

In a congratulatory letter to Lamb-shire Polypays, Governor Ted Strickland commented: "...the tradition of stewardship...is based on the recognition that a healthy environment is vital to the state's economy, communities, citizens and agriculture industry...." Representative Jim Carmichael also commented, "... Ohio has gained a reputation as a state whose residents are responsive to the needs of their communities."

But is this accurate? Do people who live in this area understand community needs in the same way? Are we responsive to the needs of our community? Do we look at ripping up farmland to build a mall as "good economic development"? Do we look the other way when a developer diverts agricultural land to housing? Do we argue "we have to have someplace to shop and someplace to live" when there are so many buildings and urban lots standing unused?

Or, to argue economics, how about asking why food prices are rising. We recognize that the world supply of oil is shrinking causing gas prices to skyrocket, but do we recognize the same situation exists with farmland? Land to grow food is equally limited - and shrinking. Do we see the direct connection between loss of farmland locally ,as well as worldwide, and the shrinking supply of food? Experts tell us that sticker shock at the grocery store has just begun.

Hopefully most people in the Wayne County area are aware that farmland and farming are our links to physical, mental and economic health. Our Governor and our State Representative are aware, but it is still up to all of us to take action on the local scene. Should we be thinking more about our grandchildren's needs and less about our wants? Yes. Stand up today when farmland is threatened or pay the consequences tomorrow.

Protecting Farmland

Terry Kline, DVM

Recently there has been a great deal of rhetoric exchanged concern-

ing a proposed commercial development on Wooster's north end. In addition to other pros and cons of this have debated elsewhere, I would like to speak to a very basic result of this type of development. That is the loss of prime farmland. In this day and age where the fear of Global Warming is causing everyone to recycle and conserve, how can we be so cavalier as to ignore the loss of our most valuable, non-renewable resource - land?

Wayne County's culture, economy and very identity are inextricably intertwined with its land. When the German and Swiss immigrants came to Wayne County in the 1800's looking for a place to worship the way they wanted to, they brought their knowledge of cheese-making with them. The dairies that sprang up to support the new cheese houses lead to Wayne County becoming the number one dairy county in Ohio. The need for quality hay to feed our dairy cattle made us the number one hay producing county in the state. Our rolling hills and numerous small farms lend themselves to sheep-raising. We hold fifth place in the state in that category. We are also tenth in swine production. We rank in the top ten counties in Ohio in enough agricultural categories to make us the third largest agricultural county in the state.

More than 60% of Wayne County's population lives in rural areas. The promise of convenient shopping is an enticing prospect for people who need to travel to Akron or Canton to visit many major retailers. I am not anti-development. I simply question the need to locate new developments in undisturbed farmland when there is so much empty retail space currently available in the county, including stores in the already-developed north end. The argument could be made that it is cheaper to build new retail space than to renovate existing structures. In answer I would point to the many undeveloped areas available within the Wooster city limits that are zoned commercial and because of their location are unsuitable for farming.

I am sure that many people will

look at the 259,000 acres of farm land in the county and wonder why losing a few acres to development should bother me. I am sure that our neighbors in the counties to the north and east of us thought the same thing years ago when they once appeared in the top ten counties in the state for various agriculture categories.

We are losing an average of 10 dairy farms every two years in Wayne County. Just a handful of years ago we were the third largest sheep producing county in the state; now we are the fifth. This new encroachment into our farmland may be more of a flesh wound than a mortal blow, but enough small cuts and we can end up with an irrecoverable situation.

Agriculture is under assault in this part of the state and the front line is on our border. We need someone like Paul Revere to spread the word that we are being attacked. We need to get the word out about farmland preservation. We need to inform people about Agricultural Easements, Agricultural Security Areas and Community-supported Agriculture.

We need to realize that our farmland is a valuable community asset before it is too late. There are two lanterns in the church tower, but this time they are not coming by land. They are coming for our land.

Women's Issues: Where Does Candidate John McCain Stand?

Editor's Note: the *Wayne County Progressive* perennially hopes to remain neutral with regard to the candidates for president, although it's getting harder and harder, as the following example demonstrates.

from *The Nation* July 7, 2008

Feminists for McCain? Not So Much

Katha Pollitt

Are there feminist Hillary supporters who hate Obama so much they'll vote for McCain just to show the Democratic Party how ticked off they are? Yes...all five of them. I'm sure there are female Hillary Clinton voters who will go for John McCain in the general election, but I don't think too many of them will be femi-