



Calvert County NEWS

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Board of County Commissioners Honors Winners of Calvert County Sustainable Agriculture Awards

PRINCE FREDERICK, Md. – Nov. 23, 2011 – To recognize the contributions that local agriculture makes toward a more sustainable community, the Calvert County Sustainable Agriculture Workgroup presented the second annual Sustainable Agriculture Awards at the Calvert County Board of County Commissioners meeting Nov. 15.

The Sustainable Agriculture Awards were presented in four categories. The **Sustainable Farmer of the Year Award** went to Jim and Patty Bourne of The Lamb's Quarter in Owings. The Bourne family has been farming the same land on Bourne Road since 1690. Good stewardship and a love of the land runs in their blood. The Bourne farm has a Soil Conservation Plan and a Nutrient Management Plan and employs best management practices to control runoff, maintain grass cover and minimize plowing or soil disturbance. The Bournes primarily follow organic practices and minimize the use of herbicides or pesticides.

Four years ago the Bournes started a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation that now includes 90 shareholders. The shareholders buy in to the program and receive boxes of produce on a weekly basis. Shareholders are also given priority to purchase the farm's eggs, beef, pork, chickens and lamb fresh from the farm.

The 2011 **Green Grocer of the Year Award** was presented to Chesapeake's Bounty of St. Leonard. William Kremer runs the business and sells local produce, seafood, meat, baked goods,

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canned goods, dairy, honey, nursery plants, Christmas trees and firewood. Local products are featured heavily at Chesapeake's Bounty and many products are grown on site. A pick-your-own strawberry patch accompanies crops such as tomatoes, okra, eggplant and peppers.

Chesapeake's Bounty also hosted a small-scale CSA in which share owners selected crops they wanted grown in rented raised beds. Kreamer's staff planted and tended the gardens which the shareholders harvested themselves.

The **Buy Local Restaurant of the Year Award** for 2011 went to Dee and Ricky Hardesty of Hardesty Haven Catering. With the support of their children, Blake and Holly, the Hardestys created a family catering business that has been active for five years. Dee is a third-generation farmer and strives to bring her love of farm-fresh food to the catering business. Her dishes often feature food produced on her own farm as well as a wonderful assortment purchased from farms throughout Southern Maryland.

The Hardesty's mobile farm kitchen and catering trailer allows them to cook on site and serve immediately. The farm kitchen is also a great resource for the 4-H "Dirt to Dinner" group that Dee started and leads, which allows children to see farm products turned into meals.

A new Sustainable Agriculture Award category this year - **Sustainable Meat Producer of the Year** – resulted in a tie between two local providers. Debbie and Dale Jones of Windy Willow Farm in Sunderland share the award with Chris and Bryan Dowell of Crooked Branch Farm, also in Sunderland.

Both farms treat their animals humanely, never feed animal by-products, only use antibiotics if medically necessary for the health of the animal and do not use growth implants. The farms also have Nutrient Management Plans and Soil Conservation Plans.

The Jones of Windy Willow Farm are third-generation farmers working the remaining acreage of what was once a 175-acre farm owned by Dale's grandfather. They raise beef, lamb and goat. Careful attention to breeding has led them to a beef cross between a limousine bull with red angus heifers to produce cattle that thrive on a 100-percent grass-fed diet. The result is a lean meat with a full and distinct flavor. The Jones have more than 30 regular buyers and many more occasional purchasers who buy directly from the farm. They also have a following at the North Beach Farmers Market where they often sell out. Dream Weaver Restaurant purchases and uses their beef and they have participated in many other venues such as providing beef for the Kiwanis to sell at the County's Green Expo.

The Dowells at Crooked Branch Farm also come from a long line of Calvert County farmers. Crooked Branch breeds and raises its beef on the farm and boasts approximately 45 acres of pasture

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and hay. Their beef operation feeds primarily grass and hay with a grain finish. Cattle are moved between summer and winter pastures to allow the land to rest and grass to recover between grazing. All the hay needed for winter forage is also produced onsite. Crooked Branch sells custom butchered beef that is cut to the customer's specifications.

Nominees in all categories were judged by a selection committee comprised of representatives from Calvert Eats Local, the Calvert County Agriculture Commission and the University of Maryland Extension Calvert County.

Established by the Board of Commissioners of Calvert County in 2008, the Calvert County Sustainable Agriculture Workgroup includes members from the county departments of Planning & Zoning, Economic Development, Natural Resources and General Services along with representatives from the Calvert County Health Department, the Calvert County Soil Conservation District, University of Maryland Extension Calvert County and the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission. The group's purpose is to facilitate revenue opportunities for farmers; facilitate market opportunities for farmers and consumers; help the community understand the importance of farming; and build a more sustainable community that is better insulated from price fluctuations and unsafe foods.

Photo Captions:

ChesBounty_Grocer.jpg: William Kreamer of Chesapeake's Bounty in St. Leonard accepts the Green Grocer of the Year Award from Commissioner Susan Shaw.

Hardesty_Rest.jpg: Commissioner Evan Slaughenhaupt, right, presents the Buy Local Restaurant of the Year Award to Hardesty Haven Catering. From left are Tony Hardesty, Blake Hardesty, Rick Hardesty and Dee Hardesty.

LambsQtr_SustFarm: Jim and Patty Bourne of The Lamb's Quarter accept the Sustainable Farmer of the Year Award from Commissioner Jerry Clark.

Meats.jpg: The Sustainable Meat Producer of the Year award went to two local providers. From left are Commissioner Steve Weems, Dale Jones of Windy Willow Farm, Chris Dowell of Crooked Branch Farm and Commissioner Pat Nutter.

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Calvert County is Maryland's smallest county in land area with 213 square miles. It is home to approximately 90,000 people and has one of the highest standards of living in Maryland. A labor force of at least 1.8 million resides within a one-hour drive. Major industries include defense contracting, information technology, tourism, utilities, light manufacturing and administrative services.