



Roni Cassilly's mother and niece plant trees on her Darlington property with her dog Teddy relaxing nearby. (photo by Roni Cassilly)

Leaving a Legacy in the Heart of Darlington

Cassilly siblings permanently preserve neighboring properties

“I enjoy watching an approaching storm roll across the valley. Distant lightning on the horizon and the grass in the field moving like an ocean. I enjoy seeing thousands of fireflies decorate the tree canopy in the woods on summer nights. I enjoy listening to the rhythmic calls of the peepers evolve to the bellows of bull frogs as the season passes,” reflects Andrew Cassilly.

It was an easy decision for siblings Veronica “Roni” Cassilly and Andrew Cassilly, along with their families, to donate conservation easements on their

neighboring properties in Darlington.

Roni says, “We wanted to ensure that generations to come can find the peace and joy that we have received from this property.”

Andrew and Amy Cassilly were blessed to make their home on Deths Ford Road 29 years ago. Andrew’s sister Roni purchased an adjoining property on Harmony Church Road the next year and later built her home with Carey Marzicola there. Collectively the two properties total 17 acres.

The properties are mostly forested, providing important buffers to Graveyard Run, a tributary of Deer Creek. Roni also keeps goats on the property,



To work with landowners, private and public, to conserve land and protect its natural resources, scenic beauty, rural character, and promote a healthy quality of life in Harford County.

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Spring is a Time for Growth

Now that the warm weather is here, growth is all around us. At my house, this is especially true. My husband and I became a family of four with the birth of our daughter Sage in February. She has already doubled in weight and seems to change right before our eyes. Our son Forest will soon be three and has discovered a love of climbing trees and riding tractors this spring.

I often look at my children and wish I could slow down time. But I can't stop time, nor should I hope to. I need to plan for growth, prepare for the future, and instill my values in the next generation.

Just as I know my children will grow up, I know that Harford County will continue to develop rapidly over the next two decades. With your help, we can have a meaningful impact on the way in which we grow. A careful balance of development, land preservation, and government services is necessary to ensure stable and healthy growth in Harford County.

Over the past year HLT's pipeline of land preservation projects has grown greatly. I meet regularly with different Harford County landowners to understand their vision for their property and the legacy that they want to leave. This increase in activity means that HLT as an organization must grow too.

HLT will be advertising for a new position this summer to increase our capacity to connect with more citizens and conserve more land. I am excited to see HLT grow and change to meet the needs of Harford County residents. Your support is what makes this possible. Thank you.



Kristin Kirkwood
Executive Director

While we appreciate the sharing of news regarding our work, please contact the HLT office prior to reprinting of newsletter content in full or in part.

Cassilly *Continued from front page.*

which she uses to manage invasive species.

The land has helped to shape the Cassilly family's lives and values. Both Andrew and Roni recognize how lucky they are to have grown up roaming the Harford countryside.

Andrew reflects, "In my youth, I could walk the rocky shores of the bay during low tide and not see another soul. I could launch my canoe in Deer Creek and camp on the isolated islands off Havre de Grace." He feels fortunate that his children had many of the same experiences but recognizes that our population is growing and the landscape is changing rapidly as a result.

"Land preservation is our only hope of saving the things about our county that make it so special," Andrew notes.

Roni feels strongly that people have an innate need to be connected to nature. She is worried that so many children are not spending time in the forests and streams.

The desire to share open space with future generations motivated the Cassillys to permanently preserve their properties with a donated conservation easement to the Harford Land Trust and Maryland Environmental Trust. Under the current zoning regulations, no additional houses could be built on the properties. But, as Roni notes, "You never know how and when the zoning codes will change." The Cassillys want to ensure that the land remains open, regardless of future regulatory changes.

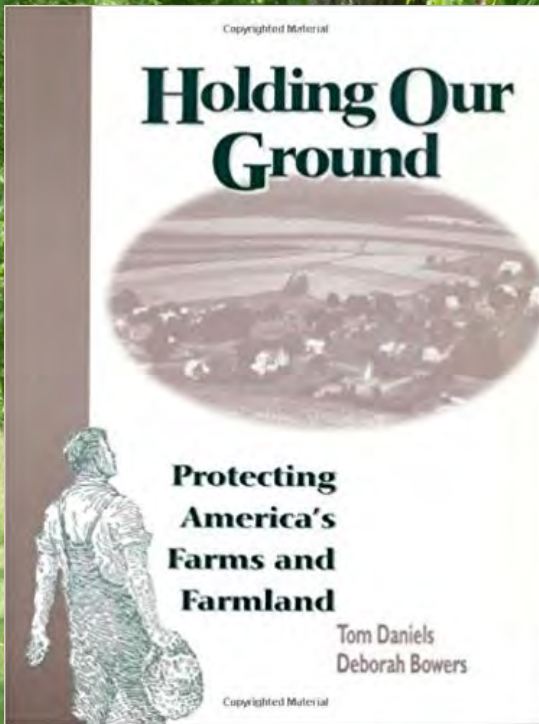
"As I reflect on the privileged life I have been blessed to live, my priorities have adjusted with age... I realize the most important thing I can leave my children is the open space they have come to know as home," Andrew says.

Are you a property owner in Harford County? Do you want to know more about voluntary actions you can take to preserve your land for future generations?

Contact HLT at 410-836-2103 or info@harfordlandtrust.org.



Roni Cassilly uses her goats, known as the Harmony Herd, to control invasive species on the property. (photo by Roni Cassilly)



A Leading Voice for Land Conservation

Deborah Bowers recognized for her life-long commitment to the land

The Harford Land Trust recognized Deborah Bowers of Rocks with our prestigious Conservation Award during the annual membership meeting on Saturday, April 6 at Harford Glen Environmental Education Center in Bel Air.

Bowers has been a leading voice for conservation and land preservation for decades. She founded the Farmland Preservation Report, a nationally recognized periodical, in 1990. Bowers also co-authored the book "Holding Our Ground: Protecting America's Farms and Farmland" in 1997, which remains a leading resource for farmland preservation practitioners. She was instrumental in the effort to create Harford County's

agricultural land preservation program, which was overwhelmingly approved by Harford voters in a referendum, and through which the county has permanently preserved over 30,000 acres since 1993.

Bowers was also a founder of the 2009 Save the Rocks campaign. The group successfully worked with the State Highway Administration on improvements to Route 24 that safeguarded the aesthetic and historic value of the Rocks and prevented erosion into Deer Creek. She was employed as a land preservation manager by numerous land trusts in Baltimore County and currently serves as the Agricultural Land Preservation Manager for Carroll County.

Botanical Beauty

Jeff Conti recognized for his many years of floral and event design expertise and materials

The Harford Land Trust also recognized Jeffrey Conti of Joppa with our Volunteer Award during the 2019 Annual Membership Meeting.

Jeff was honored for his long-time service and contributions to the HLT. For the past seven years, he has donated his professional floral and event design expertise and materials for HLT's annual Harvest Moon Dinner & Auction.

Each year, Jeff designs and creates unique displays from local flowers and plants which transforms the Bel Air Armory for the event. Attendees routinely gush over the spectacular creations which have become a defining feature of the Harvest Moon event.

Bob and Lee Crush, Patti Dallam, Gloria Moon, and Peg Niland, a team of loyal HLT supporters, joins Jeff each year to assemble the natural creations.

Jeff is a lifelong advocate for environmental causes, having helped start Harford County's recycling efforts when he a student at Bel Air High School. He is also a member of Friends of Harford and the Little Gunpowder Improvement Association.



SAVE • THE • DATE

8th Annual Harford Land Trust

Harvest Moon Dinner & Auction

Saturday, October 19, 2019 • Bel Air Armory

Agriculture Continues to Shape Harford's Future

Local highlights from the 2017 U.S. Census of Agriculture

In April, the U.S. Department of Agriculture published the 2017 U.S. Census of Agriculture data. The U.S. Census of Agriculture is conducted every five years and provides the most comprehensive dataset on the status and impact of U.S. agriculture, down to the county level.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture published a short summary of Maryland's statistics in a [press release](#) on April 11; but what about Harford County? The full, county-by-county report can be viewed on the NASS website, but here are a few points that I found to be particularly interesting:

- The number of farms and acreage in farms reported in the 2017 Census increased to 628 farms on 74,273 acres; up from 582 farms on 65,472 acres reported in the 2012 Census. It is great to see the reported acreage increase, as it more accurately reflects the actual amount of farmland in the County, which is somewhere closer to 100,000 acres, according to USDA Satellite imaging data and tax assessments. This goes to show why accurate reporting by farmers and landowners is critical to showing agriculture's impact on our community and economy.
- The average farm size in Harford County is 118 acres, with a median of 27 acres. This means that of Harford County's 628 farms, 50% (314) are larger than 27 acres, and 50% are smaller. These data indicate that Harford County's landscape is dominated by many small farms; however, 28 farms in the county operate over 500 acres. Harford County ranks among the highest in the state in estimated market value of farmland and buildings, at \$10,906 per acre.

Fawn View Farm, Pylesville (photo by Mary Stewart)



- Harford County farmers reported nearly \$46 million dollars in market value of agricultural products sold, which is down slightly from the 2012 Census. This equates to \$73,066 per farm, with a net cash income of \$6,290.
- Of Maryland's approximately 12,400 farms, only 43% report net gains in farm income. In Harford County, only 32% report net gains. This is likely a function of several years of depressed commodity and crop prices, as well as Harford County's significant number of small farms and small, part-time hobby farm operations. Forty-one percent of Harford County's principal operators report farming as their primary occupation.
- The average age of principal operators in Harford County is 59.3 years old. In 2017, there were a reported 2,262 young producers in Maryland, farming nearly 280,000 acres. The USDA defines a young producer as one whom has been farming for 10 years or less. In Harford County, there are 147 young producers farming 14,484 acres. Seventy-one of the 147 are the principal operators of the farm.
- Harford County has 495 female producers (43% of total) who manage nearly 39,000 acres. Female producers make up 38% of Maryland farmers.
- Constant with National trends, 97% of farms in Maryland are family-owned; in Harford County, 99% are family-owned.

Harford County has a rich agricultural heritage and agriculture plays a significant part of the County's economy, community, and natural resources. For more information, visit www.nass.usda.gov.

Andrew Kness, Harford County Extension Office



Permanently Preserving Farmland - a Capital Idea!

Quick facts about the economic value of farmland preservation

Promotes economic development

Farms are businesses. If retaining and growing local business is an economic development goal, *farmland protection is economic development*. Harford's approximately 580 farms generated \$46 million in market value in 2012.

Generates tax revenue

Compared to houses, farms generate more in local taxes than they demand in services. According to national studies, farms on average receive only \$0.37 in public services for every dollar they contribute; housing developments, on the other hand, receive \$1.16 in services for every dollar they contribute.

Protects local jobs

Farms create more than 3,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities in Harford County. There are positions on the farms themselves—some jobs require highly skilled workers, while other jobs are available to younger workers or those new to farming. Farms also create jobs in secondary markets such as food processing, insurance, and veterinary care.

Ensures availability of local food

Availability of local food is vital to our health and well-being. As specialty crop production grows, Harford citizens will have more choices of fruits, vegetables, local meats, dairy, nursery plants and other products.

Promotes local investment

Farmland preservation spurs further investment. Independent studies in the Mid-Atlantic region show most proceeds of easement payments stay in the local economy to improve farm business infrastructure, buy machinery and land, and/or increase land leases.

Enhances Harford's quality of life

Studies demonstrate that open spaces can boost the value of neighboring commercial properties. Businesses seeking new locations report that quality of life is a major factor in their decision-making, and cultural and recreational open spaces are important considerations. Protected land generally enhances the value of nearby residential property too.

Avoids costs through smart growth

Farmland preservation is a smart growth tool, saving taxpayers money by avoiding costs on infrastructure and other municipal services required by residential property owners, such as schools, police, and fire safety. Haphazard development results in unpredictable and costly infrastructure and services. Concentrated development allows public services to be sited economically in population centers.

Promotes tourism

The beauty of farmland appeals to many people. Agricultural-based tourism (or agritourism) offers people a chance to enjoy open space in many ways: picking strawberries in the summer, touring a vineyard, or holding their wedding in a bucolic farm setting. Agritourism has ancillary benefits for the community too; when tourists visit a farm, they spend money at nearby establishments too.

Protects our natural resources

Preservation of fields, pastures, and woodlands means clean air, drinkable water, fertile soil, and flood protection. These natural resources are capital assets—they have tangible real-world economic value. Environmental protections such as stream buffers and prohibitions against dumping and pollutants are built into every farmland preservation easement too.

We Hold this Land in Trust for Future Generations

Retired Judge William Carr joins HLT Board

HLT recently elected the Honorable William O. Carr of Bel Air to our Board of Directors. Bill retired in 2017 after 33 years of service as a judge on the Circuit Court of Harford County, one of the longest serving circuit court judges in Maryland.

He is a native of Havre de Grace, and a graduate of Havre de Grace High School, Towson University, Johns

Hopkins University, and the University of Maryland School of Law. Bill served for many years as the Court's Administrative Judge, and he continues to hear cases on a fill-in basis.

Bill and his family reside in Bel Air. He is a former member of the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners and in that capacity also served as town mayor. He co-founded the Harford County Bar Foundation in 1992 and currently serves on the organization's Board of Directors. A celebrated local historian, Carr also serves on the Board of the Harford County Historical Society.

Board President Ben Lloyd stated, "We are thrilled to add Judge Carr to our Board of Directors, as his legal expertise and knowledge of the county will be of great value to us in our mission to preserve important lands for future generations."

Bill Carr participated in HLT's Earth Day clean-up at Perryman Woods.

Thoughts from Judge Carr

Tell us about your connection to Harford County.

The Carr family has lived in Harford County for several hundred years. Thomas Carr came to Harford in 1690 when it was a wild land.

Why is local land preservation important to you?

It is important to remember that we do not own the land. We hold it "in trust," as the Harford Land Trust's name implies. We have an obligation to preserve the land for future generations.

Why did you become involved with HLT?

HLT fills a gap. There are public programs that support agricultural land preservation. But, HLT steps in to preserve properties anywhere in the county, regardless of the zoning.



Your compassion and vision will be remembered

Would you like to help slow down time and provide opportunities for people from all walks of life to experience what makes Harford County special?

Perhaps you'd like to ensure that the farms, woodlands, wetlands, and streams are conserved rather than be at the mercy of haphazard development. You can do just that, protecting the stunning beauty, the quiet mornings, the mist rising off the river with the sounds of birds... for generations to come.

For many there is tremendous satisfaction in knowing that your gift will benefit what you care about most. No gift is too small to include in your will, and conservation will be all the better for it.

There are also potential estate and financial benefits to consider when including land conservation in your will.

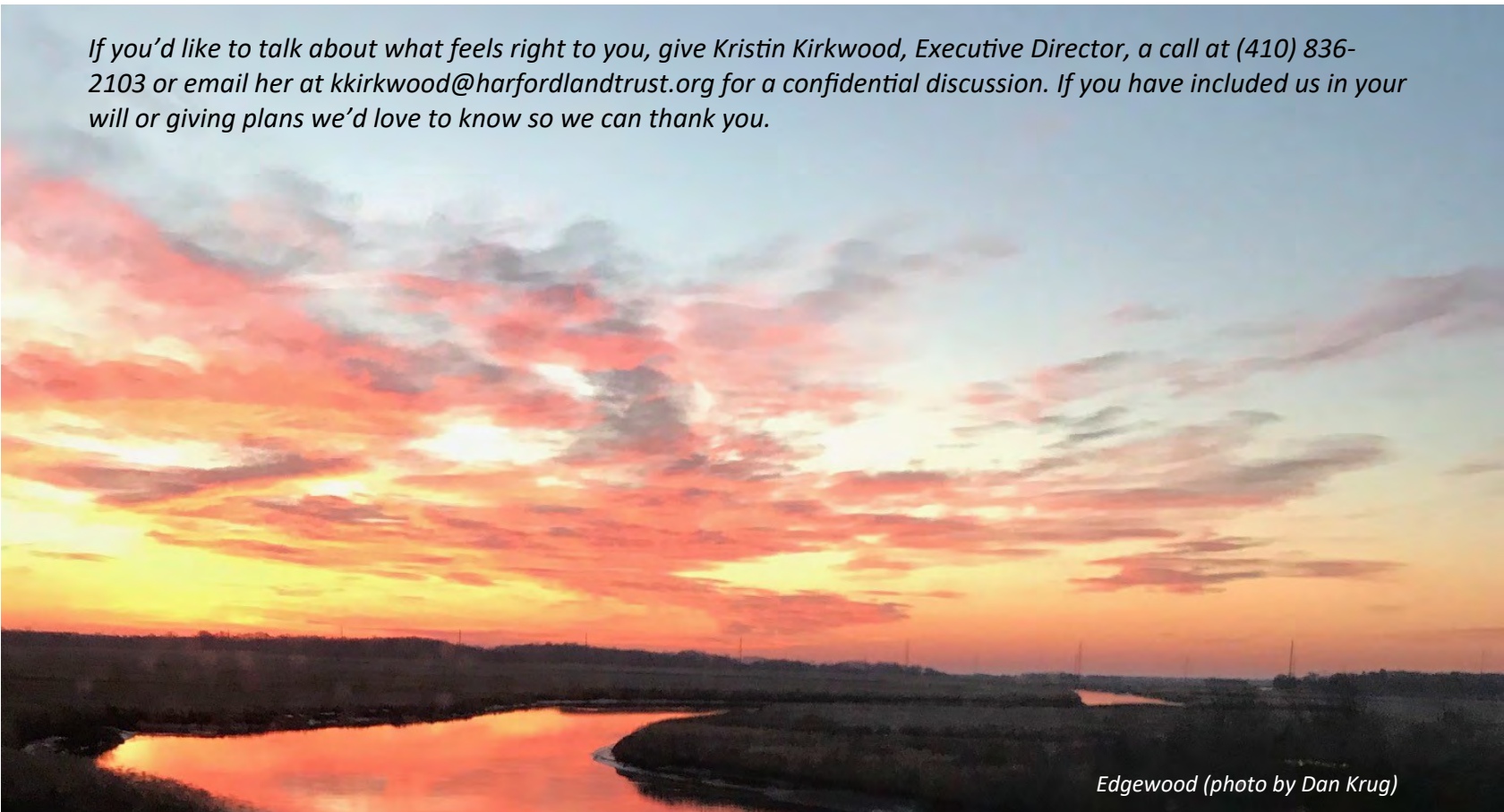
Gifts of property can make a big difference

You'd be surprised at how easy it is to ramp up the pace of conservation in Harford County.

If you own a residential property, a vacation home or business, a retirement home or a piece of property that is part of your investments and you no longer need it, you can simply donate it to our land trust. Your gift would likely qualify for an income tax deduction. We would then resell the property and apply the funds to

assist local families to conserve Harford County's farms, forests, streams, and wildlife habitat as well as host complementary programs for Harford's community. If the land had important conservation characteristics we would conserve it before we sold it to a conservation buyer.

If you'd like to talk about what feels right to you, give Kristin Kirkwood, Executive Director, a call at (410) 836-2103 or email her at kkirkwood@harfordlandtrust.org for a confidential discussion. If you have included us in your will or giving plans we'd love to know so we can thank you.



Edgewood (photo by Dan Krug)

YOU make land conservation possible. THANK YOU!

Thank you to the many members and donors who contributed between November 2018 and May 2019.

We strive to ensure that our records are accurate and to properly acknowledge all donors. Please contact us if you see that we have made an error or omission.

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You're invited!

8th Annual

Kayak Poker Run

Saturday, July 13, 2018

Flying Point Park, Edgewood

Join HLT and the Ben Boniface Memorial Fund for a morning on the water in support of land preservation in Harford County.

Register online today at www.harfordlandtrust.org. Tickets are \$25 until June 22 (\$35 after).