

Hardin County Extension News Release

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For Immediate Release – November 18, 2021

Ag Hall of Fame to Induct New Members

Hardin County – The Hardin County Agriculture Hall of Fame has announced the 2020-21 honorees to be inducted at the eighteenth annual Agriculture Hall of Fame recognition banquet. The 2020-21 inductees include: Ronald E. Cronley, John Knedler, Ira Carl Marshall, Jerry McBride, and Dave Russell. The banquet will be held on Tuesday, December 7th, beginning at 6:30 pm at St. John's Evangelical Church on East Carrol Street in Kenton. The public is invited to honor these inductees and their families, and to recognize their many accomplishments. The purpose of the county Agriculture Hall of Fame is to recognize outstanding agricultural contributions by Hardin County people and to honor those who have brought distinction to themselves and the agricultural industry.

Joe Cornely will be the guest speaker. Joe is a 2017 inductee of the Hardin County Agriculture Hall of Fame and a nationally recognized farm broadcaster. Most recently, he worked as the Senior Director of Corporate Communications for the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation. Previously, he worked at both WRFD and WLW as farm director after getting his start working part-time for WKTN in Kenton while still in high school and later while attending Bowling Green State University, as well as after he graduated as both the news and sports director. His exposure to agriculture was mostly from his grandparents and some part-time jobs with local farmers.

Ronald E. Cronley graduated from Ridgemont High School and later The Ohio State University with a B.S. Degree in Agriculture. He was a county manager for Production Credit Association. He operated a general livestock and grain farm from 1976-2019. During that time, he also worked in various agricultural related fields. In 1994, he started Cronley Livestock Nutrition to provide up to date information and products to producers which later developed into a full-time business. He was employed by White Farm Equipment as a regional parts sales manager and was later promoted to territory manager for northwest Ohio. He was a representative for Agri-King Livestock Nutrition and twice honored as a president's club member. He has also worked as a part-time enumerator since 1986 for the USDA Ag Statistics Service where he received several awards including the Enumerator of the

Year award in 2020. He has held several roles with the Ohio Shorthorn Cattle Breeders Association including president and received a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2020.

Cronley has served on the Farm Service Agency County Committee, a member of the Hardin County Cattle Producers, Farm Bureau, and as a 4-H advisor and Extension advisory committee member. He has worked closely with NRCS on various conservation practices and started no-till cropping in 1982. He received the Conservation Partner of the Year award in 2007. He also has been a Hale Township Trustee and zoning chairman, and has also served in officer roles for the Hardin County Township Association and was twice appointed to the Ohio Township Association. He has been a representative of the Southeast Hardin Northwest Union Joint Fire District. He is a member of the Mt. Victory Methodist Church, taught business and civics classes at Ridgemont High School, as well as served as president of the Ridgemont School Board and the Mt. Victory Lions Club. He also served as president of his high school class, FFA chapter, and 4-H club.

John Knedler graduated from Fairbanks High School in 1959. He has served the Hardin County agriculture community since moving here in 1975 with his seed business. He has served the seed industry teaching and training staff throughout the Midwest. He has shared his knowledge of growing corn and soybeans to many farmers and has been dedicated to teaching and promoting the next generation of agriculturalists through county FFA programs. He was a passionate servant of the Hardin County Farm Bureau. He has won numerous seed sales awards throughout his career, being recognized on both the regional and national level for Midwest Seeds, ICI Seeds, Channel Seeds, and NuTech Seeds. These awards have included Sales Achievement Awards, Award of Excellence, Million Dollar Club, Top Dog Awards, Professional Achievement Award, Lifetime Achievement Award, and Channel Gladiator Club. His claim to fame is being "The Seed Man."

Knedler has served on several boards including Robinson Hybrids Board of Directors, Hardin Memorial Hospital, Hardin County Council on Aging, Hardin County Farm Bureau Board, Hardin County Board of Education, Forest Christian Pre-School Board, and Riverdale School Board where he served as president. He was also president of Riverdale Lions Club and was a member of the Forest Community Improvement Corporation and the Forest United Methodist Church, where he served as trustee. He was recognized by the Riverdale FFA with both the Honorary Degree and an Appreciation award. Younger people also benefitted from his service as a Cub Scout Leader, along with being a coach of the Forest Little League.

Ira Carl Marshall is being inducted to the Hardin County Agriculture Hall of Fame as a "Pioneer in Agriculture." Born in 1888, Ira's farm was located east of the intersection of County Road 75 on State Route 81. He served Hardin County agriculture for 60 years as a farmer before he passed away in 1962. He also was an owner of Ada-Kenton Farm Service, Inc. in Ada and Kenton. This business sold and serviced International Harvester Corporation equipment and sold supplies to local farmers. Ira Marshall was recognized by OSU College of Agriculture Dean Vivian when he shattered the world's corn growing record while farming near Ada. In 1926, he was awarded this honor by Department of Agriculture with a yield of 168.92 bushels per acre. He received this World Champion Corn Grower trophy a second time in 1929 with a corn yield of 186.66 bushels per acre.

Marshall also gained recognition by placing second in wheat growing, yielding 47.84 bushels per acre on 10 acres. All of Ira's crops were grown naturally, not with the fertilizers and chemicals used today. In addition, he received the County Champion corn medal from the Corn Club of Ohio in 1923. Overall, he received five medals from the 100-Bushel Corn Club of Ohio along with a World Champion Medal from the Corn Club of Ohio. He was a member of the 40-Bushel Wheat Club of Ohio, an honorary society fostered by the agricultural college Extension Service of The Ohio State University. Locally, in addition to being an award-winning farmer and businessman, he was a member of the Kenton Kiwanis Club.

Jerry McBride graduated from Hardin Northern High School and later The Ohio State University with a B.S. Degree, majoring in Agricultural Mechanization and Systems. He is also a graduate of the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Tom Spellmire Leadership Academy. He currently farms 1500 acres near Dola. When he was in high school, he won the state FFA Agricultural Mechanics Award and was second in the National FFA Agricultural Mechanics Award in 1979. Jerry was elected to the Hardin County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors in 1992 and served for 27 years as chairman and was Area 1 Treasurer/Secretary in addition to being an Area Director. He was a member of the board when the SWCD received the Field Office Award in 2005 and 2008 from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and in 1994 when the county received the Goodyear Conservation Award. He received the 2005 Ohio Outstanding No-Till Farmer Award. In 2021, Jerry was named the Hardin County Cooperator of the Year.

McBride was asked by the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation officers in 2020 to sit on the Ohio Soil and Water Commission, where he currently serves. He has participated in Farmers Independent Research of Seed Technologies for 16 years and has cooperated with OSU Extension on-farm research. He has developed conservation practices on his own land, and assists with various activities such as conservation tours, Forestry Field Day, Annual Meeting Customer Appreciation Day, Twilight Tours, and more. He was named Outstanding Supervisor of Soil and Water Districts in Ohio. His community leadership is evidenced by service as a 4-H advisor for 20 years, member of Ohio Farm Bureau, member of Ag Credit nominating committee, and an active member of the Crossroads Church of God. He has volunteered for Habitat for Humanity and has assisted the Hardin Northern FFA with digging land judging pits and coached various Career Development Events. He has received both chapter and state Honorary FFA Degrees and a Distinguished Service Award from the National FFA Organization.

Dave Russell graduated from Cory-Rawson High School in 1971 and is a Hardin County resident. He has been a farm broadcaster for 50 years, serving the Bellefontaine, Columbus, and Fort Wayne markets as well as Ohio in a statewide capacity. Dave has served agriculture far and wide and is extremely passionate about Hardin County agriculture. From serving the state in the early days of modern farm broadcasting at WRFD AM 800, to serving as Farm Director at WRFD - Columbus and WOWO - Fort Wayne. He was Director of Information and Public Relations at Indiana Farm Bureau. He then returned to radio as a reporter at the Tribune Radio Network and Channel Earth – Indianapolis. He has also worked for Baxter Communications, Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Brownfield Ag News, and Ohio Ag Net.

Russell has been invited to emcee countless state and national agricultural events, webinars produced by national farm media groups, and statewide livestock shows. He has received the Partner in Progress award from Indiana Lieutenant Governor Becky Spillman. Dave has been selected for several international agricultural trips with state and federal ag leaders. He has also served the National Association of Farm Broadcasting in many capacities. Industry recognitions he has received include Best Farm Program from the Associated Press (twice), and Excellence in Agricultural Communication from the National Farmers Union. Dave is a member of St. John's Evangelical Church in Dola where he has served on the church council and has been involved with other church events. Dave Russell has spent a half century in the farm broadcasting profession, providing agricultural advocacy to Ohio and Indiana agriculture.

Tickets for the Hardin County Agriculture Hall of Fame Banquet must be purchased in advance through November 29. Tickets are \$12 and can be reserved by calling the Hardin County Extension office (419-674-2297) or purchased from the committee members: Genny Haun, Bob McBride, Ruth Oates, Kerry Oberlitner, Gary Harpster, Steve Poling, Amanda Murphy, Bob Wood, and Mark Badertscher.