

## **VCPA Strawberry Fest ‘A Berry Good Time’**

by Travis Curry, SEW Editor



Frances MacMorran (left) and Maddie Arnett were caught by the camera as they made their way through the serving line, manned by VCPA board member Susan Summerlot inside the historic Vandalia School House. (Staff Photo)

Last Sunday’s benefit event in Vandalia was the berries, in more ways than one.

The Vandalia Community Preservation Association (VCPA) hosted its first-ever Strawberry Fest where strawberries, strawberries and more strawberries than anyone can eat or count were served. To top off the tasty shortcake served in the historic school house, festival-goers beat the heat inside the air-conditioned historic chapel where the Circle of Friends traded lead vocals on songs ranging from traditional gospel to modern praise, mixed with a few originals.

Proceeds for Sunday’s festival will help the VCPA purchase paint, make needed repairs at the chapel, and help support the general upkeep and preservation of both buildings.



Shown representing the Vandalia Community Preservation Association are, left to right: board secretary Susan Summerlot, director Mark Snapp, director Shirley Kinney, treasurer Nancy Snapp, and president Dana Bowen Cummings. (Staff Photo)

The Vandalia Community Preservation Association, Inc. was organized in 1995 by a small all-volunteer group who recognized the important historic significance of the former Vandalia United Methodist Church building and undertook its purchase, preservation, and restoration. Built in 1895, the then 100-year-old building was acquired by the VCPA from the Methodist Conference after attendance dwindled and the few remaining active members had voted to discontinue services and close the church. The dedicated small community group proceeded to restore the bell tower, replace the front steps, and repaint the entire building, and in 1996 earned the Owen County Preservation of the Year Award for the historic Vandalia Chapel.



Live music by the Circle of Friends helped festival-goers beat the heat last Sunday inside the air-conditioned historic chapel at Vandalia. (Staff Photo)

Today the VCPA continues to exist for the purpose of maintaining and preserving the Chapel and historic one-room Vandalia School House, which is located nearby and was supported for a number of years through fundraising activities of the former Vandalia Methodist Women/Vandalia Women's Circle. The latter building was erected in 1855 and functioned as a school until 1951. Without continued membership participation, financial donations, and support for restoration, preservation, and upkeep, these two important 19th century Owen County landmarks would quietly fall into disrepair and cease to exist for the enjoyment and education of future generations.

All donations received by the VCPA, a nonprofit 501c3, are used for the upkeep and preservation of the historic chapel and school house and are tax-deductible. Checks for the general operating fund can be sent directly to: Vandalia Community Preservation Association (VCPA), 5471 Vandalia Road, Spencer, IN 47460 (Attention: Treasurer).

The Flona Everly Query Fund is an endowment established in 2008 by the family of Flona Everly Query to provide an annual grant, from investment earnings on the principle, to the VCPA to help maintain the historic church and one-room school house. Gifts to this endowment may be sent to the Owen County Community Foundation, 201 West Morgan Street, Suite 202, Spencer, IN 47460, with the specification that they are to be applied to this fund.