



PHOTO: PATRICK LEE

PRESERVING WORKING LANDS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Gift of a Generation

“I know that future stewards of the property will build their own memories from the richness of farmland.”

— Maxine Mindel

The Mindels

When she was just 8 years old, Maxine Mindel witnessed the sale of her grandparents’ beloved 100-acre farm. Adding insult to injury, it was later developed into a subdivision. Maxine was determined to ensure the 32-acre farm where she and her three siblings were raised didn’t meet the same fate.

After her mother’s death, concerned with the fate of the farm, Maxine began to look into the limited legal options of preserving it. She had limited success. At the time, government agencies weren’t willing to focus on preserving such a small tract of land.

Years of fruitless searching passed before Maxine finally reached a breakthrough, uniting with CFT and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), that were willing to focus their efforts on the smaller farm. With the support of her siblings and CFT’s Executive Director Elisabeth Moore, mountains of paperwork and “a lot of perseverance,” the voluntary land agreement sale finally closed in 2011. The land was to remain safe from development forever.

But how to keep it a successful farm? Maxine and her three siblings lived scattered around the world, far from Lebanon and unable to act as the caretakers the land really needed. Maxine wasn’t willing to pass the land on to just anyone, so she strove to find a buyer who would honor the farm’s rich history.

The Greens

Cyril and Lindsay Green were raised on farms, and recalled always having a couple of cows around when they were children. “I can’t imagine

not growing up that way,” Lindsay said. It was no surprise that the young couple’s search for their first family home began with their hearts set on a small farm.

It wasn’t an easy task. For years, the Greens struggled to find an affordable piece of farmable land in Lindsay’s hometown of Lebanon. Connecticut has some of the highest farm real estate values in the nation, and competition for land is fierce. As their search continued, Maxine was still waiting and for the right buyer to come along.

Generations United

After multiple missed connections, timing finally united Maxine with the Greens.

The Mindel Farm lit a warm fire in the Greens’ hearts and imaginations. It was small, private, and, yes, it needed work. To some, the latter might be



*The Mindel Children – Marjorie, Sylvia, Howard & Maxine
 Photo: Courtesy of Maxine Mindel*



Cyril and Lindsay Green with their son Cyril IV at Stoneboat Farm in Lebanon

off-putting, but for the Greens, it presented a world of opportunity. And the best part? The land was affordable.

The Greens expressed the difference that the Mindels, CFT, and NRCS made with their devotion to seeing the preservation through. The hard work and perseverance of all of the parties involved allowed them to take the first, most vital step in their dream – acquiring a reasonably priced farm of their own.

Since purchasing the land, the Greens have transformed the property, reclaiming the potential lying dormant in the land since the Mindels left. Cyril has cleared five overgrown acres for their herd of goats and two miniature donkeys, improved outbuildings and added a coop for their flock of chickens.

And they aren't finished yet. Bigger pastures, better barns, and buzzing beehives are on the horizon for Stoneboat Farm.



“They have allowed us to be here... making it affordable and attainable.”

— Lindsay Green

An Interview with Tim Slate, Kahn Tractor & Equipment

Kahn Tractor in North Lebanon provides agricultural and construction equipment sales, parts, service, and rentals.

Q. How did you come to work at Kahn Tractor?

A. I was always interested in machinery as a kid. I attended an agricultural tech school and joined Kahn Tractor in 1979 as a parts manager. I was young and had the energy and ambition to move up the ranks to become the general manager.

Q. How large of an area do you serve?

A. There used to be five dealerships in town, but no more. Many had to consolidate to stay in business. We're a medium-sized dealership, serving a 300-mile radius. We have to compete with brick-and-mortar dealerships as well as internet sellers.

Q. How has your customer base changed?

A. We sell a lot more small tractors and equipment than before. The average farm size in Connecticut is shrinking even though the total amount of land under cultivation is the same. Although the same amount of land is cultivated, the trend is a departure away from the classic farm.

Q. Have you noticed trends in conservation?

A. Absolutely. I've seen tremendous development pressure on good, working farmland. As we all know, that's the final crop. You can never go back. People need to work together to ensure land is protected before it's gone.

Q. What do you envision for the future of farming in the region?

A. More interest in local products. People like to know where their food comes from, and that it's safe and healthy.

Q. Why did you join CFT's Board?

A. I was invited by fellow Board member Robin Chesmer. Ultimately, it's all about the land. My heart is in farming, and I wanted to be a part of the movement to protect the land. CFT gives me a way to do my part.



“Money comes and money goes. Land is there forever.”

— Tim Slate



Tim Slate, CFT Board Member

Paying it Forward: Helping Farms Stay Farmland

Every land agreement selling development rights is different, and yet many agreement sections are the same.

Believing reinventing the proverbial wheel is a waste of time, American Farmland Trust, Connecticut Land Conservation Council, and Connecticut Farmland Trust developed a model farmland agreement or agricultural easement from which individual agreements could be crafted.

Diebold Foundation recently awarded a grant to CFT to take the model easement on the road. The goal is to educate land trust volunteers and staff, town officials, attorneys and landowners on how to draft a well-crafted easement using language from the model easement to ensure the farmland is protected and agricultural viability sustained.

Three different workshops will be presented. Each workshop will target a different key player.

First, the lawyers. They represent landowners, land trusts, or towns and are critical advisors throughout the process of negotiating and selling development rights.

Second, the planners. They and other municipal officials play an important role in towns and regions in talking with farm owners in their town and establishing local plans for conservation and development.

Third, the land trust volunteers and staff. Land agreements for farmland compared to nature preserves are different. Often land trusts lack the expertise in drafting the easements. A poorly worded agreement can wreak havoc on a farmer's ability to put food on the table and stay in business.

The workshop presenters will be CFT's Executive Director Elisabeth Moore, Linda François, experienced conservation attorney, and Kip Kolesinskas, former CT Soil Scientist for USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In addition, fact sheets on different aspects of agricultural easements (e.g., different approaches to impervious surface limitations, on-farm energy use and renewable energy production) will be developed and posted on CFT's website, www.ctfarmland.org.

Workshop dates, times, and locations will be posted on CFT's website.



Thank You!

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Peter Cooper and Linda François, Cooper Whitney and François

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Tom Moore, Alpinix.Com

– for information technology services

John O'Connell, C.M. Smith Agency

– for employee benefit advice



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Staff News

John S. Weedon was promoted to Conservation Manager. He recently received a master's degree in natural resources and environmental science. He is responsible for working with CFT's easement farmers and assists in managing new farmland projects.

Danielle Breakell joined CFT as Conservation and Outreach Associate. Having grown up across the street from her grandparents' farm in Goshen, she studied agriculture and food systems at Brown University. She has worked for Acadia National Park and the Goshen Land Trust.



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Contents

The Gift of a Generation 1
An Interview with Tim Slate,
Kahn Tractor & Equipment 2
Paying it Forward: Helping Farms
Stay Farmland 3
Thank You! 3
Staff News 3

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Highlights of Coming Events

June 25th
Farm Tour
Cato Corner Farm in Colchester, CT

July 9th
Farm Tour
Westford Hill Distillers in Ashford, CT

August 7th
Summer Local Food Celebration
Smokedown Farm in Sharon, CT

More events are in the works!

Visit **www.ctfarmland.org**
for updates.



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