

2009 Outstanding Cooperator Award

Sister Jeremias and the Sisters of St. Francis were proudly named the 2009 Cooperator of the Year.

The Sisters of St. Francis at Lourdes College have cared for their land since it was purchased as the Hitler farm in 1916. Concerned over the condition of the soils on the site, Mother Adelaide began changing how the land was planted and used. Initially the land was used to support the sisters who staffed the local schools through raising chickens and cows. Later buildings were erected, St. Clair Academy and a library. As construction was expanding, Mother Adelaide worked to obtain large hardwood tree plantings through the Lucas County Soil Conservation Service to stabilize slopes from erosion.

In the 1930's WPA crews continued the planting of trees with pines and black locust. Mother Adelaide continued her conservation efforts for many years following, having a 50 year plan to carry out her conservation goals. Nearly 20 years later, Sister Jeremias renewed the work on Mother Adelaide's plans for conservation partnering with the Lucas Soil and Water Conservation District, the Ohio Division of Forestry, and others. Since that time, Sister Jeremias has

nearly single handedly brought about the land improvement and reforestation of the 55-acre school forest. The Sisters' more recent projects included the installation of hundreds of trees to replace those lost to the Emerald Ash Borer. Many of which you can enjoy as you enter the property from Convent Blvd.

The number of trees planted by these women is truly astonishing and should be recognized as a genuine community asset and certainly a treasure. We at the Soil and Water Conservation District know her face well as we see her at every tree sale and nearly every annual meeting.

In the file at the office, we found not only the history of the land but more importantly an overwhelming history of dedication to the land and education. Thank you for your deep dedication and your tireless work.

