

Award Honors Md. Farm Family For Land Stewardship

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A fourth-generation Maryland farm family hailed as a strong, vocal proponent of state and national farmland protection programs and the usage of environmentally sound farming practices received the first national Steward of the Land Award.

American Farmland Trust, a national nonprofit farmland conservation organization, chose the Wayne McGinnis family of Baltimore County, Md., for the award over 60 other nominees nationwide in recognition of its outstanding efforts in land stewardship, farmland conservation policy, and the use of environmentally and economically sustainable farming practices.

Wayne McGinnis accepted the award at a special luncheon of the AFT board of directors in Washington attended by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman and Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Richard Rominger.

Both Rominger and Glickman praised the McGinnis family for their conservation efforts.

A member of the 1958 University of Maryland basketball team which finished sixth in the NCAA, McGinnis owns and operates the 1,400-acre McGinnis Family Farm in north Baltimore County, Md. The tall, strapping, 6-foot, 7-inch farmer raises corn, soybeans, wheat and hay. He also has 160 head of Angus beef cattle.

The \$10,000 award honors the memory of Peggy McGrath Rockefeller, philanthropist, farmer and AFT founder who died last year. It recognizes the spirited inspiration and deep personal commitment to farmland conservation that Mrs. Rockefeller brought to AFT from its establishment in 1980 until her passing.

"Mrs. Rockefeller strongly believed in the family farmer and the protection of the nation's best and most productive land," said AFT President Ralph Grossi.

"Wayne McGinnis and his family have demonstrated that same strong commitment to the conservation of our nation's agricultural resources as Mrs. Rockefeller did. I know she would have been very pleased with AFT's choice. The family truly is a model for farmers across the nation."

"Our family are fourth-generation farmers who have always had a real passion for the land," said McGinnis. "So it's an honor, a great honor in fact, to be recognized for something we have believed in so strongly and committed ourselves to so much."

McGinnis was born and raised on his family farm in Baltimore County. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland where he met his wife, the former Harriet Husted. She now handles the farm's administrative matters. Their three children all grew up on the farm and intend to return some day.

McGinnis was an early leader in the usage, demonstration, and

promotion of environmentally sound farming practices. As early as 1969, he converted his farm to "no till" cultivation, a then new form of cultivation that improved organic matter on his crop acreage. He used other practices as well to reduce soil movement and protect the water quality of streams. He also continued to experiment on ways to reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers and created wildlife habitat on the nonproductive portions of his farm.

In the 1970s, McGinnis actively supported Baltimore County efforts to adopt agricultural zoning and protect farmland from suburban sprawl. His work on three different county committees resulted in the establishment of ag zoning for a third of the county. Later he aggressively promoted and placed his own farm in the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program. Today the county ranks in the top 10 in agri-

cultural preservation nationally, having protected more than 19,000 acres of farmland.

McGinnis also aggressively promoted farmland protection at the state level and recently was appointed chair of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation. He has taken part in national farmland protection efforts as well, speaking before farm groups, legislators, reporters, planners and government officials in numerous states.

"Wayne McGinnis feels so strongly in his heart his commitment for agriculture that he has spoken up even when it was not politic to do," said Wallace Lippincott, program administrator for the Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management, who nominated the McGinnis family for the award. "He truly has made a difference in farming and land preservation in his community, the state and the nation."

LVNB Holds Ag Seminar

NORTH CORNWALL (Lebanon Co.) — More than 500 people on Wednesday attended the annual spring agriculture seminar sponsored by the Lebanon Valley National Bank agricultural lending group, at the Lebanon Valley Exposition Center at the Lebanon Area Fairgrounds.

Speakers for the event included Dr. Robert Yonkers, a Penn State University agricultural economist who discussed the dairy situation and predicted that while dairy producers can expect to receive less for their milk this year, compared to last year, that it shouldn't be as much of a drop as some have predicted.

Also speaking was H. Louis Moore, Penn State professor emeritus of agricultural economics, who said that livestock and grain prices appear set to remain strong for the coming year, largely because of the growth in exports. He said that 15 percent of the beef, as well as 20 percent of the United States' poultry production is to be exported, helping to prevent domestic surpluses and thus lower prices.

The same is true for grain production, he said, predicting relatively strong prices because of export commitments.

Albert Murry, president and CEO of LVNB, also addressed the audience, discussing financial tools that may be available to them to survive uncertainties in farming.

Erik Bucks, a nutrient management specialist with the Lebanon County Conservation District, also talked to the group. He discussed the help that the Conservation District exists to provide free to customers, in addition to opportunities through the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Well-known Pennsylvania weatherman Joe Bastardi, of Accuweather and the Penn State public television weather program, "Weather World," talked about weather patterns in the Lebanon Valley and how major winter storms have formed over the past years.

Bastardi gave a list of the 10 most significant winter storms in the Lebanon Valley during the past years, and showed a comparison of how the storms developed.

Bastardi reviewed each of the storms and what made each unique, such as the weather following the storms. For example, the January 1996 blizzard (Farm Show storm) was followed by a flood of a level that hadn't been experienced since the 1972 flood associated with Hurricane Agnes.

The weatherman said that residents of the Lebanon Valley are extremely fortunate, weather-wise to live where they do, because of the protections provided by the mountain ranges to the west, south and northeast.

Most of the severity of storms passes either to the north or south of the Lebanon Valley, he said.

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