

## 2012 Portage County Environmental Conservation Awards

### **Reverend William Graham—Stewardship**

#### ***Director and Pastor, Asbury Camp and Retreat Center***

Reverend William Graham is the Director of the Asbury Camp and Retreat Center, a year-round facility owned and operated by the East Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church. Camp Asbury is located near Hiram and provides program assistance to retreat and outdoor education groups. Reverend Graham strives to make Camp Asbury a place where children, youth and adults are invited to deepen their relationship with each other and with God. The natural setting and programming at Camp Asbury promote the call for humans to be responsible stewards of creation, and they offer a variety of educational programs on ecosystem monitoring and management, including the removal of invasive species, sustainable forestry, and wetlands protection on the Camp's 450 acres. Reverend Graham serves as a thoughtful and dedicated steward, inspiring his flock to be loving caretakers of this beautiful world.

### **Ron Etling—Environmental Education**

#### ***Retired Science Teacher, Naturalist***

Ron Etling has educated and inspired several thousand students over his career, having served as a science teacher at Stow High School and a community volunteer for more than 30 years. His enthusiasm and energy have awakened generations of students to the diversity and value of the natural world by providing classroom and in-field instruction and learning. He currently mentors the next generation of scientists and environmental educators at Hiram College by providing practical support based on a lifetime of experience. Mr. Etling's love of his work is contagious, and he has shown how learning about environmental science can be fun, exciting, and rewarding. He also passionately shares the ethics of responsibility and stewardship for our natural resources, influencing countless future leaders of environmental conservation.

### **Dr. Gordon F. Vars—Environmental Activism (posthumous)**

#### ***Founder of Friends of Kent Bog***

Dr. Gordon F. Vars was a retired Kent State University professor who focused passionately on the preservation of the Kent Bog. The Kent Bog is well known for supporting one of the largest, southernmost stands of tamarack in the United States, as well as many other unique bog species. Even though the State of Ohio purchased the land in 1985 and protected it as a high quality natural area, the threat of development and secondary pressure loomed. In 2005 Dr. Vars formed an advocacy group called "Friends of Kent Bog". The Friends group fought for protective restrictions on the surrounding land to reduce secondary impacts on the bog ecosystem. More than 600 supporters belong to "Friends of Kent Bog" and all are committed to the mission that Dr. Vars founded and that is simply to care about and advocate for this very important natural resource.

### **Community Action Council of Portage County, Inc.—Green Building Energy Efficiency & Housing Services Program**

The Energy Efficiency and Housing Services Program housed at the Community Action Council of Portage County, Inc. has recently overseen a massive weatherization grant through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Grant monies in excess of \$3M were used to install new furnaces, hot water tanks, refrigerators, and freezers, and to perform important weatherization projects in hundreds of homes in Portage County. These energy efficiency

measures helped cut energy costs by 30-50%, saving homeowners money while significantly reducing pollution. Gloria Haven is the director of the Energy Efficiency & Housing Services Program at the CAC and she and her staff are committed to energy conservation programs and bringing grant monies to assist the residents of Portage County

### **Robinson Memorial Hospital—Green Building**

#### ***Green Strategies Committee and Initiatives***

The Robinson Memorial Hospital "Green Team" has been working diligently since 2009 on several strategic initiatives to become a more environmentally responsible facility. Major accomplishments include: installation of high efficiency HVAC units and generators; replacement of all exterior windows in the main building; installation of occupancy sensors on lighting fixtures and the use of low wattage bulbs; water conservation improvements including flow restrictors; use of natural cleaning chemicals; and increased paper, cardboard, plastic, aluminum, and glass recycling in partnership with the Portage County Solid Waste District. The recycling of batteries and laboratory chemicals is also in practice. Robinson Memorial Hospital is taking active steps and quantitative measures to minimize their carbon footprint, reduce their reliance on landfills, and function as a zero waste facility. Their employees, hospital patrons, and the community are better served for their efforts.

### **Sand Hill Stable—Green Business**

#### ***Green Energy and Sustainable Land Management***

Betsy and Virginia Shaw had a dream and that was to create a viable and environmentally sustainable business around a hobby they are passionate about. Sand Hill Stable is a boarding stable located in Shalersville and it's been a "green business" from the start. From the land use practices to the architecture of the buildings, Sand Hill Stable is operated in a manner that has a low impact on the environment. Solar panels not only function to heat and cool the stable but also power electric fencing and paddock troughs. Excess energy is sent back to the grid. Pastures contain a wide variety of native warm season prairie grasses, whose deep root systems help secure the soil. Rain barrels supply water to the community garden. A variety of animals including goats and chickens share the grazing duties with the horses to help naturally replenish nutrients in the soil. The Shaws generously share their passion and experiences with the public through venues such as the Green Energy Ohio annual tour.

### **Dr. Tom S. Cooperrider—Lifetime Achievement**

#### ***Professor Emeritus, Author***

Dr. Cooperrider has dedicated his career to furthering the science of botany. A native Ohioan, Dr. Cooperrider is a published expert on Ohio flora, a professor emeritus of biological sciences at Kent State University, and one of the first to discover the bog that now bears his name—the Tom S. Cooperrider Kent Bog State Nature Preserve. With help from his long time friend Dr. Gordon Vars, Dr. Cooperrider worked tirelessly to study, record, and protect the precious tamarack ecosystem within the Kent Bog. His tenure at Kent State lasted for several decades and thousands of students were influenced by his teaching and research. Dr. Cooperrider's research and cataloging of Ohio's native flora, manifested in numerous books and papers, including *Endangered and Threatened Plants of Ohio* and *Seventh Catalog of the Vascular Plants of Ohio* has advanced the understanding and ultimately the protection of many precious ecosystems. His most recent work—*Botanical Essays from Kent*—is a collection of writings and photographs that capture the spirit and excitement of botanical fieldwork from the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. Dr. Cooperrider's legacy will long outlive the man. He will be remembered well, both in academic circles and by the many visitors who enjoy the Kent Cooperrider Bog each year.