

Lancaster Farmland Trust Announces a Renewed Focus on Impact at Annual Dinner

For immediate release: September 28th, 2022

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Lancaster Farmland Trust (LFT) celebrated farmland preservation and Lancaster County agriculture at its Together for the Land event on September 27th. Friends, farmers, and supporters attended to honor the commitment the Lancaster County community has made to protecting the county's vital farmland. The event, held at The Farm at Eagles Ridge, raised more than \$118,000 for farmland preservation.

Jeff Swinehart, President and CEO of LFT, announced that since it was established in 1988, the non-profit has protected 557 farms covering more than 34,256 acres, "The impact of LFT reaches beyond the 21 farms protected on 1,285 acres this year and beyond the 13 additional farms to be protected by the end of 2022. Our work provides a wonderful quality of life to our community in Lancaster, preserving this place we get to call home. Yet, we know our farmland is at risk of development. A recent report from American Farmland Trust names Lancaster County as one of the three hardest hit counties in Pennsylvania, with a projection of 18,000 acres of additional farmland lost by 2040 - if we continue to build at the same rate and density. For context, 18,000 acres of farmland is the equivalent of 231 average-sized Lancaster County farms. I would challenge the community, the next time you drive around Lancaster, start counting farms and imagine the loss to our community if we don't change those projections."

Swinehart highlighted the organization's plans for the future, unveiling components of a new strategic plan the organization has been working on throughout 2022 with Due East Partners. LFT is focusing its mission to vigorously accelerate the permanent protection and stewardship of farmland with the vision of our farms, soil, water, and roots protected for all.

Clean Water Partners Director of Strategic Partnerships, Allyson Gibson, attended the event and spoke about the impact LFT has on the Chesapeake Bay through its water quality work. "Lancaster County's local creeks and rivers need us. Supporting our local farms, creeks, and farmers is the best opportunity to see successful water quality improvement. All of that will trickle downstream to our friends in the Bay."

Lancaster County Commissioners Ray D'Agostino and John Trescot attended the event and shared the importance of farmland preservation in Lancaster County. With the recent approval of \$1.52 million in ARPA funding, LFT is grateful for the Commissioner's continued support of protecting Lancaster County agriculture and waterways.

The highlight of the evening was the annual Acres for Auction, at which attendees entered "bids" to preserve two family farms. During this year's successful "auction," LFT raised enough to protect a 103-acre farm and a 31-acre farm in Strasburg Township.

The event saw the support of the local and regional business community, as well. More than a dozen businesses supported the event. Sponsors of this year's event include The Wenger Group, PNC, The Steinman Foundation, Lancaster Farming, LNP, Beiler-Campbell Realtors, Horizon Farm Credit, Commonwealth Financial Associates, Conestoga Animal Hospital, Fulton Bank, Hooper Inc., Univest, LandStudies Inc., Truist, Good's Livestock, and Brown Shultz Sheridan & Fritz.--