



Fall 2018

Simply
Forever

Page 3

Protecting
a GEM

Page 5

Forever Farmland
Capital Campaign

Page 6

On the Cover

Sam, George & Dave Mesick
conserved GEM Farm
in Schodack this summer

Farmland conservation is forever.

Conservation easements—the legal agreements landowners sign when they conserve their land—guarantee that the places they love will be protected in perpetuity.

That promise of forever is not taken lightly. ASA's middle name, "stewardship", is an essential component of perpetuity. Once the land is protected, ASA has the ongoing responsibility to steward conserved lands. Whether that stewardship is provided by visiting every conserved property annually, providing educational workshops for landowners, offering community farm-based events for children and families, or finding land for new farmers through the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network, we are working to ensure that our conservation values are protected forever.

If you haven't already, we hope you'll consider giving generously to our Annual Fund. Your donation is crucial because it makes the day-to-day work of ASA possible. The end goal is to maintain a robust agricultural economy because that is what makes this region so special as a source of fresh local food, as a home for vibrant farming communities, and as a place of unique scenic beauty. (Just ask the 58 local artists who participated in this year's Landscapes for Landsake Art Exhibition!)

Protecting more land is important too. That's why we launched the final stage of the Forever Farmland Campaign in August. The goal is to raise \$1.9 million in private funds in order to leverage another \$7,516,000 in public funding and conserve another 8,400 acres in perpetuity.

The good news is that we've made substantial progress toward this goal.

There are many reasons why protecting farmland is important right now, before the opportunity is lost forever. Our new website is filled with stories from the farms we've protected. Or you can read the stories in this newsletter from Simply Grazin' and GEM Farms about ensuring sources of local food for generations to come. We can't eat locally, after all, if there aren't any farms to grow that food.

So once again, we thank you for your faith in our mission to conserve these soils that produce food, these landscapes and our rural communities.

Our thanks, in perpetuity,

Katherine Roome Teri Ptacek



Katherine Roome and Teri Ptacek at ASA annual celebration at Hand Melon Farm.

Simply Forever

ASA's first conserved property in Hartford, NY



Mark & Lynn Faille

"You can't take this area for granted. It's special and we want to protect it from the same fate we witnessed in New Jersey."

— *Mark Faille*

When Mark and Lynne Faille first started their farm, Simply Grazin' in Hopewell, NJ, they were raising chickens and gifting them to family and friends. "It was just something that was needed in our community," Lynne said. "We did not intend to start a business." However, 20 years later, their family business had expanded to include organic grass-fed beef and pork sold through Whole Foods, Wegmans and Fresh Direct.

As an organic operation, the Failles need to control what their livestock eat. Their animals graze only on their land and the Failles make their own hay for the winter months. As their business expanded, they ran out of land. What was once open land when they began farming had been taken out of production and either ended up as large estates or was paved over for strip malls and two-lane highways. "In 2003, we were the first farm in our county to conserve our land through the New Jersey state farmland protection program," Mark says. At that time, you could buy an acre of farmland for approximately \$4,000 per acre. Now the last farmable 100 acres is \$22,000 per acre. Today, there is no land available to grow a farm business in Hopewell, NJ.

So in 2010, Mark and Lynne started looking elsewhere for land. They wanted the largest piece for the best price, as close

to New Jersey as they could find. On a snowy winter day, they took a drive north and when their boots hit the ground four hours later in Hartford, NY, they both immediately thought, "Wow, this place is perfect!" Mark and Lynne purchased the Gibbs Farm and another property on County Route 17 and converted the dairy barns for their hog operation. Along the way, they fell in love with the rural beauty of the area.

Now, Mark and Lynne are in the process of moving their home and business headquarters to Washington County as well. They hope to be a catalyst for other area farmers to conserve their land. The Failles understand the importance of having space to produce food. They've learned a lot along the way too. "If you want to buy locally produced food, you have to conserve the land, you have to protect the farmers, and you have to support the agricultural infrastructure," Mark says. "This is a great place to farm. We're here for the long-term and we want to make sure there is a solid base of farms, farmers and farm businesses. We want to build partnerships with other farmers to ensure that this area doesn't become overrun with development."

Funding for this project was provided by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Landscapes for Landsake

17th Annual Art Sale & Exhibition



Over 500 works of art captured the beauty of our region's farms, forests and livestock at this year's Landscapes for Landsake Art Sale & Exhibition on Columbus Day weekend. The event is a celebration of our agricultural community, land, local foods and beverages, and the many talented artists who call this region home.

This year the jury selected 58 artists to participate in the exhibition, 14 of whom were new to the event. All told, 596 works were chosen for the exhibition and 177 pieces were sold, totaling just over \$84,000 in art sales (50% of which goes to our artists)! Curators John and Gigi Begin spent months preparing for the show, employing their elegant and effortless style to ensure each piece was displayed to highlight its unique allure. ASA is truly grateful for all that they have done to elevate this signature event.

This year's featured piece, *In the Stillness*, was painted by Anne Suther-

land. "The landscape determines so many things in the composition of my paintings: form, movement, structure, color and light," Ann says. "I believe our landscapes are more than inspiration. They are essential to our health and the vitality of the region."

ASA is also grateful to Larry Sconzo of Maple Ridge, who generously opens his beautiful property each year for the event. His magnificent two-story barn, built by Grandma Moses' uncle in 1869, is the perfect setting for our most important fundraiser. For 17 years, the hanging and lighting has been led by Jim Schanz whose technical expertise is invaluable. Many thanks to the artists, volunteers and sponsors who helped make this year's event possible and to everyone who supported the event by purchasing art. An extra special thanks to Thomas Christenfeld, Elizabeth Ellard, Nina Lockwood, Randy Odell and Mary Ellen Williams for providing additional support.

Thank you!

Artists: Cyndy Barbone/Susan Hoffer Collaboration, Deborah Bayly, Susan Beadle, Gigi Begin, John Begin, Linde Caughey, Marilyn Cavallari, Matt Chinian, Eden Compton, Susan Coon, Joan Duff Bohrer, Sally Eckhoff, Yucel Erdogan, Ann Fitzgibbons, Jerry Freedner, Janine Gibson, Beth Hill, Conard Holton, Margaret Horn, Mary Iselin, Carolyn Justice, Laura Cromie Kemmerling, Lynne Kerr, Tom Kerr, Carolyn Kibbe, Clarence King, Rose Klebes, Karen Koziol, Carol Law Conklin, Nina Lockwood, Elizabeth Maloney, Leah McCloskey, AnneLise McNeice, Virginia McNeice, Catherine Minney, Robert Moylan, Harry Orlyk, Leslie Parke, Terry Peca, Leslie Peck, Christopher Pierce, James Rodewald, Elise Sheehan, Laura Shore, Lorianne Simon, Robert Skinner, Seline Skoug, Ferrilyn Sourdiffie, Anne Sutherland, Marguerite Takvorian Holmes, Terry Teitelbaum, Janine Thomas, Mark Tougias, George Van Hook, Frank Vurraro, Takeyce Walter, Susan Bayard Whiting, Regina Wickham

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A huge thank you to the students in Greenwich FFA and VOSCA for helping with parking throughout the weekend.

Protecting a GEM in Schodack

In 1793, Fritz Mesick, an immigrant from southern Germany, purchased 100 acres of farmland in South Schodack and started a small dairy farm. Ten generations later, the farm now known as GEM Farms has grown to ~600 acres and has diversified from dairy. Mostly known for their herd of buffalo, the Mesick family also raise beef cattle, hay, soybeans and vegetables, which they sell to Hannaford and farm stands throughout the region.

George Mesick, Jr., the great-great-grandson of Fritz Mesick, purchased the family dairy in 1960 from his father, George E. Mesick, Sr. (the original G.E.M.). George and his wife Gerry have two sons and three daughters. Their son Dave is an active partner in the family farming business. Dave's son, Sam, is also carrying on the tradition, making GEM

Farms a 10th generation family farm.

In 1973, when the kids were nearly grown, George and Gerry purchased their first buffalo as a "fun project." That fun project eventually turned into a small herd and in 2006 GEM Farms made a big transition away from dairy farming to focus on its growing buffalo, beef and vegetable operation. Today, GEM Farms has about 30 buffalo and they sell frozen cuts of meat at their on-farm retail store.

While the buffalo might have been the first big transition, the farm's surrounding area is going through a transition of its own. Even though the farm is located in an Agricultural District and expected to remain viable and valuable for agriculture well into the future, the Town of Schodack's Comprehensive Plan targets much of the surrounding area for new business and residential development. With a short commute

to Albany and Troy, Schodack is likely next in line to absorb additional growth. "It's not so much keeping development out, but we just want to protect what we have," Sam Mesick said, "because there's already a bit of urban encroachment." Over 200 new homes have been built in Schodack since 2007. Fortunately, the Comprehensive Plan includes a guiding principle to conserve open space and agricultural land. This made GEM Farms the perfect candidate to protect.

The protection of GEM Farms is a model for success. Partnering with Scenic Hudson made this project possible. For 10 generations the Mesick family has been resilient, adaptable and forward thinking, and if history is any judge, the next 10 generations will be too.



"I believe that conserving this land is the right thing to do for our family. What ASA stands for is the bottom line. You can't make any more land, so you need to protect the land you have now."

— Dave Mesick

10 generations of Mesicks worked this farm. Now it's protected for the next 10.

Funding for this project was provided by New York State through the Hudson Valley Agricultural Enhancement Program administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets, and Scenic Hudson Land Trust.

Forever Farmland

A capital campaign to conserve 8,400 acres in the Upper Hudson Valley

Just three years ago, ASA was celebrating 25 years of land conservation and the protection of 100 farms, crossing the 15,000-acre mark. At the same time ASA was developing a new five-year Farmland Conservation Plan with a goal to protect a total of 24,000 acres by 2020.

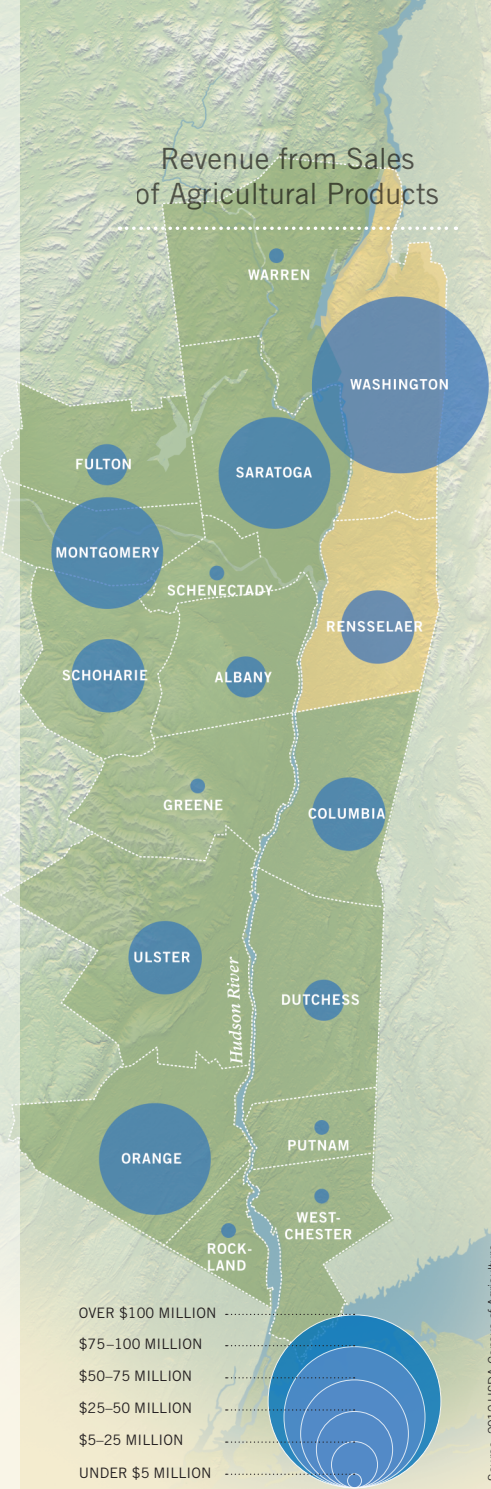
To reach this goal ASA launched a Forever Farmland Campaign to raise an additional \$1.9 million in private funding (over and above annual operating expenses) in five years to leverage around \$7.5 million in state and federal awards for a total of \$9.4 million.

Washington and Rensselaer counties are one of the most important agricultural areas within a 200-mile radius of New York City. They serve as anchor counties to the overall agricultural economy of the Hudson Valley, accounting for 25% of the Valley's farms and farmland, and nearly 33% of the Valley's total annual farm sales.

Thanks to generous leadership gifts and grants from public and private sources, we've already raised 94 percent of the \$9.4 million goal.

We still must raise another \$500,000, however. This funding is needed to match state and

federal funding as well as to cover transaction and stewardship costs. You can make a big impact by donating to the campaign.



Annual Fund vs. Forever Farmland Capital Campaign

What's the difference between the two?

➔ **ANNUAL FUND** gifts are solicited and given every year to help fund day-to-day operations. The Annual Fund supports all parts of the organization, enabling staff to work with more landowners to put projects together, steward conserved land, offer a variety of community programs and events, and leverage more public and private support.

➔ **FOREVER FARMLAND CAMPAIGN** gifts are generally larger pledges, usually made over a three- to five-year period, that fund the long-term goals of ASA building a foundation for the future. We ask that you continue to support the Annual Fund during our Forever Farmland campaign.

Annual gifts help us live. Capital gifts help us grow.

In September, Margaret and I, surrounded by family and friends, celebrated our 25th anniversary on our farm, Birch Hollow in Easton, N.Y. The previous owners, the Mosher family, were only the second owners since the farm's founding in the early 1800's. The farm consisted of two homesteads and over 200 acres. The Mosher family had owned the farm for 99 years and didn't want it broken up.

I became aware of ASA and learned about conservation easements from my vet partner's wife, Pam Cali, who had just started organizing ASA with a few other local farmers in the early 90's. Together, we convinced the Mosher family to sell the houses separately but promised that we would protect the core 195 acres. This would protect the farmland from development forever. They agreed.

In 1993, Margaret and I bought the main house which was built in 1900. The original house from 1840 was sold with 10 acres to my practice manager, and the remaining 195 acres was bought with two of my vet partners. Two years later, to satisfy our obligation to the Mosher family, we donated a conservation easement on the 195 acres. I still feel like I honored a sacred obligation to the Mosher family and all of their ancestors who worked that land for almost a century. I hope that my family will be able to work this land for the next 100 years. But if not, because we protected the land with ASA, another family will have access to this farmland forever.

Other than marrying Margaret and raising our sons, putting a conservation easement on our farm has easily been the greatest accomplishment of my life.

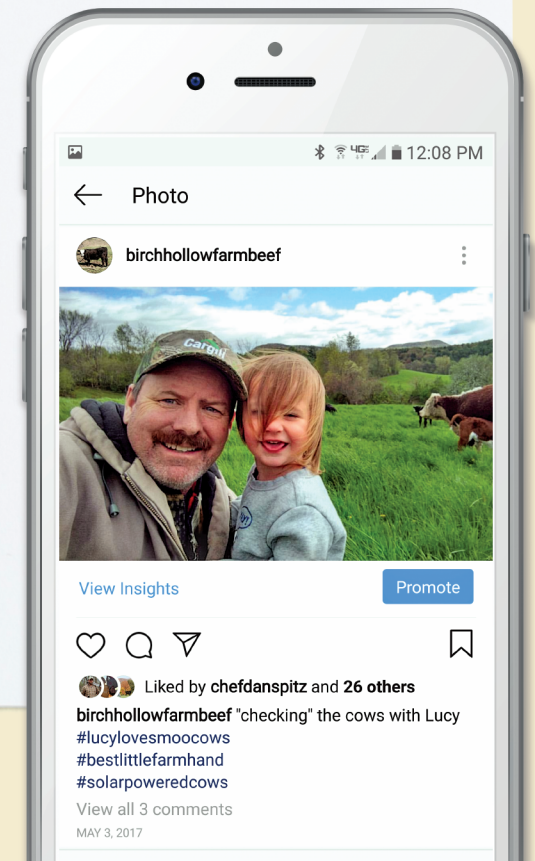
Margaret and I now have the thrill of sharing our love of the farm with our beautiful granddaughter, Lucy. Sharing our land, the animals and farm life with a three-year-old child is a gift. Another blessing is knowing that this farm will still be here when Lucy is an adult, and she will be able to share her experiences with her children and grandchildren.

So many people have childhood memories of a farm made possible by a grandparent or an aunt or uncle. Unfortunately, far too many of them cannot visit or share those farms as an adult because the farms are gone. One of the biggest tragedies of the loss of farmland is the loss of memories, the life lessons and the emotional connection to the earth, the land and to our food. Margaret and I are doing our small part by living on a protected farm and sharing it with Lucy. We hope that one day she will be committed to protecting agriculture and the rural life that we all love too.

Along with volunteering our time, Margaret and I have always given some small level of financial support to ASA, along with many purchases of art at Landscapes for Landsake. While continuing our Landscapes purchases, we have made a significant five-year commitment to the Forever Farmland Campaign. It is by far our largest commitment to any organization.

So now I ask, "What can you do to conserve our rich farmland and protect our local food source? How will you help?" Margaret, Lucy and I are asking you to make a connection to the land and donate to ASA's Forever Farmland Campaign today.

Dave Horn,
Forever Farmland Campaign Chair



Making a Connection with the Land

Recent Events and Programs

Fostering Farms & Farmers

Game of Logging

In October, ASA sponsored the Game of Logging Chainsaw Safety Training. Thanks to continued support from a generous donor, we were able to award seven full scholarships to local farmers and landowners who completed all four levels of the training. The goal of the training is to teach skills for a lifetime of safe chainsaw use. Instructor David Birdsall from Northeast Woodland Training does a top-notch job with positive feedback from participants. Thanks to Kari Bernard for hosting the trainings on her property near Shushan.



Game of Logging



Land Access Workshop

Silvopasture Workshop

Most farms in our region are a mix of cropland, pasture and forested areas, making them a perfect setting for silvopasturing of animals. Silvopasturing is grazing in a combination of forest and pasture. The goal: sustainable and symbiotic production of trees, forages and livestock on the same land. In September, John and Eva Moore of St. Croix Farm in Schaghticoke hosted a group of farmers,

foresters and agricultural service providers for a day long workshop presented by Dr. Joseph Orefice, the Director of Forest and Agriculture Operations at Yale University. After a morning presentation of general principles and best practices, we visited two sites on the farm. The first was an area slated for transition to silvopasturing. The second site had been cleared earlier in the summer and sown down to grazing forages. The Moores' goal is to make use of the extensive forested areas on their farm to expand the grazing area for their beef herd.

Helping the next generation of farmers access land

As part of ASA's participation in the Hudson Valley Farmlink network, ASA organized three workshops for farm seekers this fall. The first featured a presentation from Connor Stedman of AppleSeed Permaculture LLC on resources and skills to help farmers assess land they hope to buy or lease. The day included a field visit to the nearby Battleview Farm in Easton to put some of their new knowledge to the test.

Two additional land access workshops featured the "Purchasing Land" and "Leasing Land" modules of American Farmland Trust's (AFT) curriculum to help new farmers with information and resources needed to access land. The modules were presented by Suzanna Denison from AFT. Holly Rippon-Butler from the National Young Farmers Coalition also led a hands-on walk-through of the Coalition's new Finding Farmland Calculator, a useful tool to analyze various financing scenarios for land purchase. (www.youngfarmers.org/land-access/calculator) Both workshops included visits to farms available for sale or lease. Support for this workshop is provided by a Hudson Valley Farmlink Network Partner Grant with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.



Silvopasture Workshop

Make a Connection with the Land



Forever Farmland Supper

Forever Farmland Supper

The pumpkin patch and a rainbow served as the stunning backdrop for this year's sold out Forever Farmland Supper at the conserved Hand Melon Farm on August 2, 2018. Attendees were treated to a locally sourced dinner prepared by the Chefs' Consortium. The cocktail hour featured local cheese, beer, wine and cider from Argyle Cheese Farmer, Brown's Brewing Company, Saratoga Apple, Slyboro Cider and Victory View Vineyard. The main course included produce from 13 local farms, including Argyle Cheese Farmers, Battenkill Valley Creamery, The Berry Patch, Birch Hollow Farm, Dancing Ewe Farm, Denison Farm, Elihu Farm, Gardenworks, Gibson Family Farm, Hand Melon Farm, Laughing Earth, Mapleland Farm and Reggies Veggies. Many thanks to the Chefs' Consortium for sourcing all our food from Washington and Rensselaer counties and highlighting products from our conserved farms.

The capstone of the night was the official public launch of the Forever Farmland Campaign including a heartfelt speech by Campaign Chair, Dave Horn #allaboutthehashtags #lifelessonswithpop #givetillithurts. Auctioneer Kyle McPhail helped ASA raise \$18,290 by auctioning off farm-to-table dinners, paintings, gift baskets, event tickets and an additional \$20,900 for the campaign through our first ever paddle raise. Thank you to everyone who donated and purchased items and to those who raised their paddles!

Farm Photography for Kids

We changed things up this summer and teamed up with the Historic Salem Community Courthouse, the Cambridge Youth Center and the Greenwich Youth Center to offer Farm Photography for Kids to their summer youth programs. The four-day format allowed more than 70 children to make a deeper connection with the land. The Salem participants visited Flying Pigs Farm and White Clover Farm, the Cambridge Group visited Lewis Waite Farm, and the Greenwich participants went to St. Croix Farm and Moxie Ridge Farm & Creamery. Each program kicked off with two and a half hours of instruction prior to the farm field trips with a slideshow and games on the wrap-up day. Thank you to photographer Cliff Oliver for his fantastic instruction and to the farms who opened up their gates for us. The children's amazing photos were displayed in a gallery at the Washington County and Schaghticoke fairs.



Farm Photography for Kids: Photo by Jack Scieszka of Greenwich at Moxie Ridge Farm.

Many thanks to the businesses & foundations that help make programs possible

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You are a Part of History!

The impact highlighted in this newsletter is all because of you!

We are grateful to each of the following supporters for their generous contributions from April 1, 2018 to October 31, 2018.

Thank you for investing in the future of food and farming in our region.

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To find out more about how you and your workplace can support ASA through an EarthShare New Yorks charitable giving campaign, please call Katie at 518-692-7285. Many thanks to everyone who has made a gift to ASA through EarthShare New York this year!

20,042

acres of
farm & forest land
conserved!



Agricultural
Stewardship
Association

2531 State Route 40
Greenwich, NY 12834
518-692-7285
asa@agstewardship.org
www.agstewardship.org

The Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) protects our community's working landscape of farms and forests, connects people to the land, and promotes a vibrant future for agriculture in the region. To date, we have assisted landowners with the conservation of 20,042 acres of productive land in Washington and Rensselaer counties.

As a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, ASA receives funding from individual donors, foundations and government grants. ASA is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.



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Make a difference with your year-end gift

Thank you for your generosity and continued financial support of ASA. We hope the stories in this newsletter continue to inspire you to protect local farmland and support our agricultural economy. As a 501(c)3, donations to ASA are tax-deductible!

\$195,000

2018/2019 GOAL

\$84,750

CURRENT TOTAL

