

Lancaster Farmland Trust Banquet Honors Landowners, Supporters

ANDY ANDREWS
Editor

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Most times, the Lancaster Farmland Trust sees a donation amount in a returned pledge card.

This time, it was another story. The Trust received a pledge card that had dark, almost irate letters that spelled out one possible donor's anger and frustration. "Why bother?" the person wrote. "Everything is built up. One farm saved ain't goin' to make it. Just sell and build, build, build. You lost Lancaster County years ago — give up and build!"

If that's the case — if the program somehow "failed" in the eyes of some — then why did 14 landowners "bother to work with Lancaster Farmland Trust (LFT) this year to ensure that their land will be in agriculture permanently?"

That was the message imparted by Renny Magill, Trust director of development, to 280 registered guests, friends, and supporters Wednesday evening during the LFT's annual dinner at the Quality Inn and Suites.

Magill noted the work of Trust supporters proves that "it isn't too late — and that something

tangible and concrete can be done to save enough land to help protect Lancaster County's agriculture infrastructure, to retain our rural heritage, and to save the beauty of Lancaster County that you cherish."

LFT Executive Director Heidi Schellenger noted that in the 15 years of the Trust, 10,604 acres from more than 160 landowners have been preserved, and the landowners made the ultimate commitment, she said. "Their land is never going to be developed."

Schellenger spoke about priority items identified during a strategic study planning process, which includes not only preserved farms, but just as necessary, making the public more aware of the importance of farmland preservation through education and outreach.

"It's not just the awareness of farmers, but of citizens in general to how important agriculture is to the economy and the land base to support agriculture," she said.

The planning process glanced 20 years into the future to see what Lancaster County would look like. The report was unanimous: half the county, or 300,000 acres, can be preserved, a viable goal in 20 years.

A new person will be contracted soon, noted Schellenger, to increase the public's awareness of ag preservation in the county and nationally.

Joseph Del Tito, market president, Wachovia Bank, and Harvest Appeal 2003 chair, noted that the fundraiser reached \$100,000 of the \$225,000 goal. He announced a new chair for the 2004 Appeal, Kim Smith, chair of

the Lancaster Bar and Leadership Lancaster.

Brent Landis, LFT Land Preservation Committee chair, said that from November 2002 to this year, 14 farms were preserved with a value of more than \$2.7 million. The cost? About \$367,000.

"Half of the preserved farms are members of the Plain Sect," Landis said. They couldn't make the November banquet because "November is wedding month."

R. Ted Bowers, LFT board chair, introduced the annual awards.

Corporate sponsor of the year went to Larry Martin, Good Foods, Inc./Zook Molasses, Honey Brook. Donor of the Year went to Gary Van Dyke, veterinarian from Churchtown.

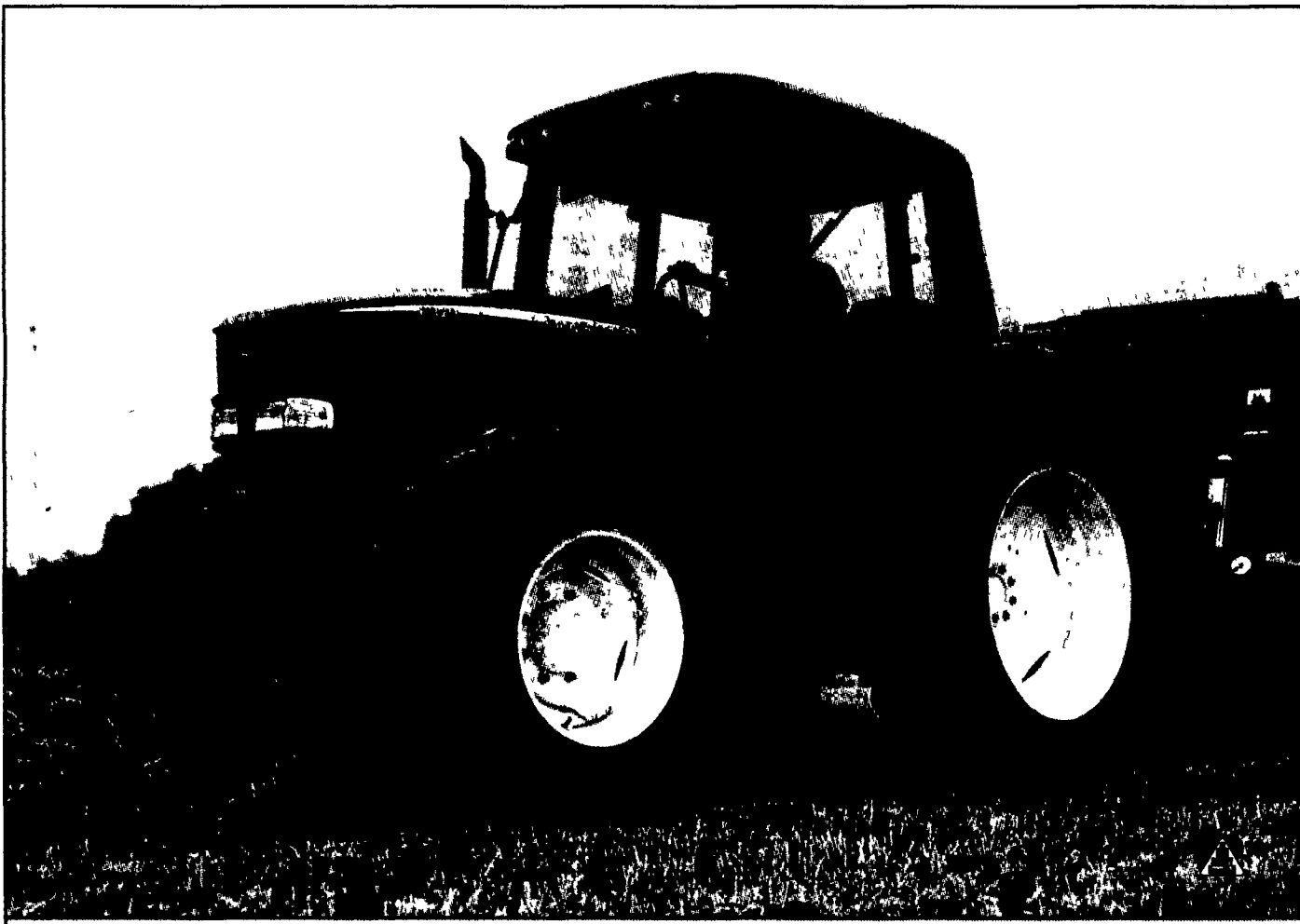
The Amos H. Funk Spirit of Cooperation Award, business, went to Ted Brubaker, representing Hartman, Underhill and Brubaker, Lancaster. The Amos H. Funk Spirit of Cooperation Award, individual, went to Terry Scheetz, Stevens, and Russ Cox, Lancaster.

Special recognition was given to Rep. Roy Baldwin, Rep. Scot

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Wednesday evening, Lancaster Farmland Trust honored several for their support. From left, Gary Van Dyke, donor of the year; Ken Messner and Chris Herr, distinguished service; and Terry Scheetz, Amos H. Funk Spirit of Cooperation Award, individual.



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