

Fairfield Union FFA at "50" (A reflection of our past)

At the end of this school year the Fairfield Union FFA will have completed 50 years of serving the young men, young women and the agricultural community in our school district. The Fairfield Union FFA was a result of combining three former FFA chapters (Bremen, Rushville, and Pleasantville) into one new chapter. Boys who were accustomed to competing against each other were now competing together as a team. And oh yes it was just boys only. Girls were not allowed into FFA at the national level until 1969. The new chapter charter was signed on September 25, 1962 by then State FFA President Robert Kraner Jr. from the Pickerington FFA Chapter. The Pickerington chapter has been gone since the late 1970's.

Fairfield Union FFA started out in the fall of 1962 with 55 boys and two Ag. teachers. R.M. Foltz who was the long time Ag. teacher at Bremen was to lead the transition from the three small schools to the one "big" chapter. The second teacher was Phil Pope who was a first-year teacher out of Ohio State. He was from the Gallipolis area in southern Ohio. All was going smoothly in the summer of 1962 until R.M. had a heart attack. R.M. decided to retire from teaching and that left Phil and a sub teacher Mr. Drake to get our program started that first fall. Remember 50 years ago this community was still split on the idea of consolidating the three former schools. But as the years have passed that original dislike of the consolidation has faded away and we are now one united school, community and chapter. Today in 2012 we are a strong chapter of 240 students with 121 boys and 119 girls.

The teachers of Agriculture at Fairfield Union

R.M. Foltz taught at Bremen from 1934-1962 (28 years) and was to lead us into the new school in the fall of 1962 before a heart attack caused him to retire. R.M. also taught three years at West Lafayette, Ohio before coming to Bremen.

Phil Pope was actually the first teacher of Agriculture at Fairfield Union. He taught here for one year and after that first year moved back to his current home in southern Ohio, where he currently resides with his wife, Mary.

Daryl Clark started teaching at Fairfield Union shortly after he graduated from Ohio State in December 1962. Daryl replaced the substitute teacher Mr. Drake. Together with Phil Pope they formed a strong young teaching team. Daryl resigned from Fairfield Union in the spring of 1969. He now lives in Muskingum County with his wife, Joyce.

James Ketcham replaced Phil Pope in the summer of 1963. Jim had been teaching for three years at Claridon High School and one year in the River Valley School District. Jim taught at Fairfield Union from 1963 until 1988 (25 years) when he retired from teaching high school students. He continued to conduct an adult farmer record keeping program (FBPA) until 2005 when he retired totally. Jim and his wife Madonna now reside in Lancaster.

Loren Young replaced his former teacher Daryl Clark in the summer of 1969 after completing four years at Ohio State. Loren had attended three years at Fairfield Union and was an active member in the FFA. He also was a student of R.M. Foltz his freshman year at Bremen. Loren Young taught at Fairfield Union for 44 years; he retired in August of 2013. He and his wife Linda live on a farm outside of Bremen.

Ray Stemen was hired as a third teacher of Agriculture in the summer of 1970. Ray had taught high school Agriculture for 11 years at four previous schools before coming to F.U. Agriculture Education in Ohio was going through some major growth in the 70's and F.U. was a part of it. Our program went from about 60 students in the late 60's to about 120 in the late 70's. Jim, Loren and Ray worked together until 1986 when Ray retired. (Ray taught 16 years at F.U.) Ray and his wife Judy still live in the Bremen area.

Joe Koehler replaced Ray Stemen in the summer of 1987. Joe had been a Moorman's feed salesman and did some sub. teaching in the Ag. Department when needed before that. Joe and Loren worked together for 15 years until Joe was stricken with cancer and died in the summer of 2001. Joe was a great teacher of mechanics and he was able to teach all three of his children before his passing. Joe's wife Rose still lives on the farm they purchased together which is just east of our high school.

Keller Moore replaced Joe Koehler in the summer of 2001. Keller graduated from New Lexington High School and Ohio State. He did his student teaching at F.U. under the supervision of Joe Koehler. After teaching Special Education one year at New Lexington he joined up with Loren Young to form a teaching team at Fairfield Union. Loren and Keller taught together for 13 years. Keller taught Agriculture at Fairfield Union until he resigned in 2018. Keller lives on a farm south of New Lexington with his wife Sierra and two daughters.

Jena Kemmerer is a 2007 Fairfield Union graduate who was a FFA member and State Degree recipient. She graduated from Ohio State in 2011 with a B.S. degree and Ashland University in 2017 with a M.S. Degree. Jena replaced Loren Young in August 2013. Jena taught for two years at Liberty Union High School before moving to Fairfield Union. Jena, her husband Jake, and daughters Jorie and Josie reside on a farm south of Fairfield Union High School.

Judd Baker graduated from New Lexington High School in 1997. He graduated from Ohio State in 2001 with a B.S. Degree and in 2003 from Marygrove College with a M.S. Degree. Judd started teaching at Miller High School in 2001 before moving to Fairfield Union to teach Industrial Arts in 2005. In 2015 Judd's outstanding Industrial Arts Program was converted into an Agriculture Science and Conservation Program. Judd currently resides near New Lexington with his wife Rebecca and daughter Grace and son Lane.

Christine Balint graduated from Firelands High School near Cleveland in 2014. She earned a B.S. degree from OSU in 2018 and a M.S. Degree from OU in 2021. Christine resides in Lancaster. Along with Jena and Judd they make up a strong teaching team and are the leaders of a very successful Agriculture Education Program at Fairfield Union.

Written by Loren Young – April 2012; Updated June 2023