



Educational Farm & Nature Preserve

# Farm Connection

by  
Pauline Scott

## Farm & Nature Guide & Board of Trustees

---

Published in *The Delaware Gazette*: August 19, 2017

### **A CHANGE IS BETTER THAN A REST FOR STRATFORD ECOLOGICAL CENTER**

One of the biggest highlights of the year at Stratford Ecological Center on Liberty Road is our elegant fund raiser aptly named “Enchanted Evening.” The proceeds help support our mission of offering numerous farm and nature programs to children. The programs bring them closer to the environment and their source of food, helping develop a relationship with the earth and a desire to care for it.

This year’s event on August 10, our seventh, was off-site for the first time at the Columbus Zoo in their Africa Event Center. The Zoo already partners with us in a browse-growing project, whereby we planted young willow trees to eventually thin and feed to the zoo animals. The new venue brought a record 325 guests excited about helping Stratford and the prospect of standing on the balcony watching the animals move freely around the Savanna. The beautifully marked, incredibly long-necked giraffes stole the show. To see them from our dining tables at sunset, with shafts of light beaming on their bodies, was magical.

Fortunately, guests managed to swivel their gaze at some point to check out the silent auction, generously bidding at or above the items value. The evening passed all too quickly with delicious food, a bird’s eye view of Stratford taken from a drone in a new video created by Above the Light Photography, the first Distinguished Service Award, an edge of your seat “live” auction, a preview of our new solar project and a panel auction, and plenty of music.

With school about to start, farm camp ended on August 11. It was a tearful day for the education interns, especially Paula and Michael our two-year veterans. Paula will be working in Battle Creek, Michigan at an overnight environmental camp until Christmas. Michael has secured a year-long position at a camp in the mountains of North Carolina teaching outdoor skills and survivorship. Both feel the experience they gain through internships is the best way to build a resume, and secure a full-time job.

They were not the only ones who left the farm. More fat lambs have gone, and there is plenty of meat available to purchase. We don’t keep a bull on the farm longer than necessary for safety reasons, so another home was found for our good-natured bull on August 11, with plenty of female company!

On July 9, we said goodbye to our Red Devon beef cow Sweet Bessie. Bessie arrived at Stratford at Thanksgiving in 2009 from Sylvia Zimmerman’s dairy farm. She was in-calf and had her first-born calf Sweet Annie at foot. Annie never produced a calf and she left us in 2013. Bessie produced a bull calf in June 2010, Katie in August 2011, and her final calf Sweetie in July 2013. Sweetie calved in April 2016, a heifer Claribel, and in March 2017 another heifer, Sweet Pea. Over the past three years Bessie looked like she was in calf and about to deliver, generating false alarms that brought staff members running to the field, but it was not to be. We are grateful to her for leaving healthy offspring who will remain a part of our beef herd.

Donna and her four piglets are well. Bella, Donna's Mom, has continued to share a pen with the boar, and appears to be in-pig as she is pounding on weight. She and her grandkids will soon be allowed to go out into a fenced-off area in the barnyard. It will benefit by the cultivation as the hogs tear up the ground in search of delicacies, and then it can be re-seeded. Donna will be placed with the boar for two months and then he will go to market.

Various crops can be seen on the north end of fields 1 & 2. The shorter corn, planted weeks after the initial seeding when the seeder blocked up, will mature in time and produce a crop. The sunflowers and buckwheat planted together have acted as a nurse crop to each other, and done better than where they were planted alone.

The peppers are slow but OK and there is a nice variety. Tomatoes are plentiful and available at \$2.00 per pound. Some of our earlier tomatoes were lost to the fungal disease late blight. The leaves finally brown and wither, and the fruit rots from the stem end. The live spores were likely blown in from infested areas during the cool wet snaps this summer.

The apple trees are loaded again this year thanks to the restoration of our bee hives and the increase in pollinators. It used to be the trees would have alternate "off" years, and were thought to be building up their reserves. Picking started three weeks ago and the apples are stored for cider in the walk-in cooler. Interestingly the apple varieties are ripening out of their usual sequence and it will be a long season.

Looking ahead, the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Message Program is so popular that it is starting before Labor Day and ending just in time for Thanksgiving. Farm and Nature school tours begin after Labor Day. New farm and nature guides are most welcome, and invited to attend the guide training on Thursday, September 7 from 10–1 pm. On Saturday, September 23 the family-oriented Harvest Fair is scheduled from 10-4 pm. at a cost of \$5 per person/\$15 per family on arrival. On the same day, the Free Range 5K Run/Walk starts at 8 am. with reservations necessary. Felting and knitting classes start in September.

A heads up that Adult Farm Camp centered around apple butter making, and the integrated workings of Stratford's 236 acres farm and nature preserve, is scheduled for Friday October 20 from noon until Saturday at 4 pm. and costs \$100, with reservations requested. Details of all programs can be found on our web site.

Pauline Scott is a farm and nature guide at Stratford Ecological Center, 3083 Liberty Road, Delaware, Ohio, 43015, Tel. 740 363 2548. Email [StratfordCenter@aol.com](mailto:StratfordCenter@aol.com) or visit our web site at [StratfordEcologicalCenter.org](http://StratfordEcologicalCenter.org)