



PRESERVING WORKING LANDS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Ensuring the Future of Farming McGuire Family Legacy

“Our uncle was quite adamant that the land should never be sold. We easily decided, without a doubt, to pursue getting it protected for him.”

— Susan Gavitt

Connecticut Farmland Trust is pleased to announce the preservation of McGuire Farm in Stonington. An extended family came together to protect a cherished, viable family farm from development.

The estate of William E. McGuire approached Connecticut Farmland Trust about accepting a donated conservation easement on the McGuire Farm. After their uncle’s death, William McGuire’s four heirs, Erinn Plante, Kaitlin McGuire, Kristin Basso, and Susan Gavitt, came together to honor his love of the land.

Best put in the words of Kristin Basso, William McGuire’s niece, the family’s motivation for protecting the land was twofold. “First, we have endeavored that the land be protected from development. My uncle often shared stories of childhood days when he and his brothers and friends would climb the surrounding hills and enjoy the idyllic view from atop a large boulder. Second, we have committed to accomplishing his desire to offer the land to small farmers as highly fertile farmland to assist them in achieving their agriculture pursuits. Our uncle was dedicated to assisting local farmers and conducted extensive research on farming techniques, including crop rotation to maintain the soil’s value.”

Susan Gavitt, another heir, added, “Our uncle was (quite!) adamant that the land should never be sold. We easily decided, without a doubt, to pursue getting it protected for him.”

Proving our Worth

The family chose to work with Connecticut Farmland Trust (CFT) because of our mission to only preserve land for agricultural use, as opposed to recreational open space uses. CFT and the family were able to work together to craft terms and conditions of an agricultural conservation easement. Demonstrating our ability to work quickly and accommodate the heirs’ desire to complete the project by the end of the year, CFT completed all of the negotiations and closed within two months.

Keeping the Land in Farming

The McGuire family fulfilled their uncle’s desire to offer the fertile land to small farmers. Currently, a portion of McGuire Farm is leased by Stonyledge Farm in North Stonington. The farm produces and sells naturally grown, responsibly raised vegetables and beef, pork, chicken, veal, lamb, and turkey, free range eggs, honey, jams, and relish. Find out more about the farm on Facebook.



PHOTO: COWBOY MEDIA

Learned Family, owners of Stonyledge Farm, who lease McGuire Farm

The Next Chapter: Continuation of a Protected Farm

An interview with Francis and Joseph Perzanowski

Last June twin brothers, Frank and Joe Perzanowski, became owners of Bilger Farm in Meriden. At age 39 these two men took up the mantle of ownership of the highly desirable 76.4-acre farm on the edge of the city.

The brothers, who are both mechanics, farm the land part-time and are currently growing hay. The land was given to the brothers by their neighbor Lucille Bilger, who protected the farm with Connecticut Farmland Trust and the State of Connecticut in 2015.

We caught up with the new owners to learn about the next chapter for this gem of a property.

How did you know the Bilger family?

Frank: "My grandparents and the Bilger family were very close. They were about the same age and our families lived close by, just an eighth of a mile away. The properties originally touched in the back and my grandfather used to raise beef cows. This property at the time was 130 acres and the Bilgers had dairy cows... About 60 acres were given to the Meriden Land Trust and 76.4 acres is still the farm here."

I understand that Lucille Bilger's brother David died tragically in a tractor accident in his 80s. What did you do on the farm with him before you came to own it?

Frank: "My grandfather died when I was young so, I looked to David as a grandfather. And being a neighbor for so many years, I was always over here helping him out. Just about everything from baling hay to tractor repair, even if he just wanted to go shopping."

What does Ms. Bilger think about your farm today?

Frank: "She's thrilled. She's absolutely thrilled that this property got protected and that the property is still being farmed by the same people who have been helping her and her brother for many, many years. Me and my brother have been an integral part of this operation since 1995."



The land was given to the Perzanowski brothers by their neighbor Lucille Bilger, who protected the farm with Connecticut Farmland Trust and the State of Connecticut in 2015.

What does Ms. Bilger's gift of the farm mean to you?

Frank: "For me, this is an opportunity of a lifetime... some people dream for an opportunity like this and to have this, with my twin brother, who shares the same interest. I count my blessings every day that I was able to fall into this situation. And, it would not be possible without Lucille Bilger."

Why do you stay in farming?

Joe: "To sum it up in a nutshell, because you can put your arms out and not touch anybody or anything. Especially in this part of Connecticut things are rather congested and built up. So here you got room to spread out."

Frank: "This is what sets me apart from everyone else. Even when I was young... I wanted to do something different. You gotta do it because you love it."

"I count my blessings every day that I was able to fall into this situation. And, it would not be possible without Lucille Bilger."

— Frank Perzanowski



Membership!

A reminder that CFT has a sustaining membership option that makes monthly giving a breeze.

CFT is thankful for the support that we receive. You share our passion for saving farmland. Together, we protect family farms for future generations.

Online sign-up for monthly ongoing membership allows for ease of mind.

Find out how easy it is: Online Sign-Up at <https://ctfarmland.org/site/support/join-us/>

Maple Sugar Bush Farm Tour

Miller's Tri-Mountain Sugar Shack of Durham

On a bitterly cold day we had a sweet time.

Connecticut Farmland Trust was pleased to offer our first farm tour of 2017 on March 12th. Miller's Tri Mountain Sugar Shack in Durham graciously welcomed 20 guests to experience firsthand the way that maple trees show us that spring is around the bend.



Josh Miller teaching farm tour guests about maple sugaring

CFT had never done a farm tour in cold weather but, we thought that maple sugaring would be a fun variation from summer time events.

Owner Josh Miller, a young forester, took us to the woods for a short walk from his sugaring shack. On the walk Miller shared the history of his farm as well as the technicalities of the tubing system he utilizes on his approximately 250 maple trees.

After the walk, our party enjoyed the warmth of the maple syrup shack, and tasted some of the hot, freshly distilled maple syrup while learning about how sap transforms into valuable Grade A syrup.

Thank you Josh Miller and Miller Tri-Mountain Farm for hosting us!



Check out our website at www.ctfarmland.org for our summer farm tours

Guida Golf: Call for Volunteers and Sponsors

We are excited to be a beneficiary of the 5th Annual Guida's Charity Golf Invitational!

Sponsorship Information:

There are a number of ways you can support this worthy event:

- Volunteer at the tournament
- Play!
- Donate raffle prizes
- Sponsor the tournament

To volunteer, donate prizes or sponsor the event, please call (860) 247-0202 x223



Guida's Charity Golf Invitational

at Lyman Orchards Golf Club

May 5th

9:00 am – 5:00 pm

To register to golf visit:

www.guidas.com/golf



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Connecticut Farmland Trust
77 Buckingham Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
telephone 860.247.0202
fax 860.247.0236
www.CTFarmland.org

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