be held in Sandusky County, at the WR Hunt Club on Saturday, July 30, 2011. Owners, and OFU members, Bob and Betty Wright are excellent hosts for young and old alike. They are excited about hosting the picnic and are already making plans. Mark your calendars and plan to attend. It will be a wonderful event.

Congratulations to members Jeff and Deb Eschmeyer who were selected as participants in the newly created NFU Beginning Farmer Institute. This is an honor for sure and an opportunity for Jeff and Deb to take advantage of resources and network opportunities to help them make their family farm flourish.

If your summer schedule is not already full and you are pondering a place to go, the annual Farm Aid Concert will take place in Kansas City, Kansas on August 13.

Check out our newly rebuilt OFU website at www.ohfarmersunion.org. We are confident that you will find it interesting, user friendly and filled with current information, both state and national.

Enjoy your summer and your families.

--Roger

Ohio Farmers Union Leadership



Ohio Farmers Union Executive Committee (left to right) Joe Logan, Carl Maag, Vice President William Miller; President Roger Wise, Duane Shields, Bruce Yancey and Walt Streber.

Ohio Couple Selected for NFU Beginning Farmers Institute

National Farmers Union (NFU) recently announced the 10 participants selected for NFU's new Beginning Farmer Institute. Applicants who will participate in the inaugural institute are Erin Schneider of Wisconsin, Tess Brown-Lavoie of Rhode Island, Jeff and Deb Eschmeyer of Ohio, Aeric and Rex Reilly of Montana, Joseph and Ida DeFrancesco of Connecticut; and Barbara Marty and Justin Fehringer of Colorado.

"Today's farmers face a wide array of challenges," said NFU President Roger Johnson. "The Beginning Farmer Institute will provide these participants with a better working knowledge of the tools available to help them succeed."

Institute participants will learn about financial planning, farm management, and farmer-owned cooperatives. In addition, they will help determine the agenda based on what they have identified as important on their farm. Topics include marketing, understanding U.S. Department of Agriculture programs, renewable energy, recording keeping or understanding the local food system.

"We see farming as both a way of life and a business. Farming is a career and a profession that demands the most of people," said Johnson. "Farmers are entrepreneurs, conservationists, mechanics, managers, and the muscle it takes to operate a farm around the clock, month after month. They literally grow our nation's food, fuel, and fiber from the ground up."

The selected individuals range from cattle ranchers and grain farmers to those growing for CSA and farmers markets across the country. The program is sponsored in part by Farm Credit, United Soybean Board, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, and the NFU Foundation.

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OHIO FARMERS UNION SUMMER PICNIC

Saturday, July 30, 2011

12:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

RAIN OR SHINE

WR Hunt Club

(family owned and operated hunting preserve)



Bob and Betty Wright, Owners and Farmers Union members
5690 CR 237 - Clyde, OH 43410
Free for Ohio Farmers Union Members, Families and Friends

Come and enjoy the food and fellowship!

RSVP by July 15, 2011 by calling 800-321-3671.

Bring your lawn chairs and your appetite!

Interested in shooting sporting clays in the morning?

Cost is \$35 for a round of 100 or \$20 for a round of 50 shots.

Traveling from a distance - Red Roof Inn (phone 419-547-6660) in Clyde offers a 15% discount when you mention WR Hunt Club

Picnics have a double value – fellowship and communication!
SAVE THE DATE!!!

THEODORE O. FINNARN
 ATTORNEY AT LAW
 421 PUBLIC SQUARE
 GREENVILLE, OHIO 45331

Telephone: 937. 548.3240
 937.547.7365 (Treasurer's Office)

Fax: 937.548.3291
 E-mail: toflaw@earthlink.net

CAUV Values to Skyrocket!

Farmers across Ohio have benefited in the past in regards to CAUV values that have been kept extremely low and now these values are scheduled to increase quite a bit in the next few years. Ted Finnarn, Darke County attorney, is the Ohio Farmers Union representative to the Agricultural Advisory Committee of the Division of Tax Equalization and this CAUV Advisory Committee functions to advise the Ohio Tax Department on the operation of the Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV) law and the consequent valuations used under the law. Finnarn has served on this State Committee for over 34 years originally being appointed by the Ohio Farmers Union in 1976. Scott Zumbrink, Darke County Treasurer, also serves on this committee, representing the State Treasurers' Association and he has served with distinction since 2007. According to Finnarn and Zumbrink the CAUV table valuations (which vary according to soil type, slope, drainage and soil management groups, using inputs of a 5-year "olympic" average of crop prices and costs of production) will increase substantially for tax year 2011 effective for taxes to be paid in 2012. When the more important comparison is made between the 2008 table valuations to the 2011 valuations (the 2008 table being the last one used by counties, including Darke, which will now use the 2011 values, due to the 3 year rotation), therein there may be an increase of approximately 200-300% or more in CAUV values.

By way of explanation Finnarn and Zumbrink noted that the CAUV values had been kept artificially low in the past since they were mainly dependent on crop prices (which were low) vs expenses (and government farm payments have never been taken into consideration). CAUV values got so low in some counties (circa tax year 2005) that farmers were only paying \$3 - \$4 per acre per year on some of their valuable farm real estate. Finnarn stated "We had a real problem of almost losing the CAUV entirely during the summer of 2006 since the values were so much lower than the fair market value of farm real estate". Therefore, the formula had to be adjusted and updated and also with the recent increase in crop prices coupled with lower interest rates, it was inevitable that the CAUV values would go up in the future. Even though farmers may be paying more on their tax bill, they should realize that the highest CAUV values in the state will still be only around \$2400 per acre.

	2008	2011*
Corn/bu.	\$3.20	\$6.30+
Soybeans/bu.	\$8.10	\$13.60+
Land Value/Acre	\$3,000.00	\$5,500.00+

COMPARE!!

*The CAUV formula uses 7 year avg., kicks out the highest and lowest years, then 5 year avg. crop prices vs 5 years costs of production; then capitalizes the result per soil type by ÷ interest rate (rates have been extremely low) to = CAUV per soil type per acre.

Are farm organizations more or less viable today than they were 25 years ago?

By OFU Scholarship Winner Elizabeth Ritz

Though there are fewer family farms today than there were 25 years ago I believe that farm organizations are more viable today. This is because in the current economic downturn many family farmers are struggling to keep their farms up and running. In today's economy it is hard to make a decent living off of a small family farm when you are competing with so many larger factory farms. Also, prices on farmers products are going up, yet the farmer is not getting paid much more for it. But farm organizations try to maintain fair prices on farm raised products. Farm organizations not only help the farmers, but they also help consumers and the environment.

Farming organizations try to look out for small family farmers and help them to thrive. Farm organization help keep the prices of farm grown goods up by promoting the usage of these products. Also, they promote buying farm fresh products from local farmers in the community. One way Farmers Union encourages the use of locally grown products is through its support of COOL, country of origin labeling. COOL will tell consumers where their food is coming from and will offer them the choice of eating products grown here, in the US. Another way farm organizations help farmers is by sending representatives to Washington DC to lobby with legislative members over agricultural bills

and laws.

Farmers and farm organizations have done a lot to help the environment. One way they do this is through the promotion of renewable fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel; both help farmers because they are made from products like corn and soybeans and don't



Joseph Fichter Scholarship contest winners. Runner-up Amanda Porter of Paulding is the daughter of John and Michele Porter and attends The University of Findlay; First Place Elizabeth Ritz of McClure is the daughter of Steven and Peggy Ritz and attends Ohio Northern University; Runner-up Amy Gobrogge of McClure is the daughter of Ed and Kathy Gobrogge and attends The Ohio State University.

make as much harmful waste that will hurt the environment. Additionally, scientists have found a way to use the methane gas in animal wastes and turn it into useable energy which can be renewed and helps eliminate waste in the environment. Also farming organizations are in full support of alternative energies such as wind, solar, and geothermal. Today farmers use 37% less energy than they did 40 years ago, and they have reduced their emissions by 37% also. Farmers are producing 20% more crops and using 25% less land, which leaves more land for wild-

life and the replanting of trees.

Farming organizations believe that consumers have a right to know where their food is coming from and should have a choice of buying locally grown products. Through the use of COOL consumers will have a better understanding of where their food comes from. They also try to ensure the safety of the food being put on the market, so consumers have good quality food available to them. The food being put on the market is checked for pesticides and hormones before becoming available to the public. In Addition farming organization not only advocate for issues that effect farmers they also address issues such as environment, taxes, and wildlife; which effects the general public.

Farm organization are more viable today than they were 25 years ago, because of the current economic downfall. They help family farmers by promoting the use of their products and encouraging people to purchase locally grown goods. They also do more to help the environment by encouraging the use of renewable fuels and alternative energies. Farming organizations help consumers by making safe foods available to them. In the current economy it is harder to make a decent living off of a small family farm than it was 25 years ago, however farm organization help by finding new ways to advertise their products. By working together with farm organizations we can accomplish more than we could alone.

Elizabeth Ritz was selected as first place winner of the Joseph Fichter Scholarship contest during the Ohio Farmers Union 77th Convention. Ritz received a \$1,000 scholarship for her essay. Elizabeth of McClure, in Henry County, is the daughter of Steven and Peggy Ritz.

Ohio Farmers Union Meeting Notice

Defiance, Fulton, Henry, and Williams County Farmers Unions are holding an Informational Meeting on June 30th at Northwest State Community College, George V. Voinovich Auditorium, Archbold, OH. Refreshments at 6:30 p.m. Meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. State Senator Cliff Hite and Chairperson of the Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources Committee and David Simmons, Agriculture Inspection Administrator for the Ohio Grain Indemnity Fund, Ohio Department of Agriculture are featured for this event. Call Ohio Farmers Union at 800-321-3671 for additional information.



OFU members met with House Agriculture and Natural Resources Ranking Minority Member Teresa Fedor during Legislative Day.

Testimony Submitted

House Bill 229 Agriculture – to revise the laws governing agriculture. Introduced by State Representative Jim Buchy from the 77th District. Former Ohio Farmers Union President Joe Logan presented the following testimony.

House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, Honorable Dave Hall, Chairman

Testimony Regarding HB 229

By Joe Logan, Director of Agricultural Programs, Ohio Environmental Council

May 25, 2011

Chairman Hall, Vice Chairman Derickson, Ranking Minority Member Fedor, Committee Members, we appreciate the opportunity to present testimony today regarding House Bill 229, which proposes numerous changes affecting the interaction of the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) with farms and businesses in our fair state. This broad-ranging bill proposes to make dozens of changes to the Ohio Revised Code. Some, like those changing the names of divisions within the ODA will have a negligible impact on the affairs of the state. Others such as the creation of another division chief within ODA, and the exempting of certain poultry brokering activities from bonding requirements will have a modest impact on Ohio's economy, but we have concerns that some of the provisions in HB229 could profoundly change the nature of interactions between the ODA and our rural communities.

The provisions that propose changes to Sections 307.204, 505.226, and 903.02, have the potential to severely limit the important negotiations that customarily take place between the agribusiness corporations and local community leaders. We acknowledge that agriculture has changed dramatically, especially in the past several decades, as agribusinesses have evolved into massive, specialized enterprises. These changes have brought with them increasingly large impacts on regional economies, the local environment and on the character of rural communities.

Considering the enormous impacts of modern industrial livestock enterprises, it is increasingly necessary to have an open and robust system of communication and negotiations between the agribusinesses and the local community leaders. Such negotiations can serve to an-

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Ohio Senate Minority Leader Capri Cafaro with Ashtabula County Farmers Union President Mardy Townsend and Secretary/Treasurer Marge Townsend during Legislative Day.



OFU Insurance Representative Dave Shindollar explains Health Savings Account plans to members during the Paulding and Defiance County spring meeting

OFU Poster Contest winners named

Winners of the Ohio Farmers Union poster contests were announced during the OFU Convention. This year's theme was, "Farmers Help the Environment."

Winners:

Division I – Grades 1 and 2

First Place (\$75.00 Savings Bond) Will Seedorf, Henry County
Second Place (\$50.00 Savings Bond) Haley Cole, Henry County

Division II – Grades 3 and 4

First Place (\$75.00 Savings Bond) Rachel Herring, Wyandot County
Second Place (\$50.00 Savings Bond) Emma Burkey, Henry County

Division III – Grades 5 and 6

First Place (\$75.00 Savings Bond) Abigail Leuthold, Wyandot County
Second Place (\$50.00 Savings Bond) Tiffani Watkins, Wyandot County



Pictured: 2011 Wyandot Poster Contest winners. (Left to right) Abigail Leuthold and Tiffani Watkins for grades five and six; Rachael Herring for grades three and four.



Pictured (left to right): Emma Burkey for grades three and four. Will Seedorf and Haley Cole for grades one and two.

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ticipate and deal with issues of infrastructure development and maintenance, protection of essential natural resources and can set the stage for dealing with community relations issues that often arise.

The need for such a system of communication and dialog was acknowledged in the original ODA permitting program, which proscribed a system of notification and the exchange of ideas regarding infrastructure development, eventually culminating in a set of "Final Recommendations". According to this procedure, local officials could exchange infrastructure development proposals with the agribusiness, until such time as an agreement was reached that served the needs of the permitted livestock facility, while adequately protecting the interests of the local citizens.

HB229 proposes to change Ohio's laws to force those, often complex negotiations into a brief 75 day window, after which time the agribusiness would merely need to submit an affidavit indicating that they had informed the local government officials of their plans.

This proposed change may be welcomed by agribusiness, as it will surely shorten the period of negotiation. It will also likely reduce the costs to agribusiness development, because it will allow them to propose a least-cost infrastructure counter proposal and wait for the 75 day "clock" to expire. It will not however, serve the interests of local taxpayers, who have invested in and maintained their local infrastructure.

As the Director of Agricultural Programs for the Ohio Environmental Council, We have serious concerns about the environmental impacts of large industrial livestock facilities. We believe that HB229 is designed to accelerate the rate of transition among Ohio's agricultural producers to fewer and larger livestock facilities, by short-circuiting the negotiation process between those representing agribusiness corporations and those representing local communities. We believe this is a disservice to Ohio's environment and to local community leaders, who were elected to represent the interests of local taxpayers.

We urge you to oppose HB 229.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter. I welcome any questions from the committee.



Ohio Farmers Union
www.ohfarmersunion.org
1011 N. Defiance St., P.O. Box 363
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800-321-3671 / 419-523-5300
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Spring cleaning extended to the Internet at the Ohio Farmers Union this year.

If you haven't taken a look at ohfarmersunion.org recently, you're in for a surprise. The entire site has been redesigned and re-organized to offer our members and future members a clean, well-organized home for OFU to share its vision and mission with the world.

Communications Consultant Ron Sylvester of Columbus worked with members of the OFU Executive Board over the past two months to produce the new website.

"The first thing that struck me about OFU is that the organization has a long history of advocating for a level playing field for family farmers and consumers in Ohio. Farmers Union issues struck a chord with me in light of the recent financial crisis and daily questions about where our food comes from and what's going into it," Sylvester said. "I've learned the meaning of 'Know your farmer,'" he added.

A few highlights from the new site:

- OFU now has a blog where you'll find updates from both the Ohio and National Farmers Union perspective.
- The site organization highlights OFU's commitment to legislative action and education.
- The new site also makes the case for joining OFU in several different areas and will include up to date information for members on their benefits.
- The homepage contains an area underneath the featured stories tab which will be used to communicate the latest updates and information. Currently to the left we are featuring an ad for OFU insurance and our Grow Forward program. To the left are synopses of the latest blog posts.

Sylvester said he hopes members enjoy the new site and welcomes feedback at rcs@ronsylvester.com. The site was built with WordPress, an open source content management system that will allow OFU to make additions in the future such as members-only forums or to add a weekly email newsletter built around blog posts.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE INFORMATION BY E-MAIL?

More and more people are using this helpful tool to communicate and stay in touch. If you are interested in receiving information from the Ohio Farmers Union by e-mail, just send your name, county and e-mail address to:
lborton@ohfarmersunion.org.