### Agricultural Stewardship Association | news



### Celebrating Our Silver Anniversary!

Happy Birthday to ASA! This year, ASA turns 25 years old.

What do we have to show for it? We have 16,000 acres of conserved working farms and woodlands on 101 properties throughout Washington and Rensselaer counties conserved by people who believe in ASA's mission. We have hundreds of loyal supporters who live, work and visit here, people who appreciate the quality of life afforded by these working lands.

#### But we couldn't have done this without you!

Back around 1990, a small group of local, visionary farmers and landowners realized that if they did not conserve productive farmland in this region, it would be lost forever. They were committed to saving the highly productive soils, their close knit farming communities and the businesses that support local agriculture.

Led by George Houser (1931-2014), those farmers and conservationists founded the Agricultural Stewardship Association ("ASA") and donated conservation easements on

several of their farms to ensure that their land would remain available for farming forever.

But that was just a start. We wouldn't be at 16,000 acres if you hadn't been there with us all the way, not only making regular donations, but also buying art and raffle tickets, pedaling your bikes during our Tour de Farms, helping us with mailings, cooking food for events, bidding on auction items, and attending countless dinners and meetings. And of course, we wouldn't be here if it hadn't been for the farsighted landowners who saw the value in conserving their land. continued on page 6

"It's tempting to think that long-term planning isn't worth the effort in this shifting world. Thus comes to mind Easton, New York and Vernon, Vermont, both selected in the late '60's to be nuclear power plant sites. The former chose to build on its natural food producing strengths; the latter now has to deal with a dormant nuclear power plant and a century or more of radioactive spent fuel storage. These outcomes are what make ASA's efforts worthwhile." - George Allen, dairy farmer and former ASA Board Member

# Ensuring a Future for Farming and Forestry in our Community

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 16,000 acres of productive farm and forest land in Washington and Rensselaer counties.

ASA receives funding from its members and supporters, including the Castanea Foundation, and the New York Conservation Partnership Program (funded by New York's Environmental Protection Fund and administered by the Land Trust Alliance, in coordination with the state Department of Environmental Conservation).

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#### CELEBRATING 25 YEARS



Agricultural Stewardship Association

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### Looking Back, Moving Forward

Our Silver Anniversary gives us a moment to pause and reflect on the past 25 years. ASA's founders knew that balancing development and growth with the protection of high-quality soils plays a critical role in ensuring agriculture will have a place in our community and local economy for generations to come.

In February, Joan McArthur Fiske signed our 100th easement, protecting the McArthur-Sauert Farm on Bald Mountain forever. ASA's total conserved acreage surpassed 16,000 acres with the protection of the Hand Melon Farm this spring. The magnitude of this achievement was made clear when we recently learned from David Haight, the New York Director of American Farmland Trust, that only 37 land trusts in the United States have conserved more than 5,000 acres of farmland and hold over 25 easements.

And things are only going to get more exciting! In April of this year, Governor Cuomo included a one-time \$20 million initiative to protect farmland in the Hudson River Valley. This is in addition to \$15 million budgeted for farmland protection statewide via the state's Environmental Protection Fund. We are already working with local farmers to submit applications to secure as much of this funding as possible.

For the past year, David deVries and John Oakley have spent countless hours producing a video highlighting the value and importance of ASA's work to the Capital Region. We are truly indebted to David and John for their remarkable gift to ASA. This moving 12-minute film will premiere early this summer. Be sure to see it!

Over 60 percent of New York's farmers are set to retire in the next decade. To help address this situation, ASA has partnered with the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network, connecting new farmers with landowners hoping to sell their land while ensuring it remains in agricultural production. As part of this initiative, we recently hosted an estate planning workshop and started a young farmers group. ASA is also excited to be playing a key role in the development of a new Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan for Washington County.

We hope you will join us at some of the 25th Anniversary Celebrations we are hosting throughout the year. And please take a moment to browse the timeline on the following pages as it takes you through the highlights of our history. If the past and present are any indication, our future is bright and, like the fruit at the Hand Melon Farm, it will be sweet. With many thanks for 25 wonderful years. —*Teri Ptacek & Katherine Roome* 

### The fruit of their labor is as sweet as ever. And Forever.

he qualities that led to success at the Hand Melon Farm are no different today than they were in 1908—experimentation, courage and innovation.

In 1908, Aaron Allen Hand retired from the downstate business world, moved to Greenwich and purchased a 175-acre dairy farm, a farm the neighbors jokingly referred to as "the county sand pile." After only a year, he passed away, leaving his 18 year old son, Allen F. Hand, to run the family farm.

After 15 years of dairy farming, Allen had gained respect amongst his peers. He began to think that his fertile fields, formed from the Batten Kill's sands, could prove valuable for more than just feeding his herd.

Experimentation from Dairy to Muskmelons

In 1925, Allen decided to try a new exotic cash crop, muskmelons. He planted one acre of the melons in an alfalfa field. To describe his endeavor as a success is a vast understatement. With some experimentation and adjustments to the planting process, he timed his harvest to coincide with the Saratoga racing season. By 1939, Allen was growing 18 acres of melons, had trademarked the name Hand Melon, and created the distinctive red and white logo you see today. According to the September, 1950 issue of Farm Journal, Allen was grossing \$19,000 a year on melons (or over \$450,000 in today's dollars). The county sand pile had become a thriving business.

With a loyal following and enthusiastic fans that included Jackie Kennedy, Elizabeth Arden, the Duchess of Marlborough, Arthur Ash, Presidents Eisenhower, Bush and Nixon, the New York Yankees and Martha Stewart, the Hand Melon farm became famous for

its rare variety of melons known as the Saticoy.

Eventually, Allen's son, "AA", took over the thriving business. He shut down the dairy farm and focused on growing the fruit and vegetable operation. It was under AA's

leadership that the Hand Melon Farm expanded from selling to distributors and retailing at their own farmstand on Route 29, to shipping "mail-order melons" and starting a pick-your-own strawberry, blueberry, raspberry, tomato and pepper business.

By the age of 15, AA's son, John, was learning the business. He became a partner before graduating from Cornell and moved home immediately thereafter to run the farm with his Dad. After his fourth season, John left the farm indefinitely and landed in Colorado with a ski resort job. Just two months later, he got a call from his mother. He needed to come home and run the farm. His Dad's cancer was back. After AA passed away in 1988, John closed the farm for a year and worked as a carpenter in Manchester and in the snowmaking control room at Stratton Mountain ski resort.

#### Courage—Do you try again?

John returned home to the farm in 1990 and had modest success growing mostly melons, strawberries, raspberries and sweet corn. Three years later, a disease wiped out the melons, the strawberries froze, and he struggled

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"When the last parcel was transferred to me, it brought tears to my eyes. Finally owning the entire farm changed my whole perspective."

- John Hand





4.27.1990

ASA is incorporated.



1992

First donated easement: Carston, 112 acres in Salem.

### 1995

ASA provides part of the money to enable Washington County to develop an agricultural and farmland protection plan. This plan led to the county to partner with ASA to establish a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program in 1997.

### 1997

First farms protected under the county's PDR program: Stewart Dairy Farm, 57 acres in Easton, Campbell Farm, 98 acres in Hebron and the Moy Farm, 293 acres in Easton.



### 1998

First Gift of Real Estate, donated by the Banyai Family, conserved as the Wagner Easement in 2000.



#### 2002

ASA completes 30 projects and reaches 3,354 conserved acres. First ASA strategic plan adopted as it becomes apparent that ASA needs to build capacity to meet national land trust standards and conserve more land.

### 2003

Private and public funding secured from The Conservation Fund and the NYS Conservation Partnership Program enable ASA to hire Teri Ptacek, its first Executive Director. ASA's momentum begins to build as local interest increases.

### 2003

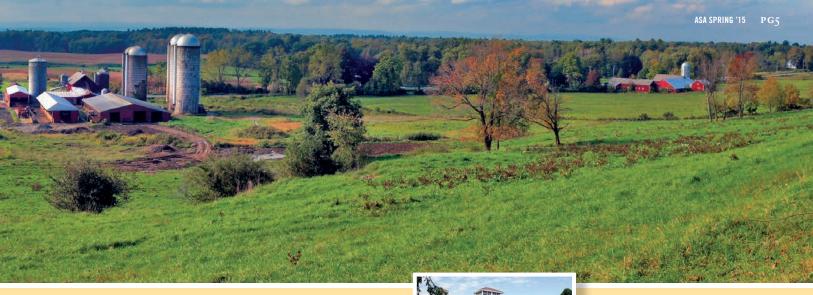
At the request of landowners, ASA begins working on farmland protection projects in northern Rensselaer County. First farm protected in Rensselaer County: Sherman Farm, 123 acres in Pittstown.

#### **ASA's Roots**

In 1984, a group of Washington County citizens concerned about the future of agriculture and loss of productive farmland to development in the region formed the Agricultural Opportunities Committee. This group researched and implemented strategies to keep agriculture economically viable. Many farmers expressed interest in using conservation as a tool to protect their land and keep land affordable for farming. While the American Farmland Trust (AFT) already existed as a vehicle for farmland conservation in New York State, they wanted to establish a separate locally based and controlled organization.

#### In the Beginning

When ASA was founded in the spring of 1990, there was no office, staff, or money. But the Board of Directors had a vision of conserving Washington County's agricultural lands. The original incorporators were George Houser Jr., Jim Perry, and Pam Cali. The organization received technical support from AFT, an organization with which ASA has maintained a close working relationship over the years. Most of the early projects involved landowners donating easements to ASA. During this time, ASA also started working with a private foundation to protect three farms in Salem.





### 2005

10 more farms protected and ASA utilizes federal funding for the first time to help protect neighboring farms, Anuszewski, 213 acres and Houser, 257 acres in Easton.



### 2006

ASA adopts its first Farmland Conservation Plan with a goal of protecting 15,000 acres by 2011. Also, ASA establishes an Easement Fund made possible with support from the Castanea Foundation. 50th Easement: LeBarron, 135 acres in Cambridge.



### 2007

Rensselaer County asks ASA to administer PDR projects throughout the county. Weir Dairy Farm, 328 acres in Schaghticoke.



### 2008

Our largest property conserved! St. Croix Farm, 688 acres (1 square mile) in Schaghticoke.

### 2013

Second Gift of Real Estate— Strand Property in Shushan (179 acres in Salem conserved in 1999). ASA sells the Strand property in 2014.





### 2015

100th Easement! McArthur-Sauert Farm, 155 acres in Greenwich. Total conserved acres reaches 16,000 with protection of the Hand Melon farm, 419 acres in Easton.



### Partner Organizations

Our partners have helped us achieve success in virtually every major conservation project that we have undertaken. We could not do what we do without the help of partners such as American Farmland Trust, Castanea Foundation, The Conservation Fund, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Farm Bureau, Land Trust Alliance, Nordlyss Foundation, Open Space Institute, Pew Charitable Trust, Whipstock Hill Preservation Society, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Alfred Z. Solomon Foundation, Historic Hudson-Hoosick Partnership, and Rensselaer and Washington Counties.

### Land Stewardship

With every land protection project comes a responsibility to uphold the terms of the easement in perpetuity. Each of ASA's projects includes funding for on-going stewardship and defense of the easement.

#### Community Outreach

ASA helps build community support for farmland conservation through a variety of activities. We lead hikes, bicycle rides, photography lessons, and offer other learning opportunities as the seasons change. By engaging children and adults in our region's beautiful farms, we hope to establish a legacy of caring for the land.

#### Celebrating our Silver Anniversary continued from page 1

Because of you, today ASA is one of the most vibrant and effective farmland conservation organizations in New York State.

#### Looking ahead to the next **Quarter Century**

ASA is poised to assume an even more critical and energized role in conserving farm and forest lands in the



Upper Hudson Valley. In addition to the role that this land plays in our regional economy and foodshed, these scenic working landscapes play a vital role in promoting tourism and enhancing the quality of life of families throughout the region.

Take a moment to share in the celebration. Send us your pictures and stories. As we embark on the next 25 years, please continue to support our work, come to our events to see the lands you've helped protect, and spread the message of farmland conservation to your friends, family and neighbors. If you have been a part of this 25 year journey, pat yourself on the back for helping to make all of this happen!

### Welcome to the Board!

e are thrilled to welcome Brian Harrington to the Board. Brian is VP of Finance and Business Administration for Carolina Eastern-Vail in Salem. Brian grew up as a child on a dairy farm in White Creek and graduated from Princeton University.

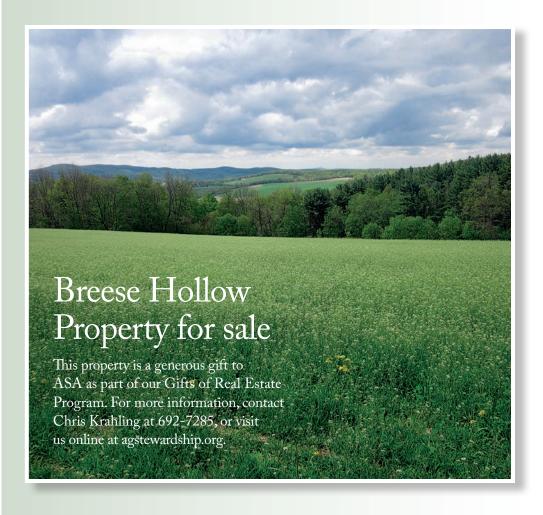
We're also happy to welcome Gerald Magoolaghan. Formerly a resident of Saratoga Springs for over 17 years, Gerry and his wife now live in Salem. For the first 25 years of his career, Gerry worked in sales and management for major national breweries Miller and Coors. Currently, he is involved in commercial and residential real estate. Gerry balances the need for land for new homes and developments with his passion for conserving farmland. He has been a volunteer

on ASA's Fundraising Committee.

John Moore joins the board after his own experience conserving his family's 688-acre farm in Schaghticoke. John's farm is well known for its rich history, quality soils and scenic beauty. It has the distinction of being ASA's largest conserved property. John currently raises chicken, beef cows, and rabbits in addition to corn, hay and straw. He also rents land to a crop farmer. He is retired from Wiley Brothers in Schaghticoke.

"I have always been a proponent of smart growth and feel strongly about the need to preserve open space, farms and waterways."

– Gerry Magoolaghan



with the blueberries. At 31 years old, he was faced with the overwhelming loss of his crops, more debt than most people incur in their entire lives, and the pressure of a family legacy.

His mother Carol (a silent partner) told him to run the farm as he saw fit. So, with a stack of seed catalogs, he went for it. In true Hand Family fashion and with a good head for business, he experimented. He grew more sweet corn and a mixed vegetable patch. He also focused on the wholesale business. The sand pile began to flourish again.

#### **Innovation**

Today, the Hand Melon Farm produces over 140 varieties of fruits, vegetables, herbs and ornamental fall gourds on 419 acres. They employ integrated pest management (IPM) principles, crop rotation, composting and resting fields.

It took John a long time and some soul searching to consider conserving



"I believe my father was part of the original conservation movement in Easton. I'm pretty sure he would approve."

- John Hand

his farm. With no plans to retire, and a crummy backswing, he plans to work until he is no longer able. In 2007, John heard news of another melon farm selling out to a developer. That farm was going to be turned into a mall and a parking lot. "I can't imagine that happening here," John thought.

#### The Future is Sweet

John knew that conserving the land was going to be a lengthy process, but with the proceeds he would receive from conserving his farm, he could make some major investments in the irrigation system, solar panels and ensure that

his family legacy would carry on. "It's an exciting time on the farm," John says, "It has taken six years but it's all coming together at the same time."

John has already left the county sand pile in better condition than he found it. With no debt, a state-of-the-art irrigation system, and no power bill for the next 30 years, John thinks his Dad would approve. And you can see it all in action during this upcoming strawberry picking season in June.

Funding for this project was made possible by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund and the Open Space Institute.



### ASA is on a Silver Screen Near You!

or the past year, David deVries and John Oakley have been hard at work to film a documentary about ASA's farmland conservation work. The result is a stunning 12-minute video featuring a star-studded cast of local farmers that will be shown at a variety of venues throughout

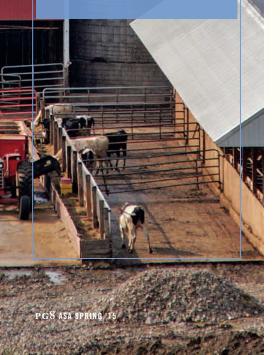
the Capital Region. David and John's story-telling skills will bring tears to your eyes and we think will inspire even greater support for ASA. To set up a viewing of the film for a group, please contact ASA or visit our website for more details.

"We hope to reveal to audiences what a wonderful area we live in and confirm the critical need to make sure its great beauty and bounty continues."

- David de Vries & John Oakley

### Hudson Valley Farmland Finder

re you a farmer looking for land or a landowner looking to lease or sell your farm? The Hudson Valley Farmland Finder (www.hudsonvalbe just the resource you need. ASA is one of several ley working to spread the word about this website and to assist making successful matches between farmers and landowners. We are available to help advise you on your search, post a proproviders in our area. The goal is to keep farmland in active farming and make unused farmland available to new farmers.



# Join us *for* some fun on the farm!

Make a Connection to Our Working Landscapes

ASA offers a variety of programs and events to give you and your family an opportunity to visit local farms and learn more about our rich agricultural heritage. We organize farm tours, bike rides, nature walks and educational workshops throughout the year. Be sure to sign up for our e-news at www.agsteward-ship.org and "like" us on Facebook to get all the latest details.

## May through July Farm Photography for Kids

\$10/per child, per session, registration required Visit agstewardship.org for dates

Learn how to take great photos of your favorite farm animals and landscapes. Farm Photography for Kids gives kids (ages 8 and up) a unique opportunity to visit some of our region's most interesting farms, explore what goes on and learn how to take great photos. Professional photographers Dona Ann Mc-Adams, Corrina Aldrich, Ellie Markovitch and Cliff Oliver will teach the fundamentals of photographic composition and lighting and share their insights and techniques for getting that perfect shot.

Over the course of the late spring and summer, we'll visit diverse farms to find out what makes them so special and worth protecting. After the trips are completed, we will choose one photo from each student photographer to be matted, framed and hung as a special exhibition in ASA's booth at the Washington County Fair, Schaghticoke Fair, Landscapes for Landsake Sale & Art Exhibition and other venues.

This year we'll be photographing beef cattle, pigs and peacocks at a farm with incredible

hilltop views, sheep with their spring lambs, dairy goats and their kids, rare heritage breed pigs and their piglets and many varieties of dairy cows! You can sign up for one or as many trips as you like, but space is limited so register early. Don't miss this great opportunity to document for yourself the beauty and diversity of our community's working farms.



This project is made possible with funds from the Decentralized Program, a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature and administered by Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council.



### Weekdays, August 17th through 28th

9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Arts Center of the Capital Region

### Farms, Food and Photography Camp

Session I: Aug. 17-21, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Session II: Aug. 24-28, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Non-Member Fee: \$290 per week (camperships available based on need), register at artscenteronline.org



For the third year, ASA is teaming up with The Arts Center of the Capital Region in Troy to offer this unique two-week camp (for ages 12 to 16) focusing on farming, food and photography. Students will visit local vegetable and dairy farms to learn about farming operations and to harvest food with their own hands. During the second week, students will spend a day at the Washington County Fair. Back at The Arts Center, teaching artist and cook Ellie Markovitch will help students understand the concept of "farm-to-table" with basic cooking and nutritional skills. The students will prepare a meal with the food they've harvested. Students will also document their time on the farm and in the kitchen through photography and will use the stateof-the-art Digital Art Studio to create a series of photographs, recipes, blog posts and other media to relay their experience. The students' work will be displayed at ASA's Landscapes for Landsake Art Event held on Columbus Day weekend.



### August 6th

6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Hand Melon Farm, Greenwich

#### Forever Farms Summer Supper

Tickets on sale in July

We'll be honoring those families who have made a gift to our community by conserving their land at this unique harvest dinner on the farm. Featuring foods sourced from local farms at the height of the growing season, this dinner promises to be a sumptuous celebration of the bounty our farmers provide. The event will be catered by Chef's Consortium, a group of dynamic chefs dedicated to sharing the joys of local foods.

# October 10th through 12th

### 14th Annual Landscapes for Landsake Art Sale & Exhibition

Opening reception: October 10, Noon to 5 p.m.

Gallery hours: October 11 & 12, Noon to 4 p.m.



ASA's Landscapes for Landsake Art Sale & Exhibition is the premier event of the season and our biggest fundraiser of the year. The show features artwork from more than 30 local artists inspired by the beauty of our region's working landscapes. Fifty percent of the proceeds benefit ASA's farmland conservation program. Don't miss the 14th anniversary of this landmark art event!



# October 17, 18, 24 & 25

### 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. location TBD Game of Logging

Levels 1-4, \$150 per session, registration required.



Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District and ASA are pleased to bring Game of Logging instructors to teach four levels of chainsaw techniques and safety. The Game of Logging is widely acknowledged as the premier timber harvesting training program in the country, offering hands-on training for professionals and non-professionals alike. Skilled instructors combine demonstration with participation to teach safety, productivity, conservation and cutting techniques.

This valuable training will teach newer and safer aspects of felling techniques, chainsaw reactive forces, bore cutting and pre-planning the fell. Instructors will go over safety features of chainsaws and personal protective equipment. Visit www.agsteweardship.org for more details.



## You are a Part of History!

#### Your Support Makes Farmland Protection Possible.

ASA would like to express heartfelt gratitude to our wonderful community of supporters.

The following contributions were made between October 25th, 2014 and April 15, 2015. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information. Please contact us to note any changes that should be made for the next issue of our newsletter.

#### **Foundations**

American Farmland Trust
Castanea Foundation
The Community Foundation of the
Greater Capital Region
Fitzgerald Family Foundation
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The Review Foundation
Robert H. Wentorf Foundation, Inc.

#### Government

New York State Council on the Arts\* New York State Conservation Partnership Program\*\* Rensselaer County

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#### Champion

Constance Kheel John Umlauf

#### Cream of the Crop

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<sup>\*</sup> This project is made possible with funds from the Decentralization Program, a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and The New York State Legislature and administered by Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council.

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Instead of birthday gifts, 12year-old Tyler Ziehm raises money for ASA.

While most 12-year-olds ask for video games or iPads for their birthday, Tyler Ziehm decided he didn't want any gifts. He wanted to protect farms. Tyler said, "My dad is a farmer and I love farming. I don't want housing developments to go up on farmland". In lieu of buying him presents, Tyler asked friends and family to donate to ASA. "I hope it's a beginning of a lifetime of giving for him," Executive Director, Teri Ptacek said. "What a difference it would make if everyone did something like Tyler."





Agricultural Stewardship Association

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We Conserve Good Farmland. For Good. Forever.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Photography: Corrina Aldrich, Laila Collins,
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### Two Weeks in Korthi, Andros, Greece.

13th/14th Century Greek House plus \$3,000 towards airfare.\$7,000 total value.

Only 300 raffle tickets will be sold. Win an authentic experience on a Greek Island with a two-week stay at a

beautiful historic home, surrounded by flowered terraces, less than a mile from the ocean. The house can accommodate 6 adults and 2 children, has a modern Greek style kitchen, large living room, three bedrooms, three bathrooms and

To purchase tickets

Call ASA at 692-7285,
or visit www.agstewardship.org,

internet access.
Korthi has extravagant beauty, pretty villages, museums, history, seaside

taverns and dozens of stunning beaches. With a network of ancient footpaths across the island, it is an outstanding place for walking. Fly into Athens, take a 2-hour ferry ride to Andros and rent a car to drive to the house.

Entries and payment for entries must be received by 3:30 p.m., October 12, 2015. Drawing will be held on Monday, October 12, 2015 at 3:30 p.m. at ASA's Landscapes for Landsake Art Sales & Exhibition at Maple Ridge, Coila, NY. All ticket holders are welcome to attend but need not be present to win.

Trip must be taken between January 1 and December 31, 2016 and is subject to certain blackout dates. Raffle open only to legal U.S. residents age 21 and over. Contest void where prohibited. To read the official raffle rules, visit us online at agstewardship.org.

