



Dan Melograna/The Daily Standard

Schoolhouse Farms co-owner Vaughn Davis stands in a sunflower field Monday morning near Rockford. The 2021 Schoolhouse Farms' In Bloom Festival runs Thursday through Sunday.

A SEA OF SMILEY FACES

Sunflowers star as In Bloom Festival starts Thursday

By LESLIE GARTRELL
lgartrell@dailystandard.com

ROCKFORD — The outskirts of Rockford are awash with yellow, which means Schoolhouse Farm's signature crop has blossomed. Located at 5468 Ross Road, the farm specializes in sunflowers, which will be on full display Thursday through Sunday during the farm's annual In Bloom Festival.

New this year is the addition of lavender, a labor-intensive perennial crop that farmer and co-owner Vaughn Davis said will be a wonderful addition to the operation.

Davis started the farm with friend and co-owner Beth Cole in 2016. The two started their venture because of their shared love of bird watching and Davis' proclivity for agriculture.

Schoolhouse Farms grows four different types of sunflowers, a variety of heirloom corn and will have their first crop of lavender in about a year, Davis said.

The farm gets its namesake from the one-room Frysinger School located on the premises. Built in 1862, the school functioned during



Ryan Snyder/The Daily Standard

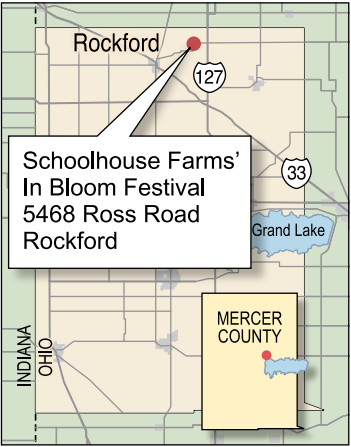
There is a 23-acre walkable hydrological map of Ohio on Vaughn Davis' sunflower farm, the site of the Schoolhouse Farms In Bloom Festival near Rockford.

the Civil War and closed in 1939 as the U.S. approached World War II, Davis said. Davis' great-grandmother Cecil Rickard attended the school in the early 20th century, he said.

Davis' father, Lowell, acquired the Ross Road property and the Frysinger School in 1975, and in 2010 a restoration of the school house was undertaken. The school is now used as a farm office. Davis hopes to eventually turn the schoolhouse into an event hall and

an educational center where customers can learn more about sunflowers and the items produced by Schoolhouse Farms.

The farm started with eight acres of sunflowers their first year, Davis said. Davis and Cole have seen considerable growth on the farm in the past five years, with around 160 acres of sunflowers and 200 acres of corn and soybeans apiece. The majority of their sunflowers are used for birdseed, Davis said. Eighty



The Daily Standard

If you go
What: Schoolhouse Farms' In Bloom Festival
When: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Thursday through Sunday
Features: You-pick sunflowers, food and drinks, local vendors, wagon rides, 23-acre walkable hydrological map of Ohio. Restrooms available.

acres are dedicated to birdseed alone.

The business has a small processing facility inside a repurposed mill on the Salmon Falls River in Maine where they press their own sunflower oil. They also recently acquired 58 acres of farmland in Oregon to grow sunflowers, Davis said.

At the Ohio farm, 57 acres of sunflowers are grown for

See FESTIVAL, page 7

Woman killed in 1-vehicle accident

From staff reports

PUTNAM COUNTY — A Van Wert woman was killed in a single-vehicle crash shortly before 1 p.m. Monday.

Bonnie Luke, 69, Mendon, was driving a car eastbound on State Route 694 near Cloverdale when her car traveled off the right side of the roadway and then off the left side of the roadway before it overturned and struck a utility pole, according to a news release from the Lima post of the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

Luke reportedly was transported to St. Rita's Hospital in Lima by Continental Emergency Medical Service for non-life threatening injuries. Michael Luke, 69, Mendon, a passenger in the vehicle, also suffered non-life threatening injuries and was transported to St. Rita's Hospital by Putnam County Emergency Medical Service.

Dawn Luke, 48, Van Wert, a rear seat passenger in the vehicle, reportedly was ejected from the car and died at the scene. She was transported from the scene to Love-Heit-

See KILLED, page 7

Girl, 10, injured in minibike accident

From staff reports

ST. HENRY — A 10-year-old girl was transported to the Mercer County Community Hospital emergency room in Coldwater and later transported by a Lutheran Air helicopter after reportedly crashing a mini bike into a garage door on Sunday.

According to a report from the Mercer County Sheriff's Office, members of the St. Henry emergency medical service and fire department, and sheriff's deputies were called to the scene of 582 E. Main St., St. Henry, at 12:58 p.m. Sunday.

A child reportedly had been riding a 105 cc minibike in the front yard of the residence, lost control and the minibike struck the overhead door of the attached garage. The child reportedly had been wearing a bike helmet at the time of the crash.

See GIRL, page 7

Rescued pooches thrill fair crowd

Former underdogs fly like superdogs

By WILLIAM KINCAID
wkincaid@dailystandard.com

WAPAKONETA — Trainers John Casey and Nikki Penta of Missouri had already set up part of their Ready Go Dog Show last year at the Auglaize County Fair when fair organizers were forced to cancel many attractions due to state COVID-19 orders.

They vowed to come back, marking the event down on their 2021 calendar.

"This is full circle for us from the pandemic, to come back here to Auglaize to finish setting up this show and to

do shows and the crowds have been amazing," Casey said after a performance Monday night.

Casey, Penta and their high-performance pooches thrilled large crowds on Sunday and Monday with action-packed shows, executing incredible leaps, daring dives off a 28-foot ramp into a 14,000-gallon pool and amazing Frisbee catches. The daily shows last roughly 30 minutes.

The "rescued rock stars" are excited to show off in front of people again after many of last year's shows were axed due to the pandemic, Casey said. Casey and Penta used much of the downtime revamping the show and are proud of the end product.

"We never stopped. We kept training, and we kept playing with the dogs and then to get back out on the road and perform in front of crowds, I see a difference in them," Casey said. "They feed off the energy that we get from the crowd ... and the crowds here at Auglaize have been so amazing."

The trainers together travel with 13 dogs, some of whom have appeared on ESPN, "Good Morning America," and "The Today Show," and performed at NFL, NBA and college basketball half-time shows. Fury, a six-year-old border collie, is the 2018 Frisbee dog world champion.

A few have retired from show business while others

See SUPERDOGS, page 7



William Kincaid/The Daily Standard

Trainer Nikki Penta throws a Frisbee to one of the stars of Ready Go Dog Show on Monday at the Auglaize County Fair.

Festival

(From front page)

oil and birdseed, while the remaining acreage is intended for customers to pick themselves and floral market sunflowers. Last year, Cole said they sold about 350,000 pounds of sunflowers.

Davis plants about 26,000 sunflower seeds in each acre in the hopes of yielding about 24,000 sunflowers. Some may be eaten by deer or goldfinches, he said, which are the most common pests he gets. There aren't many ways to prevent animals from snacking on the seeds, Davis said, so he plants in high numbers.

Sunflowers get planted in the spring, typically between mid-April and mid-June, Davis said. Like many producers, Davis rotates his crops. His ideal rotation is a sunflower-soybean-corn rotation, he said.

Sunflower seeds are very light, so adjusting a planter accordingly is critical to prevent skips or double plantings, Davis said. He relies a lot on the work of the University of Nebraska for planting sunflowers, Davis said.

Sunflowers don't require a lot of fertilizer. Depending on the crop rotation, the fields may not even need to be fertilized, he said.

"This year I didn't fertilize them at all," he said. "Sunflower roots can go down to about 12 feet, so I rely on the sunflowers to go get the nutrients that went out of the root zone of soybeans and corn from the years before."

Most sunflowers are grown in a region from west Texas to North

Dakota, Davis said, so the plants are typically found in hot, arid climates that require irrigation.

However, Mercer County's rich soil serves the flowers well, and the area also receives adequate rainfall. Davis said his sunflowers tend to do well regardless of whether a summer is wetter or drier than normal.

"I think most people would consider last year (2020) really dry," Davis said. "Last year we grew sunflowers in a new area ... on that (new) field of sunflowers, we set a record for pounds per acre."

Two important aspects of growing sunflowers are good seed to soil contact and spacing the plants far enough apart to keep wind moving between them, he said.

Sunflowers have a difficult time drying down, Davis said, and Ohio's humid summers don't do the flowers any favors. Sunflowers need a moisture content lower than 14% when drying out the seeds, otherwise growers risk mildew forming in storage. Planting the flowers far enough apart for proper air circulation can help keep them dry, he said.

Outside of the original sunflower operation, the pair in recent years have started growing heirloom corn. Heirloom or heritage crops are produced with seeds that are open-pollinated by natural means, such as birds or insects, and retain their original traits from one generation to the next.

Davis aimed to grow heirloom corn that would have been grown in the area at the time



Dan Melograna/The Daily Standard

A Double Quick Sunflower shines in the summer sun at Schoolhouse Farms near Rockford.

the Frysinger School was started in 1862.

Davis said when they first started growing heirloom corn, he had to purchase the heirloom seeds, which were extremely expensive. He said he believes it a worthwhile investment.

After growing enough seed corn in the first year to plant a reasonable amount the second year, Schoolhouse Farms now gets new seeds each year from the previous year's harvest without purchasing new seeds. "Our seed cost every year now is zero," Davis said of their heirloom corn.

The heirloom corn is used for gourmet popcorn, cornmeal and more recently to produce alcohol. Cole said Schoolhouse Farms has found customers in four different distilleries, which use their heirloom corn for

moonshine, whiskey and other corn liquors.

The newest addition to the farmstead is lavender. Davis, Cole and a handful of volunteers painstakingly planted each of their 1,600 lavender starts by hand in April.

Lavender is a labor-intensive perennial herb, which Davis said means the plants that survives over the winter will produce blooms for years and years to come. The fragrant plant needs lots of direct sunlight, well-drained soil and lots of space. Davis' eight rows of lavender are planted several feet apart. It must be hand-weeded for the time being, he said.

The pair envisions growing lavender to press into their own lavender oil and other goods, and offering lavender that customers can pick them-

selves. Davis said he'd eventually like to have 20 acres of lavender to compliment the farm's sizable sunflower fields, but conceded that hand-planting so many acres would be an undertaking. Schoolhouse Farms

will hold its annual Bloom Festival from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Thursday through Sunday.

Visit Schoolhouse Farm's Facebook page or website at www.schoolhouse-farms.com for more information.

Girl

(From front page)

The report stated the child had been transported by emergency medical services to Mer-

cer Health for treatment. Logs from Mercer County Central Dispatch showed Lutheran Air was later called for the child.

No condition for the child was available at press time.

Killed

(From front page)

meyer Funeral Home, according to the release. She reportedly was not wearing a safety belt.

The vehicle sustained severe damage and was towed from the scene.

The crash remains under investigation.

Also responding to the crash were officials with the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, the Kalida fire and police departments, Kalida EMS, American Electric Power and the Putnam County Coroner.

Superdogs

(From front page)

are looking to get in on the action.

"We have a couple new dogs that are in training getting ready to possibly come into the show," Casey said. "We'll give them time and see what they like to do best and then we'll focus on that."

Many of their dogs come direct from either breed-specific rescue operations or animal shelters in the U.S.

"There's a very common theme with all of the dogs from rescue. They all ended up in rescue because they had too much energy for a normal pet home," Casey said. "We focus that excessive energy on something fun and positive like Frisbee or jumping in a pool or jumping over a jump, and then they have an outlet for that excessive energy, making them good pets."

The trainers have a strong relationship with the dogs, Casey told the crowd Monday.

"All of the dogs are just our pets. They live at home with us. They do travel quite a bit on the road with us but they are just that, our pets," Casey said. "These are

not robots that do tricks for treats. They do what they do out here because they love what they do. That's why they do it," Casey said.

The show is living proof that anyone's dog has the potential to be truly amazing with good nutrition, healthy exercise and lots of love, Casey said.

The shows continue up to three times daily at the fair through Saturday.

Partly cloudy with high of 78

Today will be partly cloudy with a high of 78, local weatherman Dennis Howick said. Tonight will be clear with a low of 55. Wednesday will be mostly sunny with a high of 81.

HOWICK'S REPORT

Monday's low51
Monday's high76
Monday at 5 p.m.....74

Extended forecast: Thursday, mostly sunny, 58-81; Friday, partly cloudy, 61-84; Saturday, mostly sunny, 65-87; Sunday and Monday, partly sunny with isolated showers, 70-89 and 74-91, respectively.

The Daily Sudoku

2021-08-03

level:
easy

Monday's Solution	9	1	4	7	2	5	8	3	6
	8	2	6	9	1	3	4	5	7
	3	7	5	8	4	6	9	2	1
	7	3	9	4	6	1	5	8	2
	1	6	2	5	8	9	3	7	4
	4	5	8	2	3	7	6	1	9
	5	4	3	1	9	2	7	6	8
	6	8	1	3	7	4	2	9	5
	2	9	7	6	5	8	1	4	3

	5	4			6			
6				4	3	7	1	
7		3					4	
							5	7
	4			5			2	
2	7							
	8					5		2
	2	7	5	9				6
			3			4	8	

Come to the Van Wert Area 127 Yard Sales!

★ STOP IN & SEE US ★

Olde ★ Barn LLC

ANTIQUES ★ PRIMITIVES ★ FARMHOUSE

11830 US 127 South,
Van Wert, Ohio 45891

Email: oldebarn127@yahoo.com

Special 127 Hrs.: Wed.-Sun. 8-8 • 419-910-9135

Make sure to visit
during the 127 Yard Sale!

Special yard sale pricing in almost
every booth this Thursday-Sunday.

Touches of Time

120 S. Washington St.
Van Wert

419-232-4000

Thurs. & Fri. 9-6; Sat., 9-5;
Sun. 12-4

419-203-0525 200 E. Main, Van Wert

The Corner Treasures

Quality Used Furniture, Vintage Items,
Collectibles, Antiques, Glassware,
Household, Yearbooks, DVD's, Toys,
Handicap Assist Devices,
Small Appliances, Tools & Hardware

LARGE SELECTION OF LAMPS

• WE BUY and SELL •

Read your
local
newspaper
online!

THE DAILY STANDARD

123 E. Market St.,
Celina, Ohio

Call to get yours!!!

Proud to bring you all your local news
and highlights since 1848

419-586-2371

Don't Miss This!

2.4 miles WEST off US 127! On Mercer-Van Wert Co. Line.

Look for the Big Red Barn
& Shop the School House!
(back a lane, just before SR 118)

 **Dandelion**
SCHOOL HOUSE
Farm Decor
Antiques
Gifts - Florals



4554 Mercer-Van Wert Co. Line Rd., Rockford
567-259-7295 • Open: W-Th-F 10-5; Sat. 10-3

COUPON



Jamie Linn's
BOUTIQUE

W-F 11-6; Sat. 10-2
905 S. Shannon St.,
Van Wert

419-910-0680

40% OFF
1 Item
with this
coupon!

valid 8/5 - 8/7