Farmer’s vow of poverty promotes humanitarianism
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Dressed in dirt-laden boots and driving a truck fished from a junk yard, Paul Clever of Good Earth Farm began this past Saturday like every other this year: tending the land responsible for feeding his household and the households of others in Southeast Ohio.

Clever began Good Earth Farm in 2008 with his wife Sara, a professor at Hocking College. After farming for 10 years, Clever meshed his familiar trade with another important aspect in his life: faith.

In keeping with Benedictine tradition, Clever has taken a vow of poverty and lives solely off the food grown at the farm.

Brad Modlin, a Good Earth Farm volunteer and Ph.D. student studying English, said he is impressed with the Franciscan order that is emphasized at the farm.

“It’s an interesting connection of the two ideas,” Modlin said. “I’m impressed by how they do that in the 21st century.”

Though faith plays an important role in the ideals driving Good Earth Farm, Clever assures that his faith is kept separate from the work accomplished each day.

“It’s very important that our religious background doesn’t become a barrier to anybody that’s coming,” Clever said.

Clever has donated about 10,000 pounds of food per year to various soup kitchens and food pantries, including the Nelsonville Community Center and Donation Station.

Clever said a focus of the farm is to contribute to the solution of food insecurity on a grander scale.
“We’re not a solution, but we try to be a sign to people that come to say you can use the gifts that you’re given and make a difference for other people,” Clever said.

Clever said the food that is not donated feeds lunch and dinner to about 50 people per week, including the six with whom he lives. He said a driving force for the work accomplished at the farm is “having patience.”

“You can’t be paralyzed by the scale of the problems that are there,” Clever said. “And you can’t be paralyzed by your failure. You can’t be paralyzed by the times you screw up.”

Alex Doyle, a junior studying English at Ohio University, interns at Good Earth Farm and contributes time every week working with livestock or in the field.

“I feel very accomplished when I come here,” Doyle said. “It’s definitely giving back.”

Though Good Earth Farm is currently only in its fourth growing season, Clever assures there is more to be gained from the project in the future.

“One thing that we’re setting out to do is to put roots into (Good Earth Farm) and make long-term commitments in terms of doing what it takes to see that our neighbors are fed and cared for,” Clever said. “That’s not work that happens overnight.”