

**2019 Fulton County
Agricultural Hall of
Fame Inductees**



2019

William P. Hoops

German Township

Farmer

2019

WILLIAM P. HOOPS

William "Bill" Hoops of Pettisville in German Township gave a lifetime of service to the Fulton County agricultural community as a dairy farmer and agricultural youth mentor. After Bill got out of the service at age 21, he went straight into the dairy farming life. He started with only a few cows and grew his herd to 35 cows. As a dairyman, he was awarded various prizes for milk production and quality from the local and state associations. Dairying is what jump-started his love and commitment to the agriculture community in Fulton County.

Bill would work to get the best use out of his land and helped others to do that as well. He was one of the first and few that safely and effectively started custom applying anhydrous ammonia nitrogen to corn in the area. Not only would neighboring farmers hire him to apply nitrogen but also to do custom straw baling. Custom farming allowed for reduction in the cost of equipment and helped Bill create lifetime relationships in agriculture. It was important to him that everyone had the chance to live and enjoy the agriculture life as he had while he lived on the farm.

He was one of several that helped start the local Pettisville 4-H Club, which has grown to one of the largest clubs in the county today. He also was supportive of the local FFA chapter. He was always willing to make sure an interested youth could attend a conference or get an FFA jacket, even if they could not afford it.

Bill was a well-loved member, supporter, board member and men's group leader at the First Church of God in Wauseon. He was a member of Gideon's International and was involved on the boards of WPOS Christian Radio Station, Pettisville FFA Alumni, the Dairy Association and the Defiance Production Credit (now Farm Credit). Bill was married to Marjorie for over 60 years and they had four children. Bill was always an honest and dependable man with a great sense of humor. He really cared about people and always did what he said he was going to do.



2019

Lee Leininger

Franklin Township

Farmer

2019

LEE LEININGER

Lee Leininger owns and operates Cottonwood Vale Farms, a 400-acre dairy, corn, soybean, wheat, and alfalfa farm in Fayette, Ohio. Lee is known for his involvement in the Fulton County Dairy Association and the National Red/White and Holstein Associations. He believes in developing and maintaining relationships with local and surrounding county farm neighbors to share knowledge, equipment and facilities to advance the local agriculture industry.

In his dairy career, Lee developed five generations of excellent and nationally respected Red/White and Black/White Holstein cows – both high in type and milk production components. In 2014, Lee was named the premier breeder at the Spring Dairy Expo Red/White Holstein show in Columbus, Ohio. He was an early adopter of sexed semen technology which when applied to his cows helped him achieve a very high conception and heifer calf rating. Lee also adopted artificial insemination and embryo transfer technologies as they became available.

Lee has exhibited dairy cattle 55 years at the Fulton County Fair and has helped many 4-H and FFA dairy kids by mentoring, providing equipment, loaning dairy stock and giving his expertise. Over the years, he has been a valuable contributor to the one-on-one education that takes place with the public at the fair's dairy barn and parlor. Lee continues to give to the Fulton County Fair in many ways by donating flowers to decorate the dairy exhibit.

In the community, Lee has been a member of the West Franklin United Methodist Church and Fayette United Methodist Church. He has volunteered his time in support of past Fulton County Breakfast [On The Farm](#) events. Lee has also worked hard to provide opportunities for youth to participate in the agriculture industry through 4-H, FFA and farming activities.



2019

Dr. Emerson D. Nafziger

German Township

Extension & Research

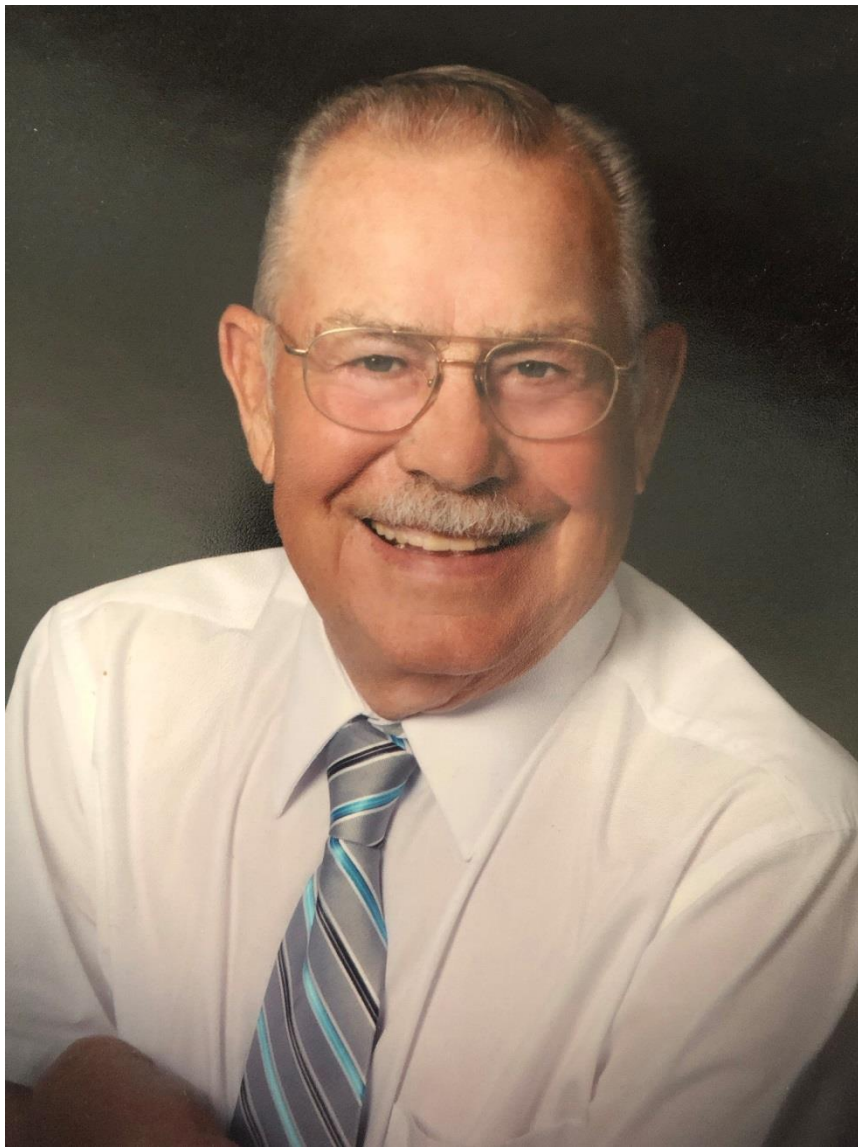
2019
DR. EMERSON D. NAFZIGER

Dr. Emerson Nafziger's interest in agriculture and agronomy began on the family farm, southwest of Pettisville in Fulton County. Emerson's impact on Midwestern crop production has been felt through his corn & soybean research, academic writing and Extension teaching to farmers and with students throughout the Corn Belt. Emerson earned agronomy degrees from Ohio State and Purdue and eventually his Ph.D. from Illinois where he spent the majority of his career.

Since 1982, Emerson has been on the faculty at the University of Illinois Extension - Department of Crop Sciences. He is responsible for Extension programs in corn, soybeans, and small grains, where he delivers programs to producers, crop advisors and students. Emerson turns agronomic data collected from applied research in the Eastern Corn Belt into tools that help producers better manage crops by predicting responses to crop inputs. He created a data-driven nitrogen rate calculator, an online resource that assists producers in improving nitrogen management for corn in most of the largest corn-producing states. Additionally, he has authored the book "Modern Corn and Soybean Production" that is currently being used by several local Ag Ed departments, multiple community colleges and several land grant universities. It is considered one of few exclusive books on corn and soybean production in the nation. In the academic arena, Emerson has written more journal articles and completed more research projects than one can count - all related to corn & soybean production.

Emerson has instructed local farmers at the Annual Northwest Ohio Corn & Soybean Day and at the Conservation Tillage Conference in Ada. Emerson is a member of several national agronomy societies and has been recognized on the national level with several industry and academic awards.

Emerson is an active member of his local church, its mission relief agency and the choir. Emerson is married to Cynthia and they live in Champaign, Illinois.



2019

William R. Schmitz

Royalton Township

Farmer

2019

WILLIAM R. SCHMITZ

William Schmitz of Lyons in Royalton Township lives a life dedicated to farming. Bill's 60-plus year career as a farmer has lead him to endeavors in drainage, excavating, specialty crops, row crops and agricultural fabrication, just to name a few. Bill can tell stories of farming his first tomato field with horses, laying drainage tile for neighbors, and today, farming with some of the most advanced farm machinery in the industry. He has always been one of the first people to try new techniques that would better the farm.

Bill was a pioneer in laying some of the first plastic drainage tile in the 1960's and eventually being one of the first to use lasers for tile installation. He has helped neighboring farmers dig ponds for water solutions on their farm fields, in livestock barns and for a domestic water source. He also designed and built special row mulchers for a John Deere 6-row planter to make garden like seedbed for sugar beets. Today, he continues to help fabricate fertilizer toolbars with the next generation. In 1947, Bill was awarded the Outstanding Tomato Grower Award by the Campbell's Soup Company and throughout the 1950's and 1960's, he continued to be a top tomato grower. Today, Bill's operation has grown to be one of the largest in the county, focusing on corn, soybeans and wheat.

Bill is an outstanding member of the Lyons community and always supports those in need. He has served on Our Lady of Fatima Church Council and is a member of Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Assumption, Ohio. Bill has opened his home to the local 4-H club for many years, served on the Evergreen School Board and Evergreen School's one campus committee and continues to support young people in the Lyons community today.

Bill and his wife, Mona, have been married for 67 years. They have created a large family, most of whom reside here in Fulton County. Bill's legacy will be that so many of his children and grandchildren continue to be involved in agriculture here in Fulton County.