FERNALD PRESERVE

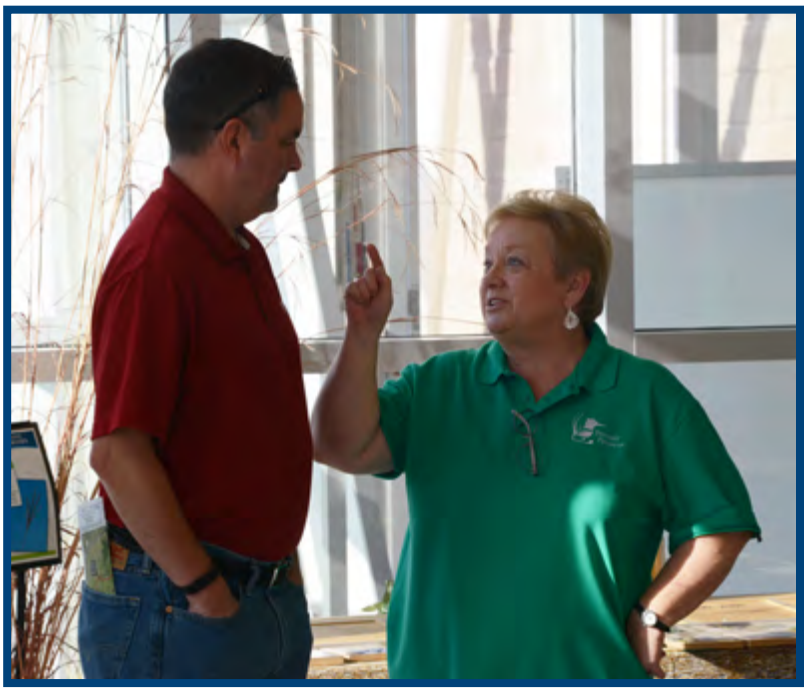
A Decade of Difference

by Bernadette Martinez

Lisa Crawford received a letter in 1984 advising that the well on her property was contaminated from the nearby Fernald, Ohio, nuclear site. Concerned about her safety and that of area families, Lisa formed **Fernald Residents for Environmental Safety and Health (FRESH)** to give the community a voice and push for solutions. Described by former Deputy Site Manager **Glenn Griffiths** as "one of those forces of nature that takes things by the throat and gets it done," Lisa contacted regulators, federal employees, contractors, and elected officials at every level to ensure that something would be done to stop further contamination and reverse or mitigate existing damage.

As Lisa busted down doors and demanded answers, **Cathy Glassmeyer**, now the Fernald Preserve site operations manager, joined Fernald in 1985. Cathy brims with stories of coworkers who devoted "huge chunks of their lives—20, 30, 40 years" to the site, which produced more than 500 million pounds of uranium metal products for U.S. defense efforts: "People who worked here thought they were defending us from the Soviet Union, doing their part to protect us, just like the soldiers."

By 1991, FRESH's efforts yielded results. Fernald's production objective officially changed to environmental cleanup and restoration. Cathy remembers the disbelief among site workers at the announcement of a remediation plan and timetable. It didn't seem real—until they imploded Plant 7. The demolition crew underestimated the amount of explosives needed, she recalls with a laugh, and had to try again 2 days later. The removal of a pair of water towers once visible for miles from the highway was another sign of progress. The changing landscape marked the changing mission.



Lisa Crawford reminisces with former clean-up and LMS employee Greg Lupton, recalling the tough questions she pushed DOE and their contractors to answer.

'One of those forces of nature' who pushed for solutions to nuclear contamination.

On October 29, 2006, remediation efforts were declared complete with the exception of long-term groundwater remediation—ahead of the December 31 target and $7.8 billion under budget. In total, 2.2 billion pounds of waste traveled more than 75 million road and rail miles to waste facilities, and nearly 3 million cubic yards of contaminated soil and building debris were moved to create the On-Site Disposal Facility that exists today.

Ten years after the creation of what **Bob Tabor** of the **Fernald Atomic Trades and Labor Council** calls "the crown jewel of DOE's nuclear network accomplishments," the 1,050 acre Fernald Preserve draws thousands of people annually and boasts a state-of-the-art visitors center that features displays and memorabilia that tell the site's story.

At the October 29 "Weapons to Wetlands: A Decade of Difference" anniversary celebration, an emotional **Jane Powell**, retired LM site manager, addressed a standing-room-only crowd and described the Fernald Preserve as "more beautiful than I ever anticipated it could be, more beautiful than I ever thought it would be." As **Jack Craig**, manager of DOE's Savannah River Site in North Carolina, stated, "DOE EM has not had a heck of a lot of successes over the past 25 years, but one they always point to is the Fernald cleanup."

Dr. Susana Navarro, president; CEO; and founder of Navarro Research and Engineering, Inc., commented after the 10-year anniversary celebration that she and her LMS staff were honored and proud to be part of the Fernald Preserve efforts as LM continues the legacy at the site.

Lisa, too, is amazed at the changes over 32 years. While Glenn credits FRESH with spearheading change not just at Fernald but throughout DOE, Lisa says the group proved what is possible "when community members, the government, DOE, EM, LM, contractors, workers, regulators, elected officials, all come together and everyone has a seat at the table. We see just what a difference it can make. It's amazing. We just move forward now, that's it."

Several Decade of Difference event visitors took advantage of the various tours conducted during the day, which included a unique perspective of the restored uranium-production site from the top of the On-Site Disposal Facility.