**2014 Portage County**

**Environmental Conservation Awards**

***Honor Roll for Land Conservation***

**Fred and Carol Maier, Randolph**

Fred and Carol Maier own farmland in Randolph Township and in 2013 placed a conservation easement on 22 acres of their property. The easement was donated to Western Reserve Land Conservancy who will make sure that it is preserved and protected in perpetuity, no matter who owns it in the future. The Maier’s enjoy raising sheep for wool and have spent countless hours restoring their civil war era farmhouse also located on the property. Fred is a former Farmland Preservation Board Member for Portage County, where he advocated passionately for the conservation and protection of farmland and the character it provides to all residents of the county. The Maiers hope that their donation might inspire others to consider farmland preservation through conservation easements too.

***Stewardship***

**Rick Strebler**Rick Strebler is a tireless volunteer and community leader who has served as the president of the Garden Club of Kent for more than a decade. There he has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for gardening, greening, and beautification projects in Kent and Portage County. The purpose of the Garden Club is to promote an interest in and knowledge of horticulture

as it applies to the growing of lawns, vegetables, flowers, shrubs, and trees. In addition to this educational function, the Club engages in programs and activities that will inform the public, benefit students, encourage better gardening practices, promote community beautification, and promote social fellowship among the members of the organization.

His leadership of the Kent Garden Club has allowed that organization to offer scholarships to area youth, and develop the Ode to Joy Garden Center, greenhouse and popular public community garden program. Rick also volunteers as a Trustee on the Portage Park District Foundation Board and donates the services of his business, Ravenna Auto Body, to keep the park truck on the road.

***Environmental Education***

**Crestwood Outdoor Education Committee**

The Crestwood Outdoor Education Committee, represented here tonight by educators Jo Cobb, Cheryl Brugmann and Rosemary Krupar, is being recognized for their many years of innovative environmental education programs for elementary and intermediate students in the Crestwood School District. Students in the program are able to have hands on educational experiences at the school campus to learn about science and the world around them. They bring in guest speakers from area agencies to expose students to the growing field of environmental careers. Finally, their good work earned them a very special award as a “green school”. To receive this award, the Crestwood Outdoor Education Committee guided the school to make improvements to their infrastructure, including bioswales for innovative stormwater management.

***Environmental Activism*  
Friends of the Crooked River**

Friends of the Crooked River are represented tonight by Elaine and Harold Marsh. Founded in 1990, their focus has been on programming and education that improves the water quality and health of the Cuyahoga River and its watershed. Staff have organized and participated in countless river cleanups and advocacy events for water quality legislation. They have provided a voice for the Cuyahoga River in regional planning meetings and advocated for ordinances and setbacks to protect the river and its floodplain. Friends of the Crooked River have been instrumental in the movement to remove dams from the Cuyahoga River allowing the water to flow freely and improve water quality. Their flagship program is River Day, an event that stretches across several Northeast Ohio counties and focuses on events aimed at education, advocacy, and action in the Cuyahoga River watershed. They are also helping to lead the efforts to develop a Cuyahoga River Water Trail to showcase this iconic asset. Our drinking water is cleaner, our children are smarter and our animals healthier as a result of the work of Friends of the Crooked River.

***Green Business*  
Lucky Penny Creamery**

Lucky Penny Creamery is dedicated to food, family, simple living, and sustainable business practices. Representing Lucky Penny this evening is owner, founder, and milk maid Abbe Turner and her husband Anderson. Located on a century farmstead in Hiram, their focal product is homemade artisanal cheese produced from goat milk and goat milk cajeta—goat milk caramel sauce, yum! Hopefully many of you enjoyed their cheese tonight as it was a featured on our local appetizer table. They make cheese in small batches and manage the entire process from pasture to plate. Their passion transcends the *process* of cheese making, and embraces things like getting children outdoors and involved in the process of understanding where our food comes from. They support the concept that being a part of a local business community also means being the first to give back to that same community. They recycle their farming waste products and are good stewards of the land. Tours of Lucky Penny Creamery are available upon request and are highly recommended. Congratulations to the hard working team at Lucky Penny Creamery.