

## Grassland Reserve Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced a new program to help landowners conserve grasslands through easements and long-term agreements. Participants applying for permanent easements will receive payment based on the fair market value of the property less the grazing value. Applicants must own forty contiguous acres. For more information, contact Scott Fitscher, NRCS district conservationist, at 692-9940 x 3.

## Landscapes for Landsake - Mark your calendar for October 11

"It's a gala, an extravaganza, a wonderful event," says Janine Lazarus, owner of Village Framer on Main Street in Greenwich. Janine is organizing the artwork for the second annual Landscapes for Landsake art event at Larry Sconzo's Maple Ridge in Coila, just outside of Cambridge. Among the artists already signed up (and more are in the works) are George Van Hook, Marguerite Takvorian-Holmes, Jean Clark, Heidi Merecki, James Shanz, Renji Singh, and artists from the Troy Riverfront Artists Association.

"All different kinds of people are going to be doing their version of the great outdoors," says Janine. "They'll all be landscapes but not necessarily realistic. There'll be some Realism, some Classical, Some Impressionism..."

Forty percent of the proceeds from art sales will go to ASA. According to Janine, "last year's event was very well attended and we expect even more this year."

All are invited to attend the opening event on October 11, from 4 to 7 p.m.

## Agricultural Stewardship Association

28R Main St.  
Greenwich, NY 12834

### I WANT TO JOIN ASA IN SUPPORTING LAND CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP IN THE WASHINGTON COUNTY REGION.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

(Please print your name as you would like it to appear in our annual report.)

Check here for "anonymous."

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Basic Membership \$30     Sustaining \$100

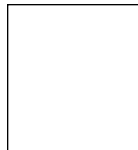
Supporting \$50     ASA Patron \$500

Enclosed is an additional donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
for ASA's easement stewardship program.

I would like to volunteer. Please contact me at (e-mail address or telephone number) \_\_\_\_\_.

## ASA Raffle Winner

Harold Hayes of Shushan won a New Holland lawn tractor at a raffle drawing on July 12. "This is the best thing I ever won," says Hayes. The riding mower was donated by Capital Tractor Inc. ASA's next raffle will be a family seasonal skiing pass to Willard Mountain.



# ASAnews

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## ASA Secures State and Federal Grants to Protect Two Easton Farms

Two farms along Route 40 in Easton were recently awarded state and federal farmland protection grants totaling \$498,900 that ASA helped to secure. The funds will be used to purchase conservation easements on farmland belonging to George Houser and Rosemarie Anuszewski. When the project is completed, ASA will have permanently protected a block of 1,000 contiguous acres of farmland.

The Anuszewskis and Housers have long been interested in protecting their farmland and worked with ASA to apply for state funds to purchase the development rights more than three years ago. The project really started moving in April of this year, when Washington County and ASA were informed that a \$338,025 grant that had been awarded to the county from NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets could be applied to the two Easton farms.

ASA immediately applied for federal funds to make up the shortfall. In New York State, where only \$2.3 million was allocated for the federal Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP), sixteen applicants requested over \$21.8 million in funding. That ASA was successful under these circumstances speaks to the

quality of the project. NRCS State Conservationist Joe DelVecchio announced on July 28 that ASA was selected as a recipient of federal funds.

"We have been hoping for many years to protect these two farms," said David Horn, President of the ASA Board of Directors. "They are part of a broad working landscape in Easton that is being preserved for agriculture. Without the Federal funds, this project would not have been possible. We're extremely pleased to be working in partnership with USDA, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and Washington County to protect these two important farms in Easton."

ASA operates the county Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program in partnership with the Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board. ASA manages all aspects of the PDR program including the grant application process, easement negotiation, project transactions and the long-term stewardship of the easements.

The county PDR program allows landowners to be compensated for voluntarily limiting future development on their land. Anyone interested in PDR can contact ASA for further information. ■

## Model Member of Farming Community



GEORGE HOUSER WITH GRANDDAUGHTER VICTORIA AND A LITTLE "NATURE'S BOUNTY."

What makes George Houser do what he's done — work with Nelson Rockefeller's Commission for the Preservation of Agricultural Land to craft the 1971 Agricultural Districts Law in New York State, be the first in Washington County to donate an easement to American Farmland Trust, establish the Agricultural Stewardship Association as a founding member, preserve more than 700 acres of farmland of his own family's, and help George III with a farm on which some 500 cows are milked?

George has the answer. "You can't really do this or expect anyone to do it unless you have the conservation ethic. Take a nice field. One person looks at it and says, 'Wouldn't that be a great site for a house!' We say, 'Wouldn't that be an awful thing if they put a house there!'"

George Houser's conservation ethic is a big part of why southwestern Washington County looks as it does. In addition to his own conserved properties along and near Route 40 in Easton, George has helped persuade several neighbors to conserve their farms. And he was instrumental in establishing the Easton planning board, on which he served nineteen years, much of that time as chairperson. Easton has

the highest concentration of "prime" and "statewide significant" soils (the very best) in Washington County, and the regulations and laws he helped create to protect those soils and the right to farm are some of the strongest in the county.

The Houser home farm has been in the family for more than two hundred years. "When you're raised in the country," he says, "you learn from your grandparents, and in my case uncles and my mother, to respect the land and the hard work that went into getting it into condition." About a perfect field of hay along Route 40 at the home farm, for example, George says "Some people drive by and say 'Look at that field! Aaaah, nature's bounty!' But nature didn't have everything to do with it. I worked on that field for twenty-five years!"

For all his commitment to farming George understands he can only preserve farmland, not farming itself. George and his wife Earline understand that their four grandkids might want to someday raise their own families on the farms, or might instead want to sell the farms. And so although none of the easements the Housers have placed on their farmland permit subdivision, some do make provision for one house. Where that house can be located is specified in what planners call a "building envelope".

The recent grants from the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program and New York's Farmland Protection Program will cover the purchase of the development rights on the Houser farm. The land already conserved has been protected through donation — not the sale — of easements. "You respect the property, you respect the land," he says. "It's anything but a commodity." ■



The Agricultural Stewardship Association is a non-profit land trust founded in 1990 by local farmers, agribusiness representatives, and conservationists to protect land for agricultural use in the Washington County, New York region. We accomplish this mission through our land conservation and stewardship programs and public education efforts. To date, we have protected over 3,500 acres of farmland in the county.

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Brian Ziehm Easton 859-4741	<i>Executive Director</i> Teri Ptacek Greenwich 692-7285

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## Message from the President

It was thirteen years ago that George Houser, profiled in this issue of ASA News, helped establish ASA. Now, with the upcoming preservation of another Houser parcel and the Anuszewski farm in Easton, ASA will have conserved more than 4,000 acres of farmland in the Washington County region. We have had our eyes on these two important parcels for a long time and it will be great to finally help preserve them.

We owe much of this recent conservation success to our new Executive Director, Teri Ptacek. Teri has jumped into work since starting this spring. She has already greatly improved our organization and is working on several land projects in addition to the Houser and Anuszewski farms. In fact, if things go as planned, we could protect more than 1,000 additional acres in the next twelve months. It has been extremely gratifying to work with Teri and to know that ASA selected the best person for the Executive Director position.

We are sorry to see Jim Perry leave the board. Thank you, Jim, for all your good work for us. Expanding the board to eleven has brought a lot of new energy and capabilities to our organization. Our new board members are really motivated. Al Klein, Glen Rowse, Meg Southerland, and Brian Ziehm bring a good balance of skills and interests to improve board oversight of ASA.

We will be sorry also to see Jessica Bielecki, our summer intern, leave in August. Having Jessica has been a big help to Teri and to ASA. We will miss her but maybe we can recruit her back at some point if her education schedule permits it. Meanwhile, perhaps some of our members would like to volunteer to help with our stewardship or public outreach programs. Increasingly, there is a lot to do at ASA!

## Executive Director for ASA



Teri Ptacek became ASA's first executive director in April. Her hiring was the culmination of more than a year of planning and fundraising by ASA board members to transition from a volunteer to a full-time professionally staffed organization.

Teri comes to ASA after nine years at the Northeast Office of American Farmland Trust, a national farmland conservation organization. She knows the Washington County region and many of its farmers well, having helped develop agricultural and farmland protection plans for Washington, Rensselaer, and Saratoga Counties.

Teri and her husband Andy Kelly moved from Wisconsin to Andy's family's home in the Village of Greenwich in the 1980s. She was pursuing a degree in urban and regional planning at Pratt Institute when Pam Cali, one of the founders of ASA, introduced her to the organization. The result was a master's degree in urban and regional planning for a thesis on land evaluation and site assessment in the little town of Greenwich.

"Over the past two years the board has worked very hard to develop a strategic plan, raise funds, and hire staff. All of this will enable ASA to protect more land and responsibly monitor and enforce our easements. I'm really happy and thankful that the board has chosen me to help take the organization to the next level," said Teri at the April 30th ASA annual meeting.

Teri is a Wisconsin native and granddaughter of farmers from the Milwaukee area. She and Andy have two children, Annelise and Ian.

## ASA Welcomes New Board Members

Eleven board members. All of them hugely capable, hard-working and good-looking. Four of them new as of April. The new ones are:

**Al Klein** and his wife Debora called the old schoolhouse on Route 61 and Skelly Road their summer home for 42 years. Twelve years ago they bought land in Shushan, and agreed that when they retired they'd live on it. "We've always loved it here," says Al. When Fleet Bank of Boston bought out the business Al co-owned, retirement beckoned.

"When we bought land in Shushan we also bought the farm across the road to keep it out of development. Kenyon Hill Farm agreed to use it as part of their operation," says Al. "It was the way agriculture shaped the land which makes Washington County so attractive to us. I joined the ASA board because I wanted to support it in any way I could. And I'm really impressed with the board and what they're doing, individually and collectively."

**Glenwood Rowse** owns a 200-acre farm between Greenwich and Cambridge on which he raises forty or fifty grass-fed Belted Galways and other "odds and ends." He's also got another job, managing data collection and planning for colleges for the state's education department.

"We moved to Washington County in 1989, and I've seen a little more development in the county every year," he says. "I think that creeping development is going to increase. ASA is an organization that can help deal with that development. It can make more people in the county aware that it's occurring, as well as providing an alternative. I'd like to do all I can to help that," he went on. "ASA provides a viable option for preserving the environment in the county – which is why we moved here in the first place."

**Meg Southerland** owns Gardenworks on Route 30 in Hebron. Meg grew up on a dairy and poultry farm before going to Cornell. After twenty years away, she returned to Washington County and

**"THE LOSS OF FARMLAND IS ONE OF THOSE THINGS YOU CAN'T REVERSE," SAYS BRIAN. "I CAN TRADE IN A TRACTOR OR BUY ANOTHER COW, BUT AS THEY SAY – FARMLAND, THEY'RE NOT MAKING ANY MORE OF IT."**

began expanding the family U-pick blueberry and raspberry business as well as growing flowers for fresh and dried use, pumpkins, and Christmas trees.

"Since we moved back to Washington County in 1990 I've seen the transition from a farm-based way of life to people living in the country but commuting," Meg says. "Development pressures seem to be greater in the southern part of the county but they're moving north. We have to be ready to save open space and farmland."

Meg sees her personal contribution to ASA as having to do with education. "I'd like to go into the schools," she says, "and establish a speakers' group to go around to other organizations to increase awareness and understanding of all ASA does. But I've got a lot to learn. If I can contribute as much as the people who preceded me I will be doing well."

**Brian Ziehm** and his two brothers and father own Tiashoke Farm, LLC, about 780 acres in Easton and Buskirk. The name is said to mean "meeting of the water" in a native American language. "There's already a ton of 'Weeping Birches' and 'Windy Pines,' Brian says. "We thought no one else would have our name."

Tiashoke is a fifth-generation farm large and complicated enough to give the Cornell grads that run it a chance "to use their managerial and finance skills without having to sit behind a desk," says Brian. They milk 600 animals two and a half times a day, and have a total herd of 1,000.

Until he moved to the Easton farm Brian was on the Cambridge planning board and worked on developing their comprehensive plan. "At my age, I'm the one that's going to have to live with what happens," he says. "Farmers are becoming a minority. We need to stay out there and keep our image moving forward. ASA has a nice, diverse board with older and younger. I think we can get a lot accomplished." ■

## Senator Little Addresses ASA

ASA's annual meeting was held April 30 in Argyle. Keynote speaker State Senator Betty Little spoke about the then on-going budget process. New board members were introduced, and President Dave Horn presented a plaque to outgoing board member Jim Perry, thanked him for many years of service to ASA, and thanked the Perry family for preserving the home farm. Jim was a founding member of ASA and recently ended a second consecutive three-year term. ■

## A Big Thanks to Jessica

Jessica Bielecki, ASA's summer intern, "has been totally dedicated," says Teri Ptacek. "She's helped organize all our baseline data and monitoring files, and her GIS capabilities have been very important to us." Jessica leaves ASA in August to return as a senior to Mary Washington College in Virginia, and to eventually, she says, "pursue a law degree with an emphasis on environmental and corporate affairs." Look out, world, here comes Jessica! ■



## Stewardship Responsibilities

ASA's easement program has protected nearly 3,500 acres of farmland. Once the land is protected, ASA is responsible for stewardship to ensure that it remains protected forever.

ASA board members and volunteers collect information to develop baseline reports for annual monitoring purposes. Board member Seth Jacobs leads a hands-on baseline monitoring workshop on a property conserved earlier this year. Enforcing easement agreements is central to ASA's mission. ■

