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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **OHIO AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL ANNOUNCES 2024 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES**

COLUMBUS, Ohio (May 1, 2024) – The Ohio Agricultural Council (OAC) is set to honor the 2024 awardees who have significantly contributed to the advancement of Ohio’s agricultural community. The 2024 OAC Hall of Fame ceremony will celebrate the achievements of the late David W. Brandt of Carroll, Bill and Janet Butler of Hillsboro, Fred Finney of Wooster and the late Raymond A. Miller of Hilliard. Each has uniquely impacted Ohio agriculture through innovation, education and leadership.

“It is with great honor and respect that we celebrate the lasting legacies of this year’s Hall of Fame inductees,” said Tadd Nicholson, President of the Ohio Agricultural Council and executive director of the Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association. “Their visionary leadership and relentless commitment have propelled our agricultural industry forward, making significant contributions at both local and national levels.”

The ceremony, marking its 58th year, is expected to draw over 600 attendees including community leaders, industry professionals and family members who will gather to pay tribute to the inductees’ lifelong dedication and service to Ohio’s agricultural sector. With these inductions, the Ohio Agricultural Hall of Fame proudly honors a total of 253 individuals since its inception.

### **David W. Brandt - Carroll, Ohio (posthumously)**

David W. Brandt, a pioneer in no-till farming and soil health, worked to transform agricultural practices with his innovative approach and steadfast advocacy. Beginning his career in 1970 at Dogwood Lane Farms, Brandt quickly adopted no-till methods by planting corn directly into sod. This early initiative marked the start of his lifelong dedication to sustainable agriculture.

As a consultant for Chevron Chemical and later Monsanto, Brandt educated farmers nationwide on the benefits of no-till practices. In 1987, he established Brandt Family Farm, which became a hub for soil conservation and sustainable farming techniques. His farm, in collaboration with Ohio State University Extension, served as a vital site for demonstrating soil conservation benefits. Brandt led numerous field days and conferences aimed at advancing soil health, significantly improving water quality and soil integrity, which encouraged farmers to adopt sustainable practices.

Brandt’s impact earned him many state and national awards, including the Ohio Conservation Farmer Award and the No-Till Farmer Magazine’s “No-Till Innovator Award.” His leadership roles in organizations such as the Ohio No-till Council furthered soil preservation efforts. David W. Brandt’s legacy continues to influence sustainable farming practices across the U.S., ensuring the environmental and economic sustainability of farming for future generations.

### **Bill & Janet Butler - Hillsboro, Ohio**

William (Bill) and Janet Butler have been pivotal figures in transforming livestock marketing and agricultural finance in Southern Ohio through their management of Union Stockyards. Since Bill’s move to Hillsboro in 1969 and his subsequent ownership, the couple has elevated the facility to a major agricultural hub, hosting over 70 auctions annually and serving farmers across multiple states. Their efforts have significantly enhanced the accessibility and transparency of the livestock market, fostering robust connections within the agricultural community.

The Butlers’ commitment extends beyond business operations. They have been integral in educational initiatives, partnering with OSU Extension and local veterinarians to deliver seminars and workshops that disseminate crucial information on animal health, nutrition and market dynamics. Bill’s role as a director at Merchants National Bank since 1983 has also been instrumental in establishing the bank as a key agricultural lender in the region, leveraging his deep understanding of agricultural needs to support southwest Ohio farmers financially.

Recognized for their service and leadership, both Bill and Janet have received numerous accolades, including the Ohio Cattlemen's Top Hand Award and the Friend of 4-H Award, testament to their lifelong dedication to agriculture and community service. Together, they have not only fostered economic growth in their industry but have also been staunch advocates for agricultural education and community development, making them exemplary candidates for the Ohio Agricultural Hall of Fame.

### **Fred Finney - Wooster, Ohio**

Fred Finney, a distinguished leader in Ohio's agricultural community, has made profound contributions to the state's produce industry. After serving in the U.S. Army, Finney began his career at Davis Melrose Company, which owned what would become Moreland Fruit Farm. In 1985, he purchased the farm and transformed it into a thriving 125-acre operation producing a diverse range of fruit and vegetable crops, significantly enhancing local food markets and supply chains.

Throughout his career, Finney has been instrumental in creating new market opportunities for farmers, particularly through his involvement in the establishment of the Farmers Produce Auction in Mt. Hope and the Mid-Ohio Growers Meeting. These initiatives have not only supported local farmers but also fostered community and economic development. His efforts have extended to national influence, particularly in food safety, where he played a critical role in the development of compliance training for the Food Safety Modernization Act, ensuring that small and Amish farmers were not overlooked.

Finney's leadership spans several prestigious roles, including serving as president of the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation and on the board of directors for Nationwide Insurance. His work has earned him numerous accolades, including the Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award from the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation. Fred Finney's dedication to improving agricultural practices and supporting his community has left an indelible mark on Ohio's agricultural landscape, making him a respected figure in the industry.

### **Dr. Raymond A. Miller - Hilliard, Ohio (posthumously)**

Dr. Raymond A. Miller, an esteemed educator and leader within Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, profoundly impacted the agricultural community through his nearly four-decade tenure at the institution. As an assistant dean and professor, Miller dedicated his career to fostering the growth and development of thousands of students, many of whom have become influential leaders across the agricultural sector.

Throughout his career, Miller was pivotal in advising, mentoring and guiding students, ensuring they received the necessary support and resources to thrive both academically and professionally. His role extended beyond the classroom into significant initiatives such as the founding of the Alpha Zeta Partners leadership program, which has been crucial in developing well-rounded agricultural leaders. His commitment to student success was evident in his advisement of various student-focused organizations, including the Ag College Chorale, College Council and the Ohio Staters philanthropic club.

Miller's dedication to Ohio agriculture was matched by his service to the community. His efforts in alumni relations and development set a benchmark for engagement, helping to keep graduates connected and active within the agricultural community. The establishment of scholarship programs and his active participation in college events underscored his commitment to education and community service. His legacy continues to influence agricultural education and community development in Ohio and beyond, making him a distinguished figure worthy of recognition in the Ohio Agricultural Hall of Fame.

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For further information or to be a sponsor in honor of the inductees and in celebration of Ohio agriculture, contact the Ohio Agricultural Council at 614-794-8970 or via email at [info@ohioagcouncil.org](mailto:info@ohioagcouncil.org).

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*Editor's note: Photos of inductees are available upon request.*