



open
views

winter 2020

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Dear Friends,

2020 is the year! The year to dream bigger in our pursuit to protect working lands and conserve natural resources. Our work is made possible by you – a community that embraces farmland preservation and our agricultural heritage. 2020 is the year to look ahead at the future of Lancaster County and ensure it continues to be a beautiful, agrarian community so future generations may have the opportunity to value and understand the importance of this treasured resource.

We're off to a great start – a surge in donations at the end of last year already preserved three farms this year! With the launch of our Honoring the Promise campaign and a waiting list of eager farmers – 50 farms covering 4,000 acres – 2020 is shaping up to be a record year.

When a community is passionate about something, elected leaders listen. That's why the Lancaster County Commissioners approved a \$250,000 challenge grant for LFT again this year. With your continued dedication to LFT's mission, we will exceed this challenge grant for the 15th straight year – demonstrating the community's overwhelming support of protecting Lancaster County's most valuable natural asset. These funds match private donations dollar-for-dollar, doubling the impact of your support.

As you know, our work doesn't end with the preservation of farmland; we must also be diligent in our efforts to ensure our farms are environmentally sensitive. In the past decade, LFT elevated its efforts to work with farmers to transition their farms to have a net-positive impact on the environment. With your continued support, LFT can commit to this effort in the decade ahead, allowing future generations to cherish the quality of life we enjoy today.

For the past 31 years, you have joined us on a journey to create an impermeable barrier of protected farmland in Lancaster County. As we embark on a new decade, I want to thank you for your unwavering support of this essential mission, and call you to further action this year. I hope the stories within this edition of Open Views inspire you to connect with your landscape and your community in more meaningful ways.

Your support makes a lasting difference in our community. Thank you.

Cordially,



Jeff Swinehart
Chief Operating Officer





CONSERVATION, GRANTED!

Recent studies show some improvement in the health of the Chesapeake Bay. As part of our effort to create healthier waterways, LFT is taking the lead on 11 grant projects in 2020. This year, we will break ground on 17 farms, collaborate with five municipalities, and provide hundreds of farmers access to resources to reduce their impact on the environment.



LFT WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The LFT Board welcomed four new members:

- Emily Bell, attorney at Saxton & Stump;
- Julie Bard-Ziegler, Environmental Manager at Tyson Foods, Inc.;
- Nate Hoover, Relationship Manager at UniVest;
- Jeff Kirk, Independent Financial Planner;
- Linda Lownsbery, Vice President of Human Resources at The Wenger Group.



1,000TH FARM FOR COUNTY PRESERVE BOARD

Last month, the Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board celebrated the preservation of its 1,000th farm. The same farm marked Warwick Township's 3,000th acre of preserved farmland.

Find out more about the Township's preservation efforts on pages 14-15.



Dawn Rise Ekdahl | IG: @echoes.of.indigo

SOCIALLY CONNECTED

Lancaster County's beautiful farmland is well documented on social media. But this image stood out to us. We hope you enjoy it too.

On Instagram? Use the hashtag **#LancFarmland** to have your photo featured on our page or in a future publication.

Follow us: **@lancasterfarmlandtrust**



Above: Mary helps young Azariah navigate through the herd, toward his uncle, Andy, and grandfather, Andy.

Left: Four generations of Mellingers stand in front of their family barn. Grouped by generation, from left to right: Allen and Joanne; Andy and Mary; Andy, Katelyn (not pictured), Abe, holding Hans, Megan, holding Azariah.

Opposite page: Younger Andy leads the herd of goats back to the barn.

Got (goat) Milk?

It started with a goat named Gwendolyn and the son of a fifth-generation dairy farmer.

Andy, twelve at the time, remembers caring for Gwendolyn as a teen. “I used to feed her Ritz crackers,” he recalls with a chuckle.

Andrew Mellinger and his wife, Mary, are the sixth generation of a Lancaster County farming family. And they are the first generation to milk goats instead of cows.

Andy always knew he wanted to make his living on his family’s farm. But the idea of making that living with the animal he loved so much didn’t come to him until he met Mary at Cornell University. Andy was studying agricultural science, and Mary was working toward a degree in nutrition. Andy’s appreciation for the cloven-hoofed animal, coupled with Mary’s interest in the nutritional value of goat’s milk, gave start to their future venture.

“He had a love of goats since childhood,” Mary describes of her husband.

“And here we are,” he chimes in.

Upon graduation, the two returned to Lancaster County and married. After the couple welcomed their first child, Mary opted to use milk from the goats, instead of cow’s milk, for their children. Goat’s milk offers different proteins and shorter fat chains than cow’s milk, making it easier for some to digest – especially children – according to Mary.

The couple purchased a few nanny goats and began hand milking, gathering enough milk for their growing family. Sometimes there was extra milk, so Mary learned to make cheese in their kitchen. “We hung the cheese over the kitchen sink, which was fine when it was just for us,” she recalls.

During the same time, Andy and his father, Allen, began talking about restructuring the farm – Allen was ready to transition ownership to his son. After many family discussions, they decided Allen would preserve the farm before selling it. This allowed Allen to retire, and Andy to buy the farm at a price he could afford while embarking on his new goat business.

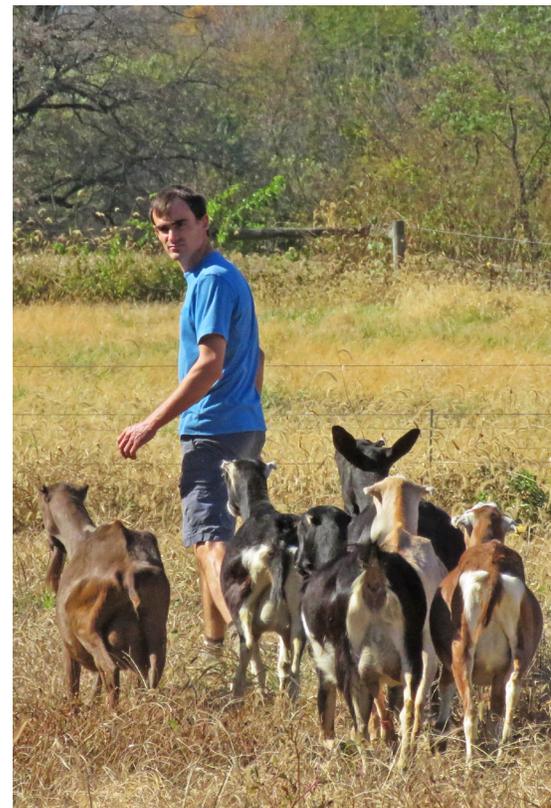
“Preserving was a critical turning point for the farm,” explains Mary, “If not for preservation, we wouldn’t be sitting here.”

With that decision, the sixth generation bought the farm and turned the decades-long cow dairy into a goat dairy. Right away, Linden Dale cheese became a staple at Lancaster City’s Eastern Market and Philadelphia’s Rittenhouse Market, then at Lancaster Central Market. In a decade, the business grew from small offerings of chèvre and feta to a full menu of soft and hard aged cheeses, yogurt, and milk.

“We were quickly able to ‘perfect’ our skills – you can hear exactly what your customers think almost immediately,” Mary says of their direct-to-market model. Though she insists things didn’t just happen overnight.

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“Preserving was a critical turning point for the farm,” explains Mary, “If not for preservation, we wouldn’t be sitting here.”



PRESERVATION BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO FAMILY FARM



They experimented with packaging and recipes until they found something they could replicate consistently and make customers happy.

Andy and Mary didn't undergo all of this trial-and-error alone – their children were there every step of the way. The smaller build and easy temperament of goats made them ideal for the Mellinger's young children to work with. And weekend shifts at market stands became well-suited part-time jobs for their outgoing girls, Carrie, Greta, and Madeline.

Today, the Mellingers' eldest two sons – Andy and Abe – are integral members of the family business. While each family member has their preferred niche, decisions are made collectively. "Our creativity gets vetted more – we make fewer mistakes," the elder Andy observes of the inclusion of his two sons into the farm.

"When you raise kids here, it gets in their blood," explains the elder Andy. His sons agree – growing up on the farm made them want to stay.

Abe and his wife, Megan, are raising the eighth generation of Mellingers. He hopes they have the same experience he did as a child. "When you are your own boss, you can do things you can't do anywhere else. I enjoyed growing up on the farm. And I want my family to have that."

The unconventional nature of the Mellinger men is what Mary believes has kept this generational family farm moving forward. She defines the three generations of men as intelligent, innovative, creative, quiet, persistent, and hardworking. The trait she omits is humility. Perhaps too modest herself, humility is most certainly the trait that allowed Linden Dale Farm to blossom. "You have to roll with it – whether good or bad times. And the farm has to change with the family," she explains.

Allen easily could have balked at the idea of breaking the legacy of his family farm to accommodate Andy's love of goats. But he did not, "I'm glad everything is going along the way it's going." Likewise, new ideas from Andy and Abe are readily considered as ways to move the business and the farm forward. There is no talk of rank or hierarchy when decisions are made. Each generation provides equal commitment and is offered an equal stake in the future of the farm.

"We had no idea the farm was going to look like this," the elder Andy says with a smile, proud of the accomplishments of his family's hard work. "Our commitment to staying in farming is for our children and grandchildren. The land will stay in farming forever; our hope is that it will stay Mellinger, too."



You can find the Mellingers at Lancaster Central Market on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. And their dairy products are featured on menus at local restaurants like Commonwealth on Queen, Horse Inn, John J. Jeffries, and Luca.



Above: The Mellingers' mild-mannered herd of Lamancha goats enjoy a sunny day outside.

Left: Abe and Mary help Azariah sit atop a black and white goat.

Opposite page, top: Azariah smiles as he greets his favorite goat, Red.

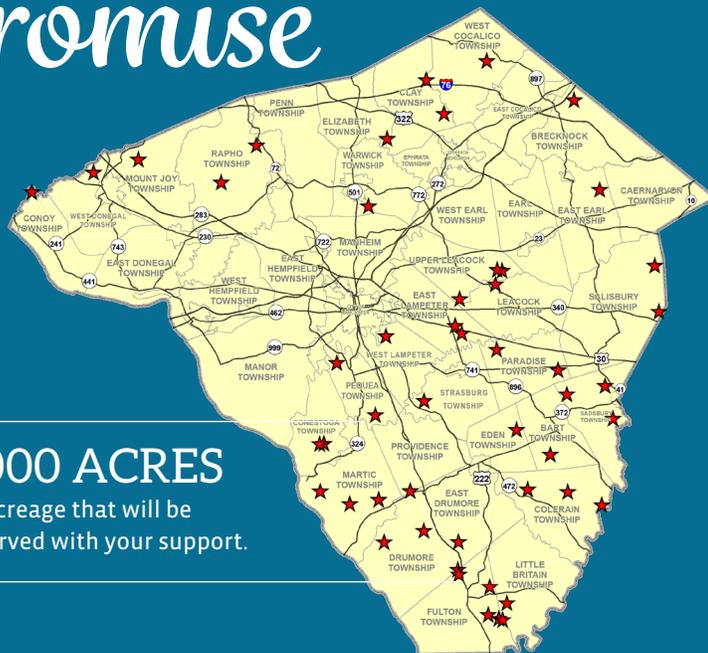
Opposite page, bottom: Andy and Mary greet their herd of goats in the pasture.

"I enjoyed growing up on the farm. And I want my family to have that."

Honoring the Promise

We've made a promise to the 50 farm families on our waiting list that we will help them preserve their land, and it is important that we fulfill that promise.

It is critical that we take advantage of this window of opportunity to preserve these farms and protect our natural resources forever.



★ Farms on the LFT waiting list



50 FARMS

The number of farms waiting to be preserved.



4,000 ACRES

The acreage that will be preserved with your support.

\$7.5 million

The overall cost to protect the farms on our waiting list and conserve the long-term viability of the land in our care.

\$4 million

To permanently protect 4,000 acres of farmland.

\$3.5 million

For the long-term conservation of these protected lands.

For more information, visit www.savelancasterfarms.org

THE AMOS FUNK *Legacy Society*



In honor of the "Father of Farmland Preservation," Amos Funk, Lancaster Farmland Trust has established the Amos Funk Legacy Society.

Legacy Society members have made a vital commitment to protecting our farmland for future generations by including Lancaster Farmland Trust in their estate plans.

Do you already have Lancaster Farmland Trust in your estate plans?

Let us know so we can thank you and include you in special activities and mailings.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact us at 717-687-8484 or info@lancasterfarmlandtrust.org

Create a lasting legacy by supporting the long-term stewardship of Lancaster County's treasured farmland.

What does the future of farming in Pennsylvania look like?

Reprinted with permission from WITF
Article and photos by Rachel McDevitt

(Harrisburg) — Hundreds of high school students, all wearing blue corduroy jackets, packed the main arena at this year's Pennsylvania Farm Show.

State officers for the Pennsylvania Future Farmers of America danced onstage to Dolly Parton's "9 to 5" in between introducing guests of honor and announcing various awards for the organization's members.

The club's mid-winter convention celebrated the overall theme of the Farm Show: Imagine the Opportunities.

Members of the Pennsylvania Future Farmers of America gather for the organization's Mid-winter Convention at

the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg on Monday, Jan. 6, 2020.

But while this wave of blue appears to represent the next generation of growers, ranchers and producers, not all FFA members are "future farmers." They might become researchers, business owners or teachers — related jobs that agriculture boosters say will be needed as the industry tries to feed a growing population. The Earth is expected to add another two billion people by the year 2050.

Pennsylvania is a major grower of produce such as mushrooms, apples and peppers, as well as a big producer of eggs and dairy products.

"It's sort of a catch-22 because Lancaster's such a great place that a lot of people want to live here, but they need land to live on."

A small creek runs through the Shirk family farm in Caenarvon Township, Lancaster County on Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2020.

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Members of the Pennsylvania Future Farmers of America gather for the organization's Mid-winter Convention at the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg on Monday, Jan. 6, 2020.



Tyler Shaw stands outside a log cabin at Blue Mountain Farm on Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020.

But to keep that status, the commonwealth will need to find answers to the who and where of future farming.

“It is something that is ever-present, this issue of transition,” said state Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding.

Agriculture accounts for 18 percent of the state’s economy, but it faces serious challenges.

One is aging farmers. Pennsylvania has twice as many farmers over 65 than under 35, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s latest census.

FFA members could make up some of that difference.

But those who go into production agriculture will have to find land to work on, and that’s another challenge, because Pennsylvania is losing farmland.

The USDA’s 2017 Census of Agriculture shows more than 400,000 acres went out of production in the state since 2012, about 5 percent of all farmland in the commonwealth.

Finding land can be especially hard for young farmers who don’t come from farming families.

Pennsylvania has some of the country’s more expensive farmland. In 2018, the USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service found farm real estate values in the state rose 1.6 percent from the previous year to average \$5,600 an acre.

Tyler Shaw, a Dauphin County hay farmer, said it’s more cost-effective for farmers to rent farmland than to own it.

The 23-year-old originally got interested in agriculture through 4-H, and helped his family turn their wooded lot into Blue Mountain Farm. They raise a few animals — Angora goats at the moment — and run a fiber mill.

Shaw started renting more ground when he was in high school. At first, he was just trying to grow enough hay to feed his own animals. He expanded it into a business, and by the time he was 16, he had 15 landlords.

He now rents about 350 acres from 25 landlords. And he’s hoping to buy a small farm of his own in the next few months.

Shaw said access to land is probably the biggest barrier a young farmer faces.

“Land isn’t something you can just go to the store and buy,” he said. “You can’t go to the farm sale down the road this Saturday and, you know, purchase a lease agreement. That’s not how it works.”

He said getting farmland takes relationships, time and money.

Shaw hopes to take advantage of a new tax credit passed by the state legislature last year that will give an incentive to landowners to sell or rent farmland to young farmers — those who have been at it for less than 10 years.

He said the credit will hopefully give young farmers an advantage over real estate developers in acquiring farmland.

Midstate counties with some of the most productive farmland in the state are also seeing some of the fastest population growth, according to estimates from the U.S.

Census Bureau. Cumberland and Lancaster counties are both seeing increased development.

Some farmers might be tempted to sell their land to developers, but others don't want to see their land be used for apartment buildings or shopping centers. Some are turning to farmland preservation.

Through nonprofits or government programs, farmers can get an easement on their land to restrict all future use of the property to agriculture.

Preservation is one answer to the question of where people will be able to farm, but it's not fully stopping the loss of farmland.

Even Lancaster County — one of the top counties for preserved farmland nationally — has been losing about 1,200 acres annually for several years, according to USDA data.

While demand for farmland in the county is strong thanks to a large population of Amish and Mennonite residents, it's also facing pressure from development.

"It's sort of a catch-22 because Lancaster's such a great place that a lot of people want to live here, but they need land to live on. And we're consuming that productive land, which is growing houses, in some cases, rather than the agricultural products that it could be," said Jeff Swinehart, chief operating officer for Lancaster Farmland Trust.

Swinehart said the trust has seen interest in preservation grow recently. Fifty farms are on its waiting list.

He noted the county is well situated for agriculture: the land is productive, and it

has the right infrastructure and proximity to large metropolitan areas to easily get products to market.

"So, it would make sense that if we're going to protect land, we might as well protect it here," Swinehart said.

Reasons to preserve farms range from the practical to the personal.

Paula Shirk preserved her family's 56-acre farm in Caernarvon Township through the trust last year, in memory of her late husband.

She easily found a tenant to work the farm. Leallen Newswanger grew up across the road. He said if this land wasn't available to rent, he'd probably be looking for a place to

buy out of state, because farms in Lancaster County are so expensive.

Shirk said she's noticed development creeping in from nearby Morgantown. Her daughter, Beth, said they can now see the glow of Walmart's lights peeking over the hills.

After her husband Robert's death in 2017, Shirk said she felt compelled to preserve the farm for him.

She also wanted to honor his family's history. They've been on the land since 1792.

"It's like my gift to future generations," she said. "This is what we had in our life that we enjoyed, and we were blessed to be here."

"It's like my gift to future generations."

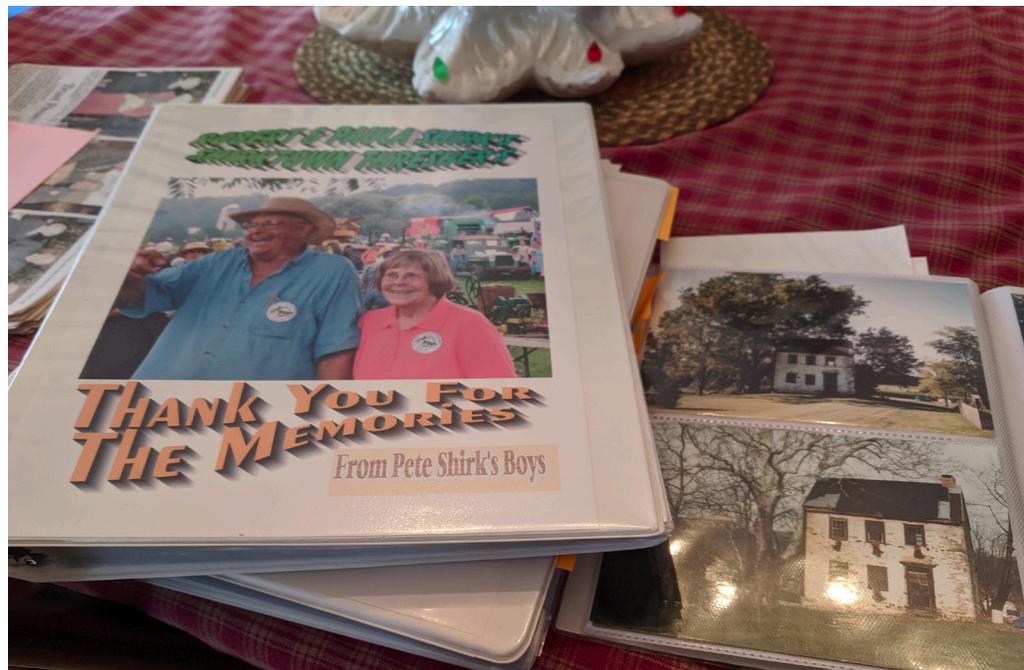


Photo albums sit on the dining room table in the Shirk family's farmhouse. The farm has been in the family since 1792.

Option to Protect and Conserve

Levi was already thinking about the run-down house, the leaky barn roof, and the soggy cow pasture when his father sold the farm to him. A capable craftsman, Levi had plans to renovate the house – making room for his wife and their three children – and fixing the leaky barn roof. The soggy pasture, though, would require help.

A few years after purchasing the farm, Levi contacted Lancaster Farmland Trust (LFT) to request information about preserving the land. Levi knew he wanted to pass down his farm to his children, or make sure it stayed available for his community to farm. During the conversation with LFT staff, Levi mentioned the small creek and pond in his soggy cow pasture.

Levi wanted to preserve his land and improve a waterway on his property, making him a candidate for a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant to help him achieve both. Our team calls this the “Preserve and Steward” grant – it provides financial and technical resources to farmers who are willing to preserve their farm, then apply conservation practices on it.

LFT will preserve the Drumore Township farm later this year. Afterward, Levi will work with LFT and TeamAg Inc. to design and construct a manure storage unit and field lane improvements. Streambank fencing and livestock crossings will be implemented through a grant opportunity offered by the Pennsylvania Department

of Agriculture. Levi also intends to work with Donegal Trout Unlimited to complete a stream restoration project – improving the waterway for fish habitat.

Excited about the opportunity, Levi can finally fix his pasture and keep his cows healthier. The improvement to the waterway, which flows from his property into the Fishing Creek, then the Susquehanna River, means he’s helping his community too.

Levi is one of five local farmers taking advantage of this special NFWF grant opportunity.

Levi's farm, with cow pasture in foreground, in Drumore Township.



Seeing Double in the “Southern End”

Quiet, picturesque southern Lancaster County is home to TWO of Lancaster County’s most recent preserved farms. Passersby can find these two farms along an unassuming country road in Fulton Township, just north of the Pennsylvania-Maryland state line.

In December 2019, staff from Lancaster Farmland Trust met at the Stoltzfus family farm, in Fulton Township, to sign paperwork adding their two farms – 59 acres and 11 acres – to the growing list of preserved farms in Lancaster County.

The larger farm is home to the family’s small dairy herd, some chickens, a couple of watchful farm dogs, and a small machine shop. Just to its south, their 11-acre farm is home to the eldest Stoltzfus son and his young family. There, the family grows produce for Lancaster Farm Fresh Cooperative.

In addition to the cows and vegetables, the Stoltzfus family grows a mix of corn, alfalfa, and tobacco on their farms. They also employ good conservation practices, such as conservation tillage or no-till, secure manure storage units, a grassed waterway, cover cropping, and contour farming.

The Stoltzfus farms are in good company – they are directly adjacent to another preserved farm, and within a two-mile radius of 27 other preserved farms, totaling more than 2,590 acres of preserved farmland. Adding these family farms creates a large, contiguous block of preserved land – helping protect the future of agriculture in Lancaster County.

The Stoltzfus’ look forward to the security that farmland preservation will afford the future of their land and their family.



Top: the smaller 11-acre Stoltzfus farm.
Bottom: the main, 59-acre Stoltzfus family farm.

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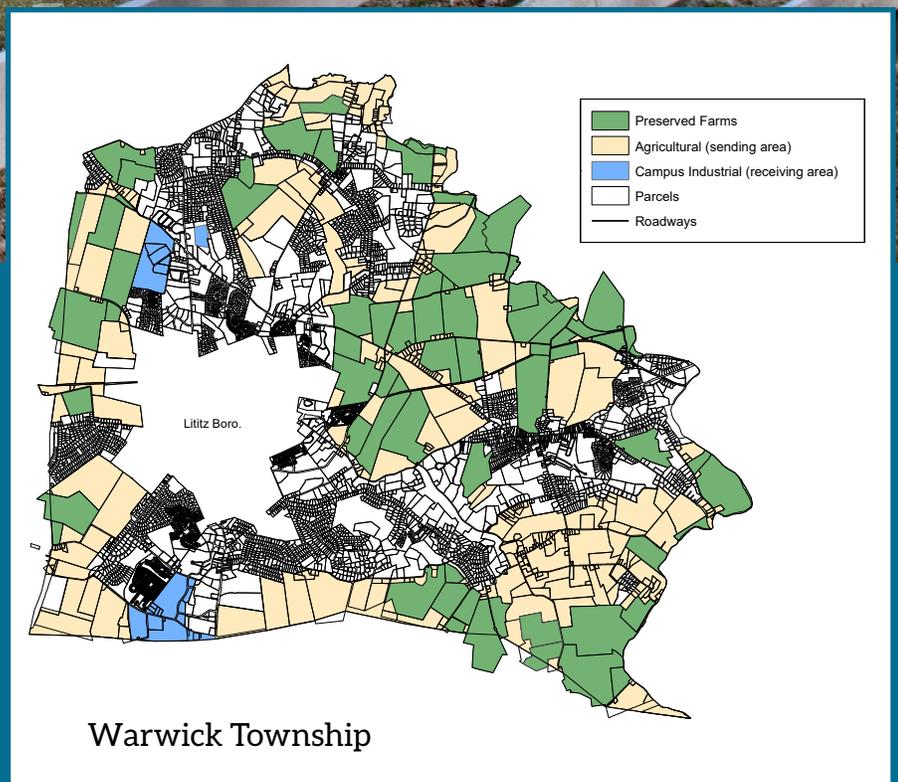
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Under Warwick Township's Zoning Ordinance, the **Transferable Development Rights (TDR) Program** assigns every farm within the Agricultural zone one TDR for each two gross-acres of farmland. TDRs are sold for the purpose of increasing lot coverage in the Campus Industrial zone. The maximum lot coverage within the Campus Industrial zone is 10%; however, an additional 4,000 square feet of lot coverage is permitted with the purchase of one TDR, up to a maximum coverage of 70%.

The funds generated by the sale of TDRs are specifically used to preserve additional farmland within Warwick Township.



It Takes A Village

Interview and photos by Laura Brenner

MEET THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

In Warwick Township, creating a thriving community boils down to one thing – “balancing assets to have a diversified portfolio” – at least that’s how Township Manager, Dan Zimmerman, sees it.

“You want industrial, commercial, residential, and agricultural [zones] in your township,” Dan explains. Apologizing for speaking quickly, Dan raises his hand over a printed township map, motioning to color-blocked sections and explaining their value to the community. “We actively seek out farms [to preserve]. This area next to Penn Township makes sense – it’s a gorgeous valley here,” Dan points to the northwestern corner of the map.

Dan’s passion for making Warwick Township a beautiful place to live and work is easy to spot – he bubbles over with stories from the last 26 years. During his tenure, Dan has shepherded 29 farms through preservation, while making spaces for job-creating, modern “campus industrial” sites like Listrak, UPMC Lititz, and Rock Lititz.

Shortly after he started working for the township, three brothers preserved their adjoining farms. The farms had been in their family for ten generations; none of the brothers had children, so they decided to protect the land before they sold the farms.

Dan recalls being at one brother’s home and watching him reach into a drawer to retrieve a document in a plastic bag. “He had the 1732 deed from William Penn’s son in a ziplock bag,” recalls Dan. “I just think that’s cool.”

Warwick Township’s success in preserving farmland is thanks to their Transferable Development Right (TDR) provision (see description at left), intended to slow the rate of growth in the township. “We want to create sustainable growth,” says Dan, “the TDR provision allows us to plan for and channel growth where it makes sense. It’s a great tool.”

Working alongside Dan are the Township Supervisors and partners like Lancaster Farmland Trust and the Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board. Dan believes this team is crucial to the success of TDRs and farmland preservation in Warwick Township.

Dan knows his attention to sustainable growth and the TDR program are not the only driving forces behind preservation in Warwick Township. “These farmers are [preserving their farms] for the love of the land. They preserved because they want it to last. You just can’t beat that.”



Dan Zimmerman, Warwick Township Manager, advocates for farmland preservation and other smart-growth strategies.

“We actively seek out farms [to preserve].”



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farms and more
than 800 acres
of farmland.

Thank you.

