

# OPEN SPACE NEWS

## ORANGE COUNTY LAND TRUST



*View from atop the Priest Farm*

### SHAWANGUNK RIDGE FARM PRESERVED

Another piece of the magnificent Shawangunk Ridge has been protected thanks to the generosity of landowner Anne Priest, with support from Orange County's Open Space Fund and the Town of Greenville. Orange County Land Trust has accepted a conservation easement on the land that will ensure it will be preserved forever.

The 114-acre working sheep farm includes a variety of habitats – hayfields and pastures divided by stone walls, chestnut oak and mixed-oak forest, vernal pools and talus ledges – providing homes for deer, bear, fox, rabbits and even the occasional porcupine.

From the open fields, the farm offers sweeping views of the Highlands and Catskills, as well as the Wallkill River Valley. The public may soon be enjoying the view, as Ms. Priest has offered to allow the Shawangunk Ridge Trail to run through her land.

To learn more about Ms. Priest, her preservationist efforts and how she came to be a shepherd, read her memoir, *Trafficking in Sheep*, published earlier this year by The Countyman Press.

### LOCAL ARTISTS DISCOVER MOONBEAMS PRESERVE



“I never knew this beautiful spot existed and was open to the public. I can't wait to wander through the trails and find more special places to record on canvas!”

Early in June, local artists carted their easels, oils and pastels to Moonbeams Preserve in order to capture its pastoral views on canvas. Well-known local artists Marie Liu and Cynthia Harris Pagano in collaboration with Anita Goldsmith, president of Mt. Hope Historical Society, invited artists to participate in a summer paint-a-thon. Moonbeams Preserve was chosen as one of thirteen sites participants were encouraged to visit as inspirational locations to use in their works of art. Artwork was displayed at the Mt. Hope Historical Society for the summer and the event culminated with an “old-time” barn auction on September 16<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm at the Harding House in Mt. Hope.

Orange County Land Trust has six preserves open for the public's enjoyment year round. For more information go to [www.orangecountylandtrust.org](http://www.orangecountylandtrust.org) and click on Protected Lands for pictures, descriptions and directions or call our office at (845)343-0840.



OCLT President Douglas McBride

## A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT: NEW STATE AND FEDERAL TAX INCENTIVES

Two recent legislative changes give a financial boost to land owners who preserve the natural character of their land through voluntary conservation agreements (also known as conservation easements). Our state legislature has just approved, effective in 2007, an income tax credit for landowners whose land is protected by a conservation agreement. The annual tax credit is equal to 25 percent of the property taxes paid on the land, to a maximum of \$5,000 per year. All landowners with land protected by a conservation agreement are eligible regardless of when the agreement was created. The agreement must be held by a qualified land trust or governmental entity.

On the federal level, new land conservation tax benefits have been combined with common sense reforms to ensure the public benefit of conservation donations. These changes are part of the just-passed pension reform legislation, now awaiting the

President's signature. After scrutinizing the land trust movement carefully, Congress imposed a significant tightening of the rules for appraisals of donated property, and stepped up its scrutiny of land conservation donations. But it affirmed its reliance on voluntary land conservation by increasing tax incentives significantly. The new law extends the carry-forward period for tax deductions for voluntary conservation agreements from 5 to 15 years. It also raises the cap on those deductions from 30 percent of a donor's adjusted gross income to 50 percent. For qualifying farmers and ranchers, the deduction can go as high as 100 percent.



Attendees from OCLT stewardship informational session.

## GROWING OUR STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM!

On July 26th, 40 volunteers attended an informational session to learn about the Orange County Land Trust's growing volunteer stewardship program. The Orange County Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department generously hosted the session at the Arboretum. Volunteers explored the opportunities available with the stewardship program, including being active on a Preserve Team at one of our eight Public Preserves or becoming a Conservation Easement Monitor on private properties located through out Orange County.

The next volunteer informational session is planned for the spring of 2007. In the meantime, workshops and training sessions are held quarterly for volunteers and landowners on land stewardship topics such as managing for wildlife habitat and biodiversity and trail construction.

The Land Trust currently has volunteer opportunities for an eBird Coordinator, Stewardship Outreach Research Coordinator, Historical Research and Register Application Coordinator, Conservation Easement Monitors, and Preserve Team members and Preserve Stewards. If you are interested in any of these opportunities or want us to keep you posted on trail workdays and workshops, etc, please call Carissa at (845) 343-0840 or email [haberland@oclt.org](mailto:haberland@oclt.org).

## WELCOME WAGON

The summer months proved to be a busy time for the Land Trust in "personnel acquisitions". Marlena Lange, who is no stranger to our organization, joined the Board of Directors in August. Having just retired as a teacher from the Chester school district, Marlena decided she had plenty of free time to devote to our organization, so she joined the Board of Directors in their pursuit of our noble mission. She has been an enthusiastic Land Trust volunteer and supporter for over four years. Marlena's eagerness and "can-do spirit" are an asset to our organization. Welcome aboard!



Marlena Lange in her natural habitat.

Also joining our organization this summer are two part-time administrative assistants, Sarah Hutton and Maureen Gambardella. They are working to keep the day to day administrative operations in order so the rest of the staff can focus on our strategic goals. We are working like a well-oiled machine due to their efforts. Welcome Sarah and Maureen, it is great to have your support!



Francis Wickham and his granddaughter made friends with a calf at Bellevale Dairy Farm.

The success was due to our dedicated farmers: Albert and Judy Buckbee and Al, Jr. and Amy Noteboom at Bellvale Dairy; Leonard DeBuck of the DeBuck Sod Farm, Victor Ludmerer and George Vurno of Masker's Orchard; Virginia Martin at Borderland Horse Farm; Cheryl Rogowski and her family at their vegetable farm; and Deborah and Michael Sweeton of The General's Garden. They eagerly welcomed our Farm Tour guests with demonstrations and activities and generously shared their special skills and knowledge. Of course our thanks for the smooth running of the day also go to the many volunteers who created the map and brochure and greeted visitors. Everyone walked away from the day with new experiences and a better understanding of what it takes to be a farmer.

**Special thanks also go to our sponsors** Bobolink Dairy, Community 2000, Orange County Citizens Foundation, Subtle Energies Holistic Health Center, Roe's Orchards, First Pioneer Farm Credit, R. J. Smith Realty, Peck's Wines and Spirits, Tracker Archeology Service, Inc., Wallace & Berry Associates, Inc., Country Chevrolet-Oldsmobile, Inc. and Jacques Levine.

## "A DAY ON THE FARM" TOUR A POPULAR SUCCESS

Cold and rainy weather couldn't dampen the enthusiasm of the day as smiles and laughter were plentiful from the participants of our first ever "A Day on the Farm" tour. Highlights of the day included hayrides, cow milking demonstrations, sod harvesting, cooking demonstrations, container planting and information about the best apples for baking and eating. Ann Marrott, a Farm Tour attendee, called it a "resounding success" and is already looking forward to next year's Farm Tour. Debbie Sweeton was as charmed as her guests at The General's Garden as she led a group of families from the Bronx around her wildflower field to show them some of the flowers and had them call a Chickadee out of a tree for all to see.



Kite flying at DeBuck's Sod Farm was one of the highlights of the tour.

## JACQUES AND FLORENCE LEVINE CHARITABLE FUND CREATED

OCLT Board member, Jacques Levine, President of Jacques Levine Shoes, has created the Jacques and Florence Levine Charitable Fund with a generous contribution of \$20,000. It is intended, says Jack, "not only to memorialize my late wife but as a mechanism to support the Land Trust and ensure the future of the organization and its mission." The fund will be managed by the Community Foundation of Orange County and is set up as a sub-fund of the Orange County Land Trust Endowment Fund. Want to help build our endowment fund? Contributions of any size can be made to the Land Trust's General Endowment Fund. To create a named sub-fund under our endowment fund a contribution must be at least \$5000. Thanks again Jack for securing the future of the Land Trust



Jacques and Florence Levine

## GRANT RECEIVED FOR \$45K FROM LTA

On July 17, 2006, Orange County Land Trust received the exciting news of a generous two-year grant of \$45,000 from the Land Trust Alliance. The Professional Development Grant gave us the opportunity to hire our Director of Acquisitions and Stewardship Programs, Carissa Haberland. Carissa will assist the Executive Director's land preservation efforts while providing leadership and oversight for our dedicated volunteer land stewards. This grant will help strengthen Orange County Land Trust's ability to protect New York State's important natural resources and help transform our Land Trust into a more effective land conservation organization.

Did you know we offer an E-NEWSLETTER service? Log on to our website at [www.orangecountylandtrust.org](http://www.orangecountylandtrust.org) and sign up today. It's a great way so stay informed about upcoming events and news about our organization.

Interested in a career or volunteering at OCLT? Check out website at [www.orangecountylandtrust.org](http://www.orangecountylandtrust.org) for more information.



Orange County Land Trust  
 P.O. Box 2442 ■ Middletown, NY 10940  
 P:(845) 343-0840 ■ F:(845) 341-0898  
[www.orangecountylandtrust.org](http://www.orangecountylandtrust.org)

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# ORANGE COUNTY LAND TRUST

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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Upcoming Events at Moonbeams Preserve

For more information call (845) 343-0840

Sun, Nov. 5, 2006 – 10am Winter Storage in Woods & Fields

Upcoming Events at Museum of the Hudson Highlands

For more information call (845)534-5506

Thurs. Oct. 26, 2006 – Mute Swans of the Hudson River

## CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS WITH ORANGE COUNTY LAND TRUST

Join us as we celebrate a years worth of accomplishments! Our informal gathering will take place at our office at 25 Orchard Street, Middletown (in the First Presbyterian Church building) on Friday, December 8 from 5 to 7pm. Share hot mulled cider and sample delectable hors d'oeuvres supplied by our board members – our way of saying thank you to all our hard working volunteers and generous supporters. All are welcome!

The Mission of the Orange County Land Trust is to preserve the fields, forests, wetlands, ridgelines, and river corridors in and around Orange County, through voluntary land conservation.