
Owl Creek Conservancy
Conserving Land Since 2000
In the Knox County Area
2022 Annual Report





Memorial Contributions since June 2020, made in memory of:

Art Cassell
Mary Dilley
Virginia Leonard
Alyce Yance
Gina Lynn Zak



Owl Creek Conservancy

Post Office Box 291, Mount Vernon, Ohio 43050-0291
740-392-6952
www.owlcreekconservancy.org

Photos provided by: Ray Heithaus and Pat Heithaus





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Treasurer's Analysis of 2021 Results Annual Meeting - June 26th, 2022

Owl Creek Conservancy experienced significant increases in gifts / contributions for fiscal year 2021, up more than \$481,364 from the previous year to \$1,119,705.

Fixed expenses were relatively flat for 2021, with the exception of Investment Management fees which were \$13,888.

Investment Returns for the year were up \$266,324 for the four funds and all four funds experienced growth. The most significant was the growth of the Endowment fund which increased \$1,057,592 to \$1,620,690. All four funds totaled \$2,519,242 at year-end. New contributions in the four funds were \$884,604 plus New Philanthropy Gift Matches of \$185,000.

There are now 5,006.328 acres conserved via 41 easements and reserves in the Stewardship Fund are \$352,865 or \$70.48 / acre or \$8,606 / easement.

The 2022 Budget accounts for a full time Executive Director and the anticipation of two new conservation easements.

Year-to-date 2022, the market has not been "kind" to us and the losses in the four funds have totaled \$308,137.

Ian Watson officially retired in Q1 2022 as Treasurer, but continues to be a great resource during this time of transition.

Owl Creek 2022 Board of Directors

<i>Kim Davidson</i>	<i>2020-2023</i>
<i>Carol Detmer</i>	<i>2022-2025</i>
<i>Howard Gratz</i>	<i>2022-2023 Vice President</i>
<i>Ray Heithaus</i>	<i>2022-2025 President</i>
<i>Harry Itagaki</i>	<i>2022-2025</i>
<i>Mark Phelan</i>	<i>2022-2025</i>
<i>Greg Spaid</i>	<i>2022-2025</i>
<i>Marcie Steen</i>	<i>2022-2025</i>
<i>Todd Vermilya</i>	<i>2022-2025 Treasurer</i>
<i>Kyle Walls</i>	<i>2020-2023 Secretary</i>
<i>Jeff Wells</i>	<i>2020-2023 Vice President for Land Protection</i>

Treasurer's Report — June 2022

	FYE 2020	FYE 2021	YTD May-22
Income			
Membership Dues	39,540	32,572	9,151
Gifts / Contributions	638,341	1,119,705	166,817
Card Sales	764	188	212
Investment Income	<u>2,001</u>	<u>359</u>	<u>78</u>
Total Income	680,646	1,152,824	176,258
Cost of Goods Sold			
Cards	<u>405</u>	<u>164</u>	<u>(15)</u>
Gross Profit	680,241	1,152,660	176,273
Expenses			
Grants	-	500	-
Management	11,364	11,705	22,843
Accounting	1,200	1,820	3,040
Investment Management	-	13,888	5,337
Other	200	18	-
Advertising	257	1,287	332
Office	880	1,737	3,149
Occupancy	420	399	166
Insurance	3,731	2,486	4,270
Easement Acq	334,684	-	-
Monitoring	6,719	482	-
Education	3,984	1,169	1,082
Membership Dues	-	475	674
Fundraising	1,844	9,824	-
Misc.	<u>666</u>	<u>83</u>	<u>100</u>
	365,949	45,873	40,992
Net Gain (Loss) for Period	314,292	1,106,787	135,281

Owl Creek Conservancy Funds / Knox County Foundation

	12/31/2020	12/31/2021	'20/'21 Comparison
Conservation Easement Acquisition Endowment Fund	-	157,740.36	157,740.36
Endowment Fund	563,098.73	1,620,690.90	1,057,592.17
Stewardship Fund	343,885.26	399,911.42	56,026.16
Memorial Endowment Fund	<u>290,717.99</u>	<u>340,900.28</u>	<u>50,182.29</u>
Total Funds	\$ 1,197,701.98	\$ 2,519,242.96	\$ 1,321,540.98

Source of Gains:

Investment Returns	266,324.60
Contributions	884,604.73
New Philanthropy Gift Matches	<u>185,000.00</u>
Subtotal	\$ 1,335,929.33

Expenses & Contributions:

Administrative Expenses	13,888.35
Grants Awarded	<u>500.00</u>
Subtotal	\$ 14,388.35

Net Gain (Loss)	\$ 1,321,540.98
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President's Annual Report, Summer 2022

The year 2022 has started as the most momentous in the recent history of Owl Creek Conservancy. We successfully progressed in our capital campaign, announced last year, and our endowments are producing enough income to support our new Executive Director, Vicki Kauffman, who began her new position in February. Along with everyone else, we have been slowly bringing business back to pre-pandemic levels, and with this report I hope to show how we have substantially carried on with our work for the citizens of Knox County and surrounding communities.

I am pleased to report that the Owl Creek Conservancy has ten new life members for 2021/2022. The Conservancy established the category of Life Membership to recognize the donation of either a conservation easement (in full or in part) or \$2,000 or more over at least a four-year period. Anna, Stanley and Bruce Williams are recognized for their substantial contributions to land protection in Knox County through an agricultural easement. Barbara Barry, John and Gayle Dowalter, Carolin Hahnemann, Mark and Pam Leonard, and Ann Stallard made substantial financial contributions. This year we have added a category of Corporate Membership, and we are happy to acknowledge the gifts of the Ariel Foundation and the New Philanthropy Fund at the Knox County Foundation. The listing of our life members attests to the number of persons and organizations who have entrusted the Conservancy with significant assets and to a sense of community and permanence. We believe potential donors find it useful to know that others have entrusted assets to the Conservancy and that all of us intend the Conservancy to continue operating permanently.

Today, the Conservancy has 197 members, reflecting a more-or-less steady level of membership in spite of pandemic and other challenges. The Board of Trustees is pleased with the loyalty of our members. A growing membership, however, would help us spread the word about our mission and activities, and would show potential donors a high level of community support. OCC often recruits new Board members and volunteers from our membership, so having more members who are aware of our mission and activity contributes to the sustainability of the Conservancy. Please, invite your friends to join the great work to conserve the lands and waters of our home!



On the less happy side of “momentous” in 2021, we reluctantly accepted the resignation of Ian Watson, our long-term and outstanding Treasurer. Ian had served since 2004, guiding us through a period of growth, increasingly complex IRS filings, and an evolution of financial management securing our sustainable financial future. Ian also recruited our new Treasurer and Board member, Todd Vermilya. I am sad to report that two additional of members are leaving the Board of Trustees. Gordy Yance completed his term plus a year to help guide us through our endowment campaign. We are especially sad to see the departure of Richard Stallard, who made innumerable contributions as a leader of the Conservancy over the past twenty-one years.

Three officers of the Board of Trustees were elected for two-year terms in 2022. Todd Vermilya was elected to the board as Treasurer. Jeff Wells was elected as Vice-President for Land Protection, and Kyle Wall was elected to the post of Secretary. Howard Gratz was re-elected to the position of Vice-President for a one-year term, and I was re-elected as President, also for a one-year term. I thank all our officers and Board members for their many and necessary contributions.

The Board of Trustees began our new business year on July 1 with a record five new members: They are:



Carol Detmer
Carol is a retired School Psychologist with experience with folks with disabilities of all kinds. For the past five years she has taught ESL for members of the Hispanic community here. She has been a member of the Sierra Club for over 30 years. Carol is very interested in the natural history of

Knox County, taking part in the “feeder count” at Wolf Run Park once a week (organized by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology) and participating in training to be an Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist. She also is the Treasurer for the Knox County Humane Society.



Harry Itagaki

Harry was born in Japan and immigrated to the US at the age of 7, growing up in northern New Hampshire. For his advanced education Harry spent time in Connecticut, North Carolina, Alabama, and Arizona. Harry has lived in Ohio for over 30 years,

teaching biology at Kenyon College. Harry gained administrative experiences as chair of the Biology Department and the Department of Neuroscience, chair of various faculty committees and administrator for several research grants. Harry just retired last summer after 31 years at Kenyon.

As for Harry’s personal life, he has been married to Lisa Gichner, a pediatrician, for over 35 years. They have twin daughters, both married, one who lives in Silicon Valley, the other in southern Connecticut. They have had a series of small dogs, and he says “each of whom has more or less run our lives.” When Harry started to work at Kenyon, they lived for two years in the McIlvaine apartments in Gambier, then moved to Worthington for Lisa’s work. Harry commuted from Worthington for the next 28+ years until he and Lisa moved back to Gambier in early 2021 as they transitioned to retirement in the middle of the pandemic.

Harry is interested in conservation issues in general, and in preserving Knox County land in particular, as he is a firm believer in the adage, “think globally and act locally.” To that end, Harry and Lisa belong to The Nature Conservancy, the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Owl Creek Conservancy.



Greg Spaid

Greg has lived with his family in Knox County since 1979 when he joined the Kenyon College faculty as a professor of studio art. Over 42 years working at Kenyon, Greg also served for a decade on the senior staff of the college administration, first as an associate provost and then as provost with responsibility for the academic division of the college with a staff of over 200 and an annual budget of 25 million or so.

As an artist Greg has created projects that focus on rural America, especially Knox County,

including a book of photographs titled *Grace: Photographs of Rural America* published in 2000 and a current project on trees and the natural world that includes a growing series of short videos (now 56) titled *The Machine in the Garden*. For these and other project Greg has roamed the trails and the backroads of Knox County and developed a deep affection for this place. Greg marks each road travelled on an aging 1995 map of the county, but even after three decades of exploring, there are still roads he has not traveled.

Since its founding in 2000, Greg has admired the scope of the Conservancy's mission, its goal to protect and enhance both natural and agricultural lands, and its success in doing that. Greg says his "temperament draws me to work on teams, especially those that bring people together to work for the common good."



Marcie Steen

While Marcie grew up in a typical middle-class neighborhood in Mansfield, Ohio, she says she spent less time in the mall than outside. Her parents instilled a love of the outdoors with family outings to Mohican State Park for hiking, picnics and canoeing, ice skating at Charles Mill Dam and sledding at the local parks. Family morel hunts were rarely successful but provided many fond memories of spring days spent in the woods. Marcie says she

didn't have to travel very far for these experiences and she grew to appreciate local outdoor recreation and the simple beauty of nature. She taught science at the Mount Vernon High School for many years, and she is especially interested in contributing to outreach programs for OCC.



Todd Vermilya

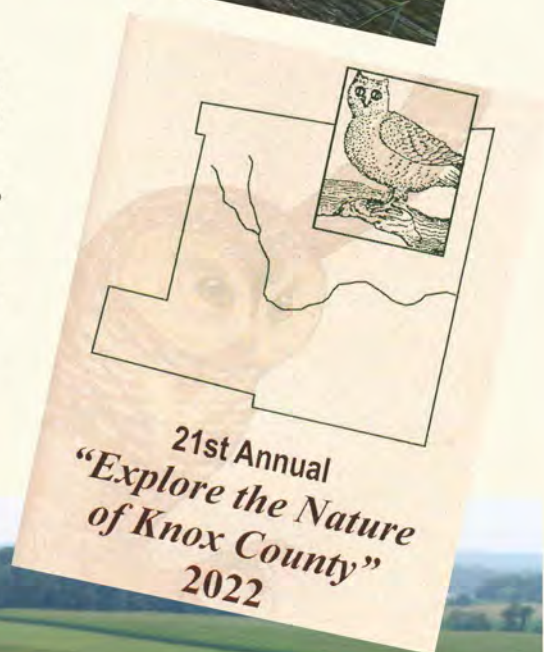
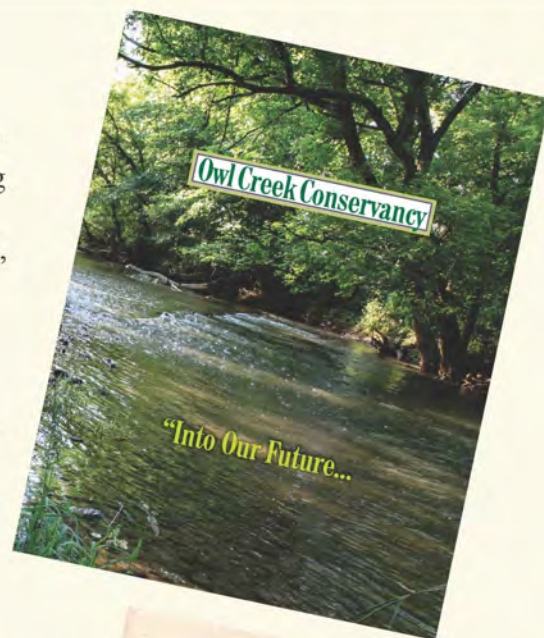
Todd is currently a Vice President at Park National Bank in Commercial Lending. He graduated from Ashland University with a BSBA in 1990, having been appointed to Omicron Delta Epsilon, and has been in the banking industry ever since.

As an Eagle Scout and the former Director of the Clear Fork Ski Patrol, he was a Senior Member of National Ski Patrol and continues today as an Alumni. Todd has been actively involved in the community of North Central Ohio through various Boards and community service opportunities including: Junior Achievement, Treasurer of Little Brothers / Little Sisters of Ashland County, the Loudonville Theater and Arts Committee, the Loudonville Recreation Board and the Loudonville Village Council.

Having joined Park National Bank in 2003, today he serves on the Board of Habitat for Humanity of Knox County and is a member of the Finance Committee. Todd continues to live in Loudonville with his wife, Rachelle, and together they enjoy telemark skiing, fly-fishing, bicycling, hiking and cooking.

This past year has been very successful for the Conservancy. Our fundraising campaign had been going well, and we are generating enough endowment income to fund the position of Executive Director and the transition proposed in last year's annual report and fundraising document. We continued participating in the Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program with the Ohio Department of Agriculture, closing one agricultural easement with the Williams family, and recently received funding for another agricultural easement in Pike Township. We engaged with the community through our continuing "Explore the Nature of Knox County" program, in partnership with the Brown Family Environmental Center and the Knox County Parks; by contributing to the Knox Soil & Water Conservation District scholarship fund; and with presentations in several venues. A newly-formed Outreach Committee has plans for more community engagement and further improvement of our social media presence.

This January we held a Board retreat (in person!) during which we reviewed the past year and set goals for the coming year. I am pleased to report that we met the major goals of our last retreat with respect to adding easements, continuing collaboration with like-minded entities in Knox County, promoting awareness of the value of preserving land, and increasing our stewardship and memorial funds. We also met the goals of continuing to use sound financial management and ensuring that we have adequate funding for protecting easements. We continue to be challenged to find mechanisms to more equitably spread monitoring and other responsibilities, though this is a priority for our new Executive Director. We also reviewed our policy on potential conflicts of interest, a review that the national Land Trust Alliance recommends be done annually.





All this activity involves considerable efforts from our Board members, who reported at least 1700 hours of volunteer time dedicated to our mission. The activity requiring the most time was preparing easements and baseline conditions reports and second was monitoring easements; these are good to be at the top of the list because those activities directly reflect our mission. Substantial time went to attending meetings and raising funds. Self-education, recruiting, leading and attending events in the Explore the Nature of Knox County also were completed with volunteer time and effort.

Sometimes it seems as though conservation easements (ce's) are about what cannot be done, but at their core ce's are very positive. It is true that ce's limit housing and industrial development, but every single conservation easement must identify how the community at large will benefit from implementing those limits for the property in question; these are the protected "conservation values." Depending on the nature of the protected property, conservation values might include production of food or fiber, protection of drinking water, protecting rivers and streams, protecting areas important for flood control, providing scenic vistas accessible to the general public, protecting unusual or special habitats or ecosystems, and enhancing biological diversity for wildlife or threatened species. Implicit in these conservation values, but often poorly recognized, is the outcome of increased resilience for our agricultural and natural systems, our economy, and our society.

A definition of resilience (Merriam-Webster Dictionary): "An ability to recover from or adjust easily to adversity or change." Resilience can refer to individuals, institutions, societies, or ecosystems.



The recent June storm in Knox and surrounding counties is a good example of both adversity and the elements of resilience. Many isolated trees near homes, roads and in fields were lost in the high winds. But even though some individual trees in wooded areas were lost, as a whole the woods will recover as surviving trees fill out to replace those that were lost. The intact system has resilience where isolated trees do not.

Thinking about our streams and drinking water, falling rain is absorbed into the soils of woods, wetlands, and pastures. In contrast, water flows off roads and roofs directly onto the surface and into drainage ditches and streams. Absorption of water by the land we protect reduces surface runoff that creates flooding, while water is slowly released from protected areas during times of drought. Again, intact systems create resilience against adverse times of both excess and deficient rainfall.

For agriculture, conversion from cropland to "house farms" adds to adversity for producers trying to provide food for everyone else. Adversity comes in the forms of declining economic incentives for business to support reduced agricultural activity, increased tensions at the farmland-suburban interfaces, and increased pressure for increasing taxes (because added tax revenue from developments rarely pays for the increased demands for services required for the increased population). Land trusts can help by creating legal incentives to keep land in agriculture.

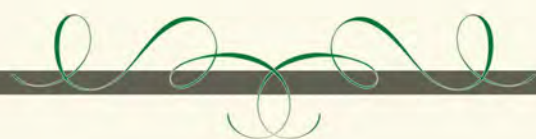
For ecosystems, scientific research consistently has shown that biodiversity contributes to resilience. Many conservation values are supported by resilient ecosystems.

Our pledge to the community is to protect our easements in perpetuity, and institutional resilience is an element contributing to our long-term mission.



For Owl Creek, adversity can manifest as loss of institutional expertise. Conservation easements are legally binding commitments for the Owl Creek Conservancy to visit each protected property at least once per year and to use every available legal resource to defend the property from actions that would reduce the conservation values to the community. Creating clear easement documents is a special skill. Monitoring dozens of properties every year requires a dedicated, talented and skilled set of

people. A sustainable and resilient future requires that multiple people can contribute the necessary knowledge and skills. We have taken the first steps to improving our resilience: creating an Executive Director position, expanding of our volunteer Board of Trustees, and seeking more opportunities for our volunteers to gain knowledge and skills. Our pledge to the community is to protect our easements in perpetuity, and institutional resilience is an element contributing to our long-term mission.



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

New and Pending Conservation Easements

On February 8th of this year, the Conservancy closed on an agricultural easement on the Williams' Farm. President Ray Heithaus completed the Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program application on the property in 2020 but the final review was a slow process. Thanks to the Williams Family for their patience!

The Williams easement covers 182.5 acres in four parcels and is located in Milford Township on the south-west side of Knox County near Centerburg and is within the Kokosing watershed. The topography of the farm is gently rolling with 131 acres currently in a corn/soybean rotation. There are 35 acres of pastured cattle and a small woodlot. There is a pond on the property that provides water for the cattle, and a small wetland depression in the woodlot. The farm is comprised entirely of prime soils, which increased the Williams' final score on their application. The Williams Farm is the ninth property in Milford Township to be preserved by the Conservancy.

The Conservancy currently has another LAEPP application in process for a 132-acre farm in Pike Township. Approval of the application was received from the Ohio Department of Agriculture mid-June, and if everything goes well moving forward, we hope to close on that project the first half of next year.

We are well under way with negotiations on two more conservation easements on two parcels of farm ground in Wayne

6.1 Map 1 County Location View

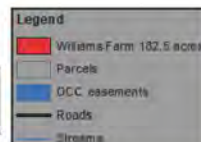


Prepared by: E. R. Heithaus
Date: 9/25/2021

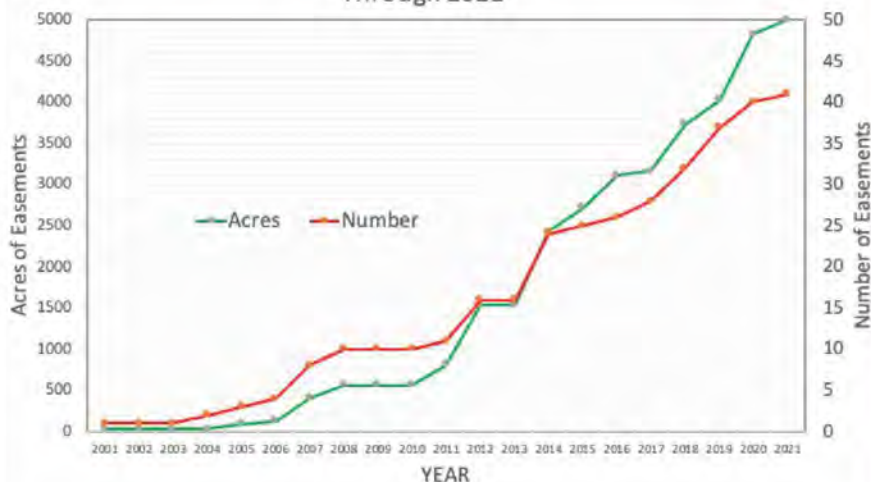


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Post Office Box 291 | Mount Vernon, Ohio | 43050 |
740-392-6952
Serving Knox and Surrounding Counties Since 2000

Data from the Knox County
Tax Map Office, 2021. Phone:
740-393-6752.



Conservation Easements Through 2021



Township, which will be the 7th and 8th conservation projects for one Grantor. The farms are 115 acres and 135 acres, respectively, and both are mostly tilled fields with partially wooded areas. These easements will be named in fond memory of two of the Grantor's family members.

In May, we started planning a conservation easement on a 15-acre wooded property with steep slopes and beautiful wooded views that has an unnamed tributary to Center Run winding through it. Part of the acreage is within the Mount Vernon city limits.

We have begun negotiating three separate conservation easements for a father-and-son team on roughly 320 acres of farm ground near Fredericktown. These easements will not close until 2023 at the request of the Grantors.

Lastly, we are drafting a conservation easement on 55 acres in Morrow County in an area that is becoming more of a housing development than farm ground. The landowner inherited the family farm and is intent on protecting and preserving it the way his father would have wanted.



Spring Monitoring

The Spring Monitoring was completed as scheduled between March 1 and May 1, with no violations of the terms of the conservation easements observed. A couple instances of trespass were noted, which were brought to the attention of the Grantors. Twenty-one protected properties (approximately 2,248 acres all together) were monitored on foot and by truck, as the circumstances and weather conditions allowed. Missing signs that mark the boundaries of the easements were replaced, a few posts were set, and clearing around the signs to keep them visible was done as needed. A heartfelt “Thank You” goes to Jeff Wells and Howard Gratz for heading up the Monitoring Team this year, providing the tools and the transportation and for sharing their expertise. Thanks also to Pat Wells and Kyle Walls for making themselves available to assist with monitoring.



It is important to note that these Protected Properties are home to declining bird populations. While monitoring, Sharp-shinned Hawks and Red-headed Woodpeckers were observed, which is notable because the Ohio Division of Wildlife designates these as Species of Concern for the State of Ohio. Blackburnian Warblers, which have a state status of Special Interest, and Sandhill Cranes, which are classified as Threatened, were also seen.

Outreach Committee Efforts

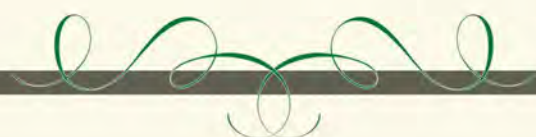
In April, we established an Outreach Committee and solidified its goals, which are: 1) Improve relations with Grantors and perspective Grantors; 2) Increase awareness of the Conservancy with its members and the general public; 3) Grow the membership. No matter how well an organization is performing there is always room for improvement somewhere, and with this in mind, the new committee has been busy assessing the areas of need within the Conservancy and prioritizing outreach projects both large and small. Our hope is to increase the visibility of the Conservancy, serve more people in the community, and partner with other organizations whose mission is either similar to ours or is complimentary to it. The Outreach Committee is Jeff Wells, Kim Davidson, Mark Phelan and Vicki Kauffman.



A Message from OCC's New Director, Vicki Kauffman

Having been a part of the Owl Creek Conservancy for almost two decades, it has been my observation that OCC has always had an excellent Board of Trustees, with capable people rotating on and off the Board throughout the years. These able people worked hard to form our organization, stabilize us through our lean years, and bring us to where we are today - a land trust with 41 easements and over 5,000 acres conserved.

Our current Board is a great mix of people with backgrounds in finance, business, farming, biology, and zoo business. Their ability is equally matched by their willingness to be involved and give of themselves. Moving forward, I hope to make adjustments to some of our processes so Trustees can more easily engage. I hope to foster an atmosphere within our organization that promotes a free exchange of ideas that will lead to solid solutions for the issues and challenges we face. I also plan to give away all the knowledge I acquire as I flesh out the Executive Director position so we are collectively more knowledgeable and better equipped to fulfill the Conservancy's mission. I look forward to working shoulder to shoulder with our new Trustees and utilizing their talents as well. We are all going to learn and serve our community together.



Life Members 2022-2023

Barbara Barry
 Marion R. Brill 1
 James and Maureen Buchwald **
 Barry Buxton +
 Alan and Traci Cassell **
 John and Abbe Cheek
 Kimberly Davidson and Richard Barker
 William de Camp, Jr.
 C.C. Porter and Patricia Donohoue
 John and Gayle Dowalter
 Daniel W. Galbraith *****2
 Douglas and Susan Givens
 Howard and Sarah Gratz
 Carolin Hahnemann
 Robert and Cornelia Hallinan
 Mrs. J. Warren Healea 3
 Ray and Pat Heithaus
 Bert and Susan Hendley
 John and Donna Horn +
 Janet L. Kohr 4
 Emerson and Edie Laird
 Brad and Melinda Lanker *
 Bruce and Kathy Lanker ***
 William Lawhon, Jr.
 Mark and Pam Leonard
 Norma Magers *
 Robert L. McFarland 5
 Robert and Elisabeth Meier
 Ed and Fran Meyers
 Charles and Julie Michelson
 Brian Miller and Beverly Morse

Brian and Cindy Montgomery +
 Jeffery L. Montgomery *
 Richard and Nancy Montgomery ****+++
 Doug and Beth Morgan
 Greg and Vicki Mountz
 Muskingum Valley Park District
 L. Keith Plocki and Mary McManus
 Joe and Sally Nelson
 Marc and Jen Odenweller
 Steve Oster
 Philander Chase Conservancy *
 Ken and Jan Reynolds
 Harold A. Rine *
 Heather Schooler and Steven Barr
 Florence Short
 W. Jerry Simpson *
 John and Rebecca Simpson
 Ann Stallard
 Richard and Joan Stallard
 Dennis and Tamara Swingle
 John and Debbie Urton
 Ian and Charlotte Watson
 Dianna and Richard D. Wetzel, Jr.
 Peter White
 Anna and Stanley Williams+
 S. Bruce Williams+
 Jay M. Wilson *
 John and Cyndi Woollam
 Karen B. Wright
 Gordon and Fran Yance

- * One Conservation Easement (CE) donated in full or in part
 + One Agricultural Easement donated in part (co-holder Ohio Department of Agriculture)
 1 CE donated in memory of Patty Markee Brill
 2 CE donated in memory of Mary Lucile Cooper Galbraith
 3 Two CEs donated in memory of J. Warren Healea
 4 CE donated in memory of Robert Duncan McKenzie
 5 CE donated in memory of Georgia Z. and Robert O. McFarland

Corporate Members 2022-2023

Ariel Foundation and New Philanthropy Fund at the Knox County Foundation

Corporate Membership: Corporate membership, a new membership category in 2022, is available to businesses or organizations that make a one-time donation of \$2,000.00, or multiple donations over four consecutive years that total \$2,000.00. Corporate Membership will continue for two years after the last donation and is granted only with the assent of the business or organization.