



## Richland Soil and Water Conservation District

*Conservation, Education and Stewardship*  
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**For Immediate Release**  
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**Mansfield, OH** - At the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (Richland SWCD) Annual Celebration held on November 4, Ella Hafenstein was announced as the Richland SWCD 2021 Volunteer of the Year. Ella volunteers in a variety of capacities in the office, at special events and with special projects. In honor of Ella being named the Volunteer of the Year, Richland SWCD created and shared a video at the Annual Celebration of her contributions to Richland SWCD and our community. To watch the video, please visit <https://richlandswcd.net/>.

To recognize Ella's volunteer efforts with Richland SWCD, a Red Maple tree was purchased by Richland SWCD and planted at Community Park with assistance from Todd Ward and his staff at the Lexington Parks Department. Todd's department has also pledged to maintain the tree in the coming years.

Ella being named Volunteer of the Year was also recognized with commendations from Senator Mark Romanchuk, Representative Marilyn John and Richland County Commissioners Darrell Banks, Cliff Mears and Tony Vero.

Ella grew up on a farm in Kansas, moved to Willard in 1980 and later to Richland County. She has two sons. Ken, lives in Hilliard and Mike lives in Topeka, Kansas.

Ella has always been active and participated in sports. She was a women's volleyball referee for 32 years and enjoys hiking, camping, gardening, and just being outside.

What is now Ohio Health Hospital benefited from Ella's work ethic for 34 years before she retired 2 years ago.

Ella enjoys volunteering and has done so for many years. She coached 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade girls' volleyball, voluntarily helped at the hospital for activities and programs outside her normal duties, volunteers to pick up litter for the City of Mansfield, plants flowers and picks up trash in the city parks and picks up trash at the hospital. Every year Ella volunteers at the Richland County Fair in the City of Mansfield Litter Prevention and Recycling booth for Kim Hildreth. Since 2010, she has volunteered with CERT (Certified Emergency Response Team).

Ella retired from Ohio Health in 2019 and started volunteering with Richland SWCD in January of 2020.

Ella no sooner started volunteering when Covid hit and Richland SWCD couldn't have volunteers in the office. Covid didn't stop Ella from continuing to volunteer, though. She picked up projects to work on at home like packaging milkweed seeds, making butterfly and bee kits for children, and butterfly and milkweed seed ornaments for the Kingwood Center Community tree. Ella volunteers weekly in the office and has helped with a variety of office tasks. She helps at special events and helped clean up the Longview Center plant bed and continues to help maintain it. Ella is back in the office again and Richland SWCD is grateful for her help. She is always cheerful and upbeat, has a positive attitude and is willing to chip in and readily takes on new projects.

The 81-member volunteer team was also recognized at the Annual Celebration for their many contributions to Richland SWCD. It was noted the exceptional group of 81 volunteers help Richland SWCD carry out their mission. Volunteers help with office projects, at special events, take photos, scan and edit historical photos and documents, manage data and assist the technicians. Precipitation, Lake and Stream Monitor volunteers post their data on the District's website on the Water

Data Map which provides a real-time picture of what is happening in our County's eight watersheds and may be viewed on the Water Data Map of the Richland SWCD website at <https://richlandswcd.net/services/water/water-data-map>.

This year, volunteers have contributed more than 2,500 hours to Richland SWCD, which has saved the General Fund approximately \$25,000.

Call 419.747.8686 or go to <http://richlandswcd.net/> to learn how to volunteer and about programs and services provided by Richland SWCD.

The Richland Soil and Water Conservation District develops, implements, and assists landowners, government agencies and our partners with a wide range of natural resource conservation programs.

Programs and assistance of the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District are available without regard to race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, age, national origin, ancestry, disability, or veteran status.

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*\*\* Serving all Richland County Landowners with Conservation Assistance\*\**