Harmony Farm Preservation Honors the Farleys

When Dr. Barbara Farley passed away in 2011, she left her niece Norma Stern a farm in western Harmony Township that she and her husband, Robert (d. 1999), had enjoyed for many years. Norma and her husband, Scot, chose to honor their beloved aunt and uncle by preserving this 108-acre property, with its rolling terrain and lovely hilltop vistas, and calling it Farley Acres. The preservation effort was successfully completed in March 2015, with the help of The Land Conservancy of New Jersey.

“The power of alignment between The Land Conservancy of New Jersey’s stated mission and my goals for our family farm was amazingly similar. Aaron Cela and the rest of the team at The Conservancy made the arduous process manageable by preserving communication and integrity during the entire process,” said Stern. “The end result was that the people of New Jersey have protected 108 acres of land and the associated environment, and we have realized a dream to protect this valuable resource from development for many years to come,” he added.

The land is actively maintained by a neighboring farmer who harvests corn and hay and the farm expands an already extensive preserved farm belt in Harmony Township and Warren County. The Farley Acres preservation was funded by the State Department of Agriculture (SADC) and the Warren County and Harmony Township Open Space Trusts.

The Land Conservancy looks forward to the next Harmony Township project, as we authored the Township’s Farmland Preservation Plan in 2008 and its Open Space Plan in 2006. Just last year, we helped preserve a nearby farm, Sunny Hill Farm, through the SADC’s Nonprofit Program.

A Pocket Park for Caldwell: The Caldwell Volunteer Firemen's Park

The former home of the Columbian Club and Knights of Columbus is now open space, a place for the neighbors along Personette Street and everyone in the Caldwell community to enjoy, thanks to The Land Conservancy of New Jersey and the Borough of Caldwell.

The park backs up to a stream and may be used for education programs sponsored by the nearby library. The park will also host an Open Space Native Pollinator Plant Garden, thanks to an Open Space Stewardship Grant awarded to the Caldwell Environmental Commission on Earth Day. The garden will be planted with native species that attract and nourish pollinators, including butterflies and bees, whose populations have been declining due to loss of habitat.

Says Mayor Ann Dassing, "The Borough of Caldwell is very pleased to add the Personette Street property to our list of open space parcels. The parcel will be named The Caldwell Volunteer Firemen’s Park, to honor past and present volunteers. I know the neighborhood will truly benefit from the creation of this park as will all who enjoy being outdoors and with nature."

Creating the park meant tearing down the old Columbian Club building and making sure the site was environmentally sound. The Land Conservancy of New Jersey helped with this and facilitated the necessary steps to make the purchase using funds allocated to the Borough through a Planning Incentive Grant from the State of New Jersey’s Green Acres Program.

The Land Conservancy often works with towns, advising them on preservation strategies and facilitating acquisitions. The Conservancy also delivered an updated open space map. “It was a great opportunity for the Borough to acquire this property,” said Linda Gloshinki, the Land Conservancy’s Land Preservation Specialist who worked with the town on this project. “Although the parcel is small in size, it is a wonderful addition to the neighborhood. It is nice to see that the community will be coming together to create a memorial park, providing a passive recreational use where none currently exists, as well as a place for reflection.”
The Land Conservancy has adopted a new strategic plan to guide our work for the next five years. We will continue to work hard to win the race to preserve open space and protect our next 20,000 acres - that part of our mission has not changed at all. But we are also broadening our focus to increase the many ways that people can enjoy the lands that we preserve. Helping more people use the lands we preserve and understand the many benefits that preservation, restoration and recreation can provide will become an increasingly important part of our work in the years ahead.

Growing local food for our communities

We will create new community gardens, like the one at the South Branch Preserve, to increase community involvement. This initial venture has been a tremendous success as we have doubled the size of the garden and gardeners donated 500 pounds of fresh produce to the local food banks that we support. There is now a waiting list that includes people who have room in their yards for a garden but want to join to meet new like-minded friends and learn more about gardening. We are also working to open a new 30-acre farm at our South Branch Preserve next year, which will grow food in a river-friendly manner, a significant portion of which will be donated to feed people in our local communities who don’t have enough to eat.

Restoring land to benefit wildlife

This month The Conservancy began converting 31 acres of former cornfields to wildflowers that will provide habitat for the Monarch butterfly. We will be planting dozens of species of native wildflowers and milkweeds, which will not only attract and support this perilously declining species, but provide beautiful displays of wildflowers along Route 46. We will build a trail to view the butterflies as well as install a butterfly cam to allow visitors to our website to watch the butterflies remotely. We are partnering with JCP&L to remove invasive species and restore a portion of their power line right of way that traverses the South Branch Preserve to native habitat. This three year project-began in September and will result in a wildflower meadow that will attract butterflies, hummingbirds and bees, which will help pollinate crops at our new farm.

Engaging people to enjoy the great outdoors

We will build more trails, like the new one at the South Branch Preserve, to highlight the reforestation project we have completed to create a new riparian buffer along the South Branch of the Raritan River. This trail will allow hikers to traverse this area to see the progress as the plantings turn into a forest. Educational signs will lead down to the South Branch, where our new bird blind provides visitors with a magnificent view over a wildlife-filled marsh. We are providing new opportunities to see the Columbia Trail and the South Branch of the Raritan River through our Pedal for Preservation bike event and the northern New Jersey countryside for the more serious riders through our Gran Fondo bike team.

As we update our webpage and expand our use of social media, we hope that you will stay in touch with us electronically, come out to our preserves, join us for bike riding and continue to support this critical work. With your help, we will find new ways to protect, restore and help the public get even more enjoyment from New Jersey’s beautiful countryside.
2015 Rogers Family Scholarship Recipient Selected

Hailing from Waldwick, New Jersey, Ryan Martens studied Environmental Planning and Design at Rutgers University.

He will graduate in 2016 and will be heavily involved in the planning, design, and implementation of green infrastructure in various urban areas of New Jersey.

Ryan believes that change starts within and encourages everyone to envision a better future and strive to make positive changes in themselves, their communities, and the world at large.

“This is a wonderful opportunity to expand my knowledge and passion for the environment and New Jersey’s beautiful and complex habitats. This scholarship will help me complete my academic career at Rutgers, and will propel me into my future of education and experience in the world of sustainable infrastructure, social justice, and environmental activism.”

The Land Conservancy’s Scholarship Program awards two scholarships annually, the Russell W. Myers Scholarship and the Rogers Family Scholarship. A total of $15,000 ($7,500 each) will be awarded in 2016 to two deserving students studying in the field of environmental science, natural resource management, conservation, horticulture, park administration, or a related field. For more information visit: tlc-nj.org

Inviting Happenings at South Branch Preserve

Other than the trees, not much stands still these days at The Land Conservancy of New Jersey’s 309-acre South Branch Preserve in Mount Olive Township. It is becoming an ecological microcosm of organic fields, community gardens, trails, forest restoration, butterfly meadows and the gently flowing waters of the South Branch of the Raritan River, which is a source of drinking water for more than 1.5 million New Jersey residents. It is also becoming a place for people to go not only to enjoy nature but also to be educated about how to reclaim land and protect a watershed.

Two of the latest additions to the Preserve are designed to invite people in: a kiosk and a picnic bench. The kiosk, built by Boy Scout Joe Harmon as his Eagle Scout project, stands near the parking lot for the North Section of the Preserve, off Wolfe Road near the intersection with Route 46. The kiosk displays trail maps and other information about the Preserve. Nearby, just off the main path between the parking lot and the community garden is a newly created picnic area, where visitors can relax at a picnic table beneath the shade of a huge sugar maple tree.

Across Wolfe Road from the parking lot and community garden, local beekeeper Ingrid O’Connor has set up hives. The bees will help pollinate the vegetables and flowers in the community garden as well as at The Farm and other fields in the area.

The South Branch Preserve’s North Section is located on Wolfe Road in Mount Olive Township, near the intersection with Route 46. To learn more, visit tlc-nj.org

Above: Boy Scout Joe Harmon with the kiosk he built.
Below: Beekeeper, Ingrid O’Connor, with fresh honey.
The spring of 2015 saw three farms added to the roster of preserved farmland in Harmony Township, Warren County: 24-acre Al-Ruby Farm, 19-acre Apgars Cider Press and 108-acre Farley Acres. Two of the farms are in the Highlands Preservation Area, and all of them are adjacent to or near preserved farmland, active agricultural land or preserved open space. In a township that's rich in agricultural heritage, these three preserved spaces further strengthen its commitment to agricultural sustainability and viability.

The three farms were preserved through a Municipal Planning Incentive Grant from the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) and cost shares from the Warren County Agriculture Development Board and the Harmony Township Open Space Trust Fund. The Township’s 2008 Farmland Preservation Plan indicated that 1,273 acres had already been preserved and set a goal of preserving an additional 1,000 acres by 2017.

According to SADC records, more than 2,000 acres of farmland in the Township have been preserved since 1997, representing nearly 10% of the farmland preserved in Warren County.

The Land Conservancy of New Jersey thanks the New Jersey Chapter of the American Water Resources Association for its recognition of our forest restoration work at South Branch Preserve. With the support of our partner, the New Jersey Water Supply Authority, and our major funder, the United States Forest Service with matching grants provided by the National Forest Foundation and The Leavens Foundation, 7,185 trees and shrubs have been planted at the Preserve. BASF and Mars Corporations provided volunteers and material support for the ecological restoration, wrapping 815 trees in a protective covering, greatly enhancing the success of the planted trees.

The Land Conservancy of New Jersey
Receives Award from
The American Water Resources Association

The Land Conservancy of New Jersey thanks the New Jersey Chapter of the American Water Resources Association for its recognition of our forest restoration work at South Branch Preserve. With the support of our partner, the New Jersey Water Supply Authority, and our major funder, the United States Forest Service with matching grants provided by the National Forest Foundation and The Leavens Foundation, 7,185 trees and shrubs have been planted at the Preserve. BASF and Mars Corporations provided volunteers and material support for the ecological restoration, wrapping 815 trees in a protective covering, greatly enhancing the success of the planted trees.

Pictured Right: Mike Haberland, Vice President and Virginia Michelin, President of AWRA present the award to Barbara Heskins Davis, Vice President, Programs of The Land Conservancy of New Jersey
Frelinghuysen Proud of Its Municipal Farm

Frelinghuysen Township values its rural character and its viewscape. So the mayor was thrilled when 28 acres of land became municipal, preserved farmland on April 21, 2015, just in time for Earth Day. "Through the Preservation of our Municipal Farm property," said Mayor Christopher Kuhn, "this Township Committee has ensured the first thing someone driving into Frelinghuysen on Route 94 South will see is a sweeping vista of the Kittatiny Ridge and cultivated fields. The preservation of this property also prevents more intense development along the Frelinghuysen School property. The students and school will remain surrounded by farms, true to the character of our community."

The Township-owned farmland is leased to a farmer who grows corn on its fields, and a County-held easement prevents the land from ever being developed. It is situated across the road from other preserved land, the Johnsonburg Swamp Preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy. The journey to preservation was long and the partners were several, including a unique organization called the 1772 Foundation, which, in partnership with the Land Trust Alliance, awards grants to land trusts protecting farmland within a 100-mile radius of New York City or Boston, the foodsheds of these cities.

“We're happy to see this farm preserved and thank the Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders and Frelinghuysen Township Committee for their support,” says Corey Tierney, Administrator for the Warren County Department of Land Preservation. “The Land Conservancy of New Jersey, which secured 50% of the funding through a 1772 Foundation grant, was especially helpful in pulling this project together and deserves special thanks. The funding they brought to the table enables the county and township to leverage local dollars in order to preserve even more farmland.” The remaining 50% of the preservation cost was funded by a grant from the Warren County Municipal Open Space Trust Fund, with the Township covering the cost of appraisals.

Monroe Township Kicks Off First Season for Community Garden

For years, residents of Monroe Township, Gloucester County, have had a community garden on their wish list. On June 1, 2015, the dream became reality with ninety six 10’ x 10’ plots that were ready for planting.

The project began when Todd Ochsner, a lifetime resident of the Township, generously donated 12 acres off Applegarth Road to the municipality. Harold Klein, Assistant to the Township Administrator, then met with Barbara Davis from The Land Conservancy of New Jersey, who agreed to provide assistance in moving the project forward. The Land Conservancy designed and manages a successful community garden in Mount Olive Township.

Ochsner and Dennis Briede, Stewardship Manager for The Land Conservancy, determined the prime location for the gardens within the 12 donated acres and designed the layout of the new garden. The Township provided monetary support and personnel who graded, installed a water line and a gravel parking lot. The garden plots were laid out with gravel pathways dividing them, hoses and a fence were installed, and an elegantly carved colorful wooden sign was hung at the entrance. The plots sold out well before opening day!

John Riggs, Director of Planning and Environmental Protection for the Township, sums up the success of the community garden project, noting “we have turned a need into a reality.”

Barbara McCloskey, Outreach Manager at The Land Conservancy, advised the township regarding logistics, rules and procedures and also enforced that gardeners must follow organic gardening practices. Going forward, the operation and management of the garden will be handled by The Friends of the Monroe Township Community Garden, a 501(c)3 organization. Future plans include a series of educational gardening workshops as well as adding 86 plots to meet the growing 2016 waiting list.

“I would recommend The Land Conservancy to any other community that’s considering this,” says Klein. “They provided valuable expertise, and we have a good up and coming garden.”
Community Garden Donates over 500 lbs. of Fresh Food

The Community Garden at South Branch Preserve in Mt. Olive has donated over 500 lbs. of food to The Christ Church Mt. Olive Food Pantry and Drakestown Church Food Pantry since July!

Reserve Your Garden Plot Today!

The Community Garden is located on a quarter-acre on the westbound side of Wolfe Road, near its intersection with Route 46 East. It is part of South Branch Preserve, which totals over 200 acres in this location. Preserved by The Land Conservancy and its partners (including Mt. Olive Township) this land was purchased to protect the headwaters of the South Branch of the Raritan River, a drinking water supply source for over 1.5 million New Jersey residents.

Novices and master gardeners are invited to purchase a 10x10 foot plot at the Preserve. A total of 145 plots are available.

For additional information, to reserve a plot, or to volunteer contact Barbara McCloskey at (973) 541-1010 x14, or gardenmanager@tlc-nj.org.

Partners for Parks: Season Highlights

The 2015 Partners for Parks spring season ended with 12 new projects and 162 volunteers participating throughout the state.

The Land Conservancy of New Jersey had the opportunity to work at two new locations, including Mountain Way Park in Parsippany, working with employees from GlaxoSmithKline, making improvement to the trails at the park, and a partnership with Habitat for Humanity at one of their worksites in Morristown.

Employee teams from BASF, Merck, Selective Insurance, Pearson, Goldman Sachs, Mars and Prudential all brought their enthusiasm and energy to projects at the Cross Estates, Lord Stirling Environmental Center, the Avian Wildlife Center, Lorrimer Sanctuary and Reeves Reed Arboretum.

Several corporate teams worked at The Land Conservancy’s South Branch Preserve and Headquarters at Wild Acres Estates. Mars employees did an outstanding job preparing our Community Garden at our South Branch Preserve for the season by attaching hoses & spreading woodchips along the garden path.

In addition, three projects were held at Wild Acres, where volunteers from Investors Bank, JCP&L and Goldman Sachs prepared a rock wall, pruned shrubs and bushes and spread 3 cubic yards of wood chips on the paths in the native garden. Goldman Sachs employees worked inside the office, painting the bathroom and providing logistics support for our 4th Annual Pedal for Preservation event which was held that weekend.

The Land Conservancy of New Jersey is deeply grateful for all of the corporate sponsors who help to make the Partners for Parks program possible. Sponsors of the 2015 Spring season included: BASF, Daily Record, Investors Bank, Merck, Novartis, PSEG and Round Table Wealth Management.

As of the end of the 2015 spring season, Partners for Parks has completed a total of 521 projects with 8,950 volunteers!

Team Preservation at Gran Fondo, NJ

The Land Conservancy of New Jersey would like to thank Team Preservation for participating in the Gran Fondo NJ on September 13, 2015. Team members raised $5,840 to preserve the landscapes you love.

Starting and ending in historic Morristown, this combination of bike touring and timed climbs attracts a wide range of cyclists from the casual weekend rider to the well-trained endurance athlete. To learn more about Team Preservation contact Rhonda VanAntwerp at rvanantwerp@tlc-nj.org
On September 17, 2015, The Land Conservancy of New Jersey held its 7th Annual Gray Cup Invitational Golf classic at the acclaimed Ballyowen Golf Club in Hamburg, New Jersey. Nearly 100 golfers were in attendance to support The Land Conservancy of New Jersey and their statewide, award-winning programs in Land Preservation, Stewardship, and Education.

The Gray Cup is named in honor of dedicated conservationist C. Graydon Rogers, a former Land Conservancy Chairman of the Board of Trustees and founder of the investment firm W.P. Stewart & Co., Inc. The Gray Cup is The Land Conservancy’s largest fundraising event, and all of the proceeds raised support its work preserving New Jersey’s open space, farmland, and water resources. “It was a wonderful day and we value every golfer, sponsor, and volunteer for their support,” said David Epstein, President of The Land Conservancy. This year’s sponsors included Alliance Bernstein L.P., CAPTRUST Financial Advisors, the Corrigan family, the Golding family, Heritage Abstract, Investors Bank, McCarter & English, LLC, the Pester family, the Rogers family and Round Table Wealth Management.

Congratulations to Jeffrey Anderson, the 2015 Gray Cup winner. “It was great to support The Land Conservancy of New Jersey in the 7th Annual Gray Cup Invitational Golf Classic and be crowned 2015 Champion,” he said. Another highlight from the round included a hole in one by John Bonfiglio, who was awarded an iPad mini.

During the evening program, The Land Conservancy was honored to present The Rosalie Laventhal Volunteer of the Year Award to BASF Corporation. The BASF Corporation has been a supporter of The Land Conservancy of New Jersey for fifteen years. Over 220 BASF employees and interns have participated in nine projects through The Land Conservancy’s award-winning Partners for Parks program, and BASF has been a major supporter of The Land Conservancy of New Jersey’s popular Pedal for Preservation annual fundraising and awareness-raising event.

The Rosalie Laventhal Volunteer of the Year Award was established three years ago by The Land Conservancy of New Jersey to honor Rosalie Laventhal, who served as Development Director for five years before passing away in 2012. Rosalie was universally admired by her co-workers, members of the board, and all of the people with whom she worked. The award is presented annually to honor an outstanding volunteer and/or company whose volunteer land conservation work best exemplifies Rosalie’s spirit of volunteerism and giving back to the community. Past recipients of the award are Ron Duval from the Lexus Eastern Region area office and the employees of Toyota/Lexus and Russ Arlotta and the employees of PSEG.

The 4th Annual Pedal for Preservation drew nearly 500 cyclists of all ages who hit the trail on Saturday morning, June 6, 2015, to raise money for The Land Conservancy of New Jersey, organizer of the event.

Leaving from West Morris Central High School in Chester, the riders headed out in staged departures for round-trip rides of 30, 20 and 7 miles along the Columbia Trail through Morris and Hunterdon counties, traveling through picturesque Long Valley, Califon and High Bridge. Bob Falcone of Long Valley said, “It was extremely well organized and a great time was had by all on my team. I look forward to participating again next year.”

The ride was well supported with food, drink, and live musical entertainment at the high school, rest stops along the way, bike techs to adjust a misbehaving bike, a support system to pick up a weary rider, and police officers and volunteers posted at critical road crossings along the way. The Long Valley First Aid Squad was prepared to respond to any emergency with their EMTs and a Polaris Rescue Ranger designed for trails. This year a two-hour, guided hike in nearby Schooley’s Mountain Park was added as an option for non-cyclists.

“This has become one of our signature annual fundraising events,” David Epstein, President of The Land Conservancy explained, “and it couldn’t happen without our volunteers and sponsors.” Many thanks to BASF, PSEG, Dixon Energy, Round Table Wealth Management, Riker Danzig, Tom Scudese and Family, Rick and Shelley Simon, REI, Anthony & Sons, Fischer-Thompson, Red Rock Oven, Ronecto Supermarkets, Starbucks, Marty’s Reliable Cycle, Big Dan’s Bike Shop Safe Kids Northern New Jersey, and Road ID.

This year, the Finish Festival, a celebration for the riders and their efforts to preserve open space, included representatives from The Washington Township Historical Society, Alstede Farms of Chester, Pur2O, AAA Roxbury, and Just Jersey, as well as Navitend, who exhibited an electric car. Lively bluegrass music provided by The Hawk Owls of Sussex serenaded riders and made the pack-up and load out go quickly for the volunteers at day’s end.
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