



NURTURING COMMUNITY AND CONSERVATION

Bob and Ellen Mulford

Few people embody “concern for community” quite like Bob and Ellen Mulford of Ripley County. Together, they have spent their lives serving others, teaching, healing, and giving back in ways that continue to make a lasting difference.

The farm that Bob and Ellen now call home has deep family roots. Bob’s grandfather purchased the original 160 acres in 1940, clearing the woods to create pasture for cattle and building small barns to support the operation. Over time, the family gradually purchased surrounding tracts of land, expanding the acreage beyond its original 160. By the end of the 1970s, the farm transitioned from a beef operation to a grain farm, reflecting the changing agricultural practices of the time.

Bob remembers working alongside his grandfather and parents during those years and watching the natural landscape shift into farmland. While the changes supported the family’s

livelihood, they also led to the loss of much of the native habitat, wildlife, and natural beauty that had once filled the area.

In 1974, Bob and Ellen returned to the farm where Bob grew up, beginning their life together on the land that held so much family history. While settling into the rhythms of rural life, Bob pursued a career in medicine and Ellen began her lifelong vocation as a teacher. Bob dedicated 40 years to caring for patients, first through his private practice in Versailles and later at King’s Daughters’ Hospital. Ellen devoted 45 years to education, with 43 of those years spent teaching first grade at South Ripley Elementary. Along the way, they also raised a family, balancing the demands of their professions with their commitment to community and home.

Bob and Ellen have always cherished the beauty of wildlife and the natural world. Their passion for birds, butterflies,

and all living things made them increasingly aware of how much of the land’s original habitat had been lost over the years. In 2010, they made the bold decision to transform their farm back into what it once was. Working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, they pledged all 400 acres of their property to restoration. Their goal was simple yet profound, to return the land to its natural state.



The results are nothing short of remarkable. Today, Capability Farm is home to native grasslands, replanted trees, vibrant wetlands, and numerous ponds. Wildlife has returned in abundance, from reptiles and amphibians to mammals like bobcats, otters, and beavers. Insects have flourished again, and Ellen's passion for butterflies shines in the thriving populations of Monarchs and Eastern Black Swallowtails. The farm also plays a role in regional conservation, including work with Big Oaks to provide a wetland for crawfish frogs to repopulate.



For Bob, the joy is in watching the place come back alive. For Ellen, the experience is summed up in one word, exhilarating. Together, with the help of their Capability Farm Crew of friends and neighbors including retired SEI REMC employee Pete Stenger and longtime supporter Rick

Bales, the Mulfords have created not only a haven for wildlife but also a place for learning and reflection. Capability Farm hosts Master Naturalist classes, nature observations, and visits from those who wish to experience the peace and beauty of southeastern Indiana in its natural state.



The Capability Farm Crew
Rick Bales, Bob Mulford, and Pete Stenger



What began as a family farm has become a lasting legacy of conservation, community, and connection. Bob and Ellen have spent their lives giving back through medicine, education, and now environmental restoration. Their work reminds us that a community grows stronger when we care for one another and for the world around us.



Pete Stenger with Ellen and Bob Mulford



SEI REMC EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

David Thomas

David Thomas has been a dedicated part of SEI REMC for more than 30 years. As Warehouseman, he supervises staff, coordinates with suppliers, maintains the facility, and oversees all aspects of warehouse operations to keep essential materials ready for the cooperative.

David enjoys the fast-paced environment of his role and the vital part he plays in keeping SEI REMC's supply chain running smoothly. Outside of work, he loves golfing, saltwater fishing, boating, and spending time with his wife, Amy, their two sons, Austin and Chase, and their dogs, Koda and Cocoa. The outdoors and family time bring him balance and joy beyond his busy work at the cooperative.

Thank you, David, for your incredible service and dedication.