



Farm Connection
by
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STRATFORD'S CO-FOUNDER HONORED BY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

Recent memorable highlights at Stratford Ecological Center on Liberty Road include the award ceremony at the Delaware County Fair, and the Kubota donation. Louise Warner, Stratford's Co-Founder in 1990, was honored by the Delaware County Agricultural Society and presented with the Agricultural Hall of Fame Award at the County Fair. Louise has shared her knowledge of sustainable agriculture with Stratford, and extensively with the Ohio State University for many years. Staff and volunteers attended the ceremony to show their support and pride in Louise, and they stayed to enjoy the fair and experience the novelty of the "fast-paced" harness racing.

Kubota Tractor Corporation of Groveport, Ohio was seeking a community partner in their north central region, which extends from Maine to Wisconsin. The partner would exemplify their new marketing initiative "For Earth for Life." They would need to meet Kubota's extensive 20-point criteria. It turned out Stratford was the only organization to meet EVERY requirement. Kubota hosted a breakfast at Stratford to formalize the partnership. They presented us with a new orange 4WD tractor, complete with front end loader and bush hog. The medium size tractor is perfect for mucking out the barn pens, and for maple sugar season. We are grateful to Kubota and look forward to a long relationship.

The weather during Stratford's annual Harvest Fair in late September was cloudier than most days this fall, but the rain held off and plenty of families attended. The lack of rain made it easy to park rows of cars in field #1, and just as easy to cultivate the same ground the next day in preparation for planting spelt. As usual the simple joys of flying a kite, shoveling a variety of colorful beans in a tin bath inside the Tee-pee, sitting on the donkey or petting the llama made everyone happy. The Delaware Arts Castle brought kid friendly tempera liquid paint, and vegetables to use as paint brushes, for budding artists. After dipping in the bright paint, a half of okra makes a terrific pattern, as does a bunch of celery. We are grateful for the multi-faceted support we receive from the Delaware community.

During the Harvest Fair, the first Stratford 5K run/walk was held. It was almost a sellout with 90 participants, the majority women and children. It was emotional to see them set off silhouetted against the wire fence and green of the North Pasture. It truly was a cross country event where entrants negotiated the orchard grass clumps and the tractor ruts. The wooded section through the sugar bush was especially beautiful, with the path cleared of everything except the tree roots, and even those proved no problem.

Stratford certainly received "Service beyond Measure" as etched on the t-shirts of forty- six students from Columbus State Community College, who spent a day volunteering. They picked apples for cider making, cleared the honeysuckle on the Hush trail, removed spent vegetables, dug the beds in the Children's Garden, and cleaned out the barn. Wow, the boost this gives to regular volunteers cannot be measured.

Three eight-week-old white Yorkshire/Duroc piglets finally took up residence in the barn on October 7th. It is so good to see hogs again after the lengthy interval since we sent Roxy, our infertile sow, to the processors. They were not used to a big pen with a concrete floor covered in straw, and naturally huddled in a corner for the first day. By the third day they had lost their inhibitions, and young school groups could get up close and personal. Mary Kindred, a farm and nature guide, led a group of six Japanese students and their interpreter into the pen. Before long the little girls were honking and the piglets were responding. They had found their own way to break the language barrier!

The corn in the back half of field #1 was harvested with our one-row harvester this week. The size fits our needs, and does the job well after a little help from the Tuesday crew to unclog it, and tighten a few nuts and bolts. Part of field #6 was also planted in corn. Field #6 and #7, nearest the Sugar Shack, would both benefit from tile draining. The corn was stunted due to the continuous rains through August. Farmer Jeff will let the cattle graze the cobs, and then work the stalks into the ground.

There will be little paperwork taken care of by Farmer Jeff for the remainder of the month, as he prepares for winter. School tours continue through early November, as does the popular 5th grade science program, Messages from the Earth, offered two days a week per school. This program continues for one day in February, and then for a final two days in the spring. This way the students experience as many seasons as possible. Come out to Stratford and appreciate the fall colors, glimpse a hint of green in the spelt and rye fields, and relish a few more warm days before winter sets in.

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