



GAINING GROUND

FALL 2024



PRESIDENT'S LETTER



We are wrapping up another wonderful season as I sit down to write this letter in my office. We took on three dedicated interns who helped us in all manner of work this summer. From monitoring conservation easements to helping with some research and our education and outreach programs, Julia Konopski, Camille Czarny and Hutch Gellert became integral parts of our teams this summer. Emma Bernadette, now a senior at Oberlin College, contributes our feature article in this issue on Cedar Ridge, a horse farm in Pine Plains that we have just forever-protected by buying the land's development rights. Seeing more and more young people become engaged with the land conservation brings me great hope for our future.



Also, you can read about Drake Real Estate's volunteer day with the DLC. A dozen employees left their New York City offices to spend a day trail-making and team-building—a great idea for companies looking to give back and get folks engaged with the land! Meanwhile, the Millbrook community came out in record numbers to celebrate our barn dance at Thorndale and we raised more than \$300,000. A special thank you to our dedicated host, Felicitas Thorne, and co-chairs Felicity and Tim Bontecou, Juliana Pecchia, Eliza Thorne, and Jacqueline and Oakleigh Thorne and to all our supporters for making the evening such a success for land conservation. As most of you know, this amazing night came with some unexpected aftermath, and we continue to think of all who were affected by the cyclospora outbreak. Despite the effects, we cannot say enough about this community and the love and support we have felt throughout this unfortunate experience.



August is also, of course, time for the Dutchess County Fair, an event which I look forward to all year. The first Dutchess County Fair was held back in 1842, back when there were only 27 states in the union! A humble affair, the event continued to grow over the years, Teddy Roosevelt speaking to a crowd of 30,000 concerning Hudson Valley Farming in 1910. When the Dutchess County 4-H Program was established in 1925 it became an integral part of the fair, providing a way to keep young people involved in agriculture. I am so proud that we were again able to support the current generation of 4-Hers with scholarships to help cover the costs of participating in the fair. The fair draws close to half a million people, making it the second-largest county fair in New York. There are so many attractions, too numerous to count, but the 4-H milkshake booth is not to be missed. I am particularly grieved to write about the passing of Dave Tetor, who developed this tremendously successful idea. Dave was a long-time DLC board member

and integral part of the Dutchess County farming community. And while a short obituary runs in these pages, you will also find an essay by 12-year-old 4-H farmer Tessa Mashburn, which was part of her scholarship application. Her enthusiasm for collective action for and by farmers is both infectious and heartwarming. I know Dave is smiling down on us, knowing our farming future has many such advocates.

As I walk outside after a day in the office and feel the crispness of fall in the air, I am reminded that protecting this incredible land is one of the most important things that we can do. And so I thank you for your help to ensure that this area remains as beautiful today, as it was when Teddy Roosevelt visited so many years ago. I wish you all a glorious fall season filled with the countless pastimes that make living in the Hudson Valley such a blessing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Becky".

Becky Thornton

HELPING HANDS

Seeking a way to give back, one company reached out to the DLC for a volunteer opportunity for their staff.

“Our team said this has been the best volunteering activity we have done yet,” said Natalia Ramos of Drake Real Estate Partners. “We are definitely looking forward to doing this again!” Each year, Drake Real Estate Partners holds a corporate retreat with at least one day devoted to volunteering with a non-profit organization. Drake Co-Founder and President Nicolas Ibanez owns a property protected by a DLC conservation easement and suggested partnering with the DLC for such a day. Working with the DLC’s Outreach and Preserve Manager Brian Straniti, Ramos, who oversees administrative activities for the firm’s New York office, agreed that a fun day of trail building was a great volunteer activity for Drake employees.

On a humid July morning, more than a dozen Drake volunteers from the New York office – and one from the Texas office – hauled tools for a half-mile through the woods and began constructing a new trail. They carried boulders that would become stepping stones to traverse streams, lopped plants and branches along the marked pathway, raked away brush and debris, and removed fallen trees and limbs, creating more than a



mile of fresh new trail that will eventually be open to the public. All of this hard work was done with smiles and a spirit of cheer, coupled with a reverence for the natural beauty of Dutchess County. Overall it was a great day with a lot of good work accomplished! 🍃

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Preserving the Ridge

BY EMMA BENARDETE

In 2018, after a career that spanned twenty-one starts, Mind Your Biscuits retired as the all-time New York-bred earning horse. The thoroughbred raced at some of horse racing's greatest venues – Belmont Park, Churchill Downs, Saratoga – to a record of seven wins, eight seconds, and three thirds. A quick sprinter, Mind Your Biscuits won three New York-bred titles from 2016 to 2018 and is widely regarded as one of the best-ever short-distance racers. This stellar champion's life began on March 14, 2013 right here in Dutchess County when he was foaled at Cedar Ridge Farm in Pine Plains.

Earlier this year, the farm's owners, Sue and Gary Lundy, completed the preservation of their broodmare and foaling operation by selling the development rights of the property to the Dutchess Land Conservancy. In their thirty-plus years running the operation, the Lundys saw New York State's horse racing industry grow to become the \$3 billion annual behemoth it is today. They also saw the changes that unplanned development brought to many towns and how they altered the character and identity of once-rural farming areas with pristine and bucolic views. The Lundys wanted to preserve their farm and its importance to the thirty to fifty horses stabled here annually. Sue was particularly concerned by trends she's seen in Dutchess County. "I was encouraged to get in touch with the DLC about protecting my property by my neighbor, Sarah Chase. She is deeply involved with and enthusiastic about the organization," said Sue. "And I was interested in the premise of their work."



Following her neighbor's advice, she reached out to the DLC. In addition to its farming aspects, the ecological merit in the property's protection was immediately obvious. "It's a key territory for regional wildlife. Cedar Ridge includes approximately 100 acres of hardwood forest which buffer the farm and provide habitat for numerous wildlife including several species of turtles, raptors, and large mammals such as black bear and bobcat," Erin Hoagland, DLC Director of Conservation says. "It's location adjacent to Chaseholm Farm, land already protected by the Columbia Land Conservancy, and among a critical mass of over 1,000 acres of active farmland added to its conservation value." The idyllic pastures



dotted with horses abut rolling forested hills across nearly 250 acres, providing fantastic views of the countryside for those driving in and around Pine Plains. And flowing through it all is a sparkling tributary of Shekomeko Creek.

The Lundys worked with the DLC to create a comprehensive plan that provides for both the long-term protection of the property and supports the continuation of the foaling and broodmare operation as well. Once the plan was established for the conservation of Cedar Ridge Farm, the DLC applied for funding to purchase the development rights through two separate grants. The Dutchess County Partnership for Manageable Growth Program, which helps protect agricultural and other important open lands by providing grants to cover land preservation project costs, and has to date helped to protect more than 4,800 acres in Dutchess County, awarded funds covering a percentage of the project's costs. Additional funds came from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets through its Farmland Protection Implementation Grants Program, which provides financial assistance to counties, municipalities, soil and water conservation districts, and land trusts to aid in the protection of agricultural land. With funding in place, the Lundys and the DLC closed on the conservation transaction this spring, permanently protecting Cedar Ridge Farm.

“We are so grateful to work with the Lundys on the protection of their amazing farm,” said DLC President Becky Thornton. “We are delighted that this agriculturally and ecologically important land is now forever preserved.” Cedar Ridge Farm and its forested ridge, buzzing meadows, and rushing streams will continue to host the birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and insects that make it their home. As for the Lundys, they will continue to care for the many mares that reside here each year to foal horses that could someday become champion racehorses like Mind Your Biscuits. 🍃





Summer Evening

The weather was particularly glorious on the evening of June 15th, as supporters of the Dutchess Land Conservancy gathered for the annual Barn Dance. Held this year at the historic Sheep Barn at Thorndale Farm in Millbrook and hosted by Felicitas Thorne, who served as honorary chair, and chaired by Felicity and Tim Bontecou, Juliana Pecchia, Eliza Thorne, and Jacqueline and Oakleigh Thorne, the evening had record attendance of nearly 400 people. Notably, the “Jockey Committee,” an idea generated from co-chair Jacqueline Thorne, brought an enthusiastic younger crowd to the dance, and to the dancefloor with music by the Luster Kings. After cocktails al fresco, guests were mesmerized by the stunning floral arrangements and enchanting lighting that illuminated the historic barn. As one of the DLC’s two main fundraising events the night was a success, taking in more than \$280,000 with an additional \$85,000 through a lively paddle raise in support of farmland protection. 🍀





PROGRAM NOTES

4-H SCHOLARSHIPS

“This means so much,” said 14-year-old Margot LaPorte of the scholarship award she received on August 24 from the DLC. This was her third year applying for and receiving one of the scholarships, which assist 4-H youth with expenses from attending the Dutchess County Fair. Margot will be using her award to pay for insect specimens and interactive presentation materials used in her Entomology Club displays. The application requires applicants to write an essay, and this year 4-H’ers chose from three topics: ways that livestock farmers can positively impact their land and natural resources, three ways to make the world a healthier and happier place, or an outdoor place in Dutchess County that they connect with. The twenty-two applicants wrote thoughtful and moving compositions, and excerpts from their essays can be read and enjoyed below or on our website, dutchesland.org, as well as one essay in its entirety.

The scholarships were handed out to the winners at the 4-H Barn Bash at the Dutchess County Fair, where 4-H’ers and their parents gather to celebrate their accomplishments. DLC President Becky Thornton dedicated the scholarships to long-serving member of the DLC Board of Directors Dave Tetor, who had passed away just a few days before and was a lifelong voice for the agricultural community, a guiding light for the DLC and – perhaps his greatest accomplishment – one of the originators of the supremely popular 4-H Milkshake Booth at the Dutchess County Fair!

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2024 Dutchess Land Conservancy 4-H Scholarships: Jessa Carpentieri, Kendra Carpentieri, Sienna Carpentieri, Caitlyn Cassidy, Corra DiBlasi, Katie Drum, Ashley Keck, Margot LaPorte, Tessa Mashburn, Lauryn Menz, Vivien Padoleski, Lyris Pennock, Tavin Pennock, Mackenzie Phillips, Julia Raskopf, Kieran Read, Natalie Shultz, Addison Stapf, Isabella Tropea, Livia Underhill, Lily White, and Noah White. 🌿



Essay Excerpts

The trails are full of untouched woods with lush trees. They wind along beautiful golden fields. In the sunny and warm summer, bushes grow along the side with perfectly red berries ready for picking. Not only are the sights stunning, but the atmosphere itself allows for peace of mind and body. Taking a stroll through nature without any distractions gives much needed personal time.

• **Lyris Pennock**, Age 14, writing about *Stony Kill Farm*

Fostering environmental sustainability is vital for the long-term health of our planet and its inhabitants. Climate change and environmental degradation pose significant threats to our wellbeing. By adopting sustainable practices, such as reducing carbon emissions, conserving natural resources, and protecting biodiversity, we can mitigate these threats. Governments, businesses, and individuals all have roles to play in this effort. For instance, transitioning to renewable energy sources, implementing stricter regulations on pollution, and encouraging sustainable consumption can all contribute to a healthier planet.

• **Natalie Shultz**, Age 16, writing on one of three things she would do to make the world a healthier, happier place

If livestock farmers compost materials, they can positively change the way their farming affects the environment. Livestock farmers can take care to properly compost different animals’ manure, examples include pairing manure from hogs with straw or cattle with shaving. These pairings help break down the manure effectively to make healthy fertilizer. Through proper composting, farmers can make a positive change to their ecosystem.

• **Kieran Read**, Age 17, writing on ways that livestock farmers can positively impact their land and natural resources

PROGRAM NOTES

Tessa Mashburn, age 12, wrote a compelling essay for the DLC 4H Scholarship Program this summer. Below, we publish an excerpt from her work describing the importance of sustainable land management and of supporting each other.

The crisp morning air of the Hudson Valley carries the sweet scent of possibility as I step out onto my small farm, surrounded by the gentle rhythms of nature. I'm reminded that even in this most picturesque setting, our everyday choices hold the power to shape a happier and healthier world.

I believe that livestock farmers like me can thrive without harming the environment. In fact, we can even help our land's natural resources flourish. Using techniques like rotational grazing, composting, and planting trees and buffers, we can keep our soil healthy, our food nutrients dense, our water clean and our air fresh. Together, as we tend to the earth and our livestock, we can become like gardeners of hope, cultivating a brighter future with every seed we sow.

My personal journey and connection began with a story my mom would read to me and my siblings, called "Riparia's River," where children work together to solve water contamination caused by livestock runoff. This

story sparked my interest in conservation efforts and sustainable land management. By helping farmers create buffer zones between farms and waterways, we help farmers, waterways and all Earth's inhabitants.

On my own small farm, I've seen the benefits of regenerative practices first-hand. My goats and rabbits play a crucial role in rebuilding soil health and promoting native plants. I hope I'm doing my part to regenerate the lands we call home and leave it better for future generations like myself.

Through collective action we can help support our farmers. Some farmers do so much with having very little. We cannot expect that they have more time and resources than we do. I know Dutchess County youth 4-H like myself would step up in a heartbeat to assist our local farmers with rotational grazing, moving fences and livestock, composting and creating waterways for buffers. Let us all become the force that heals and nurtures our world. 🌿

INSIDE THE DLC

The future of land conservation looks bright based on the talent and creativity of the DLC's summer interns.

Julia Konopski, the DLC's summer Stewardship Intern is focused on marine ecology at Marist College (where she is a junior), but quickly fell in love with the land in Dutchess County during her internship. Enjoying the opportunities the DLC presented, she participated in ground monitoring of conservation easements and gained knowledge of GIS mapping. "[These skills] will be helpful in my schoolwork and could be applicable to an eventual career," she says.

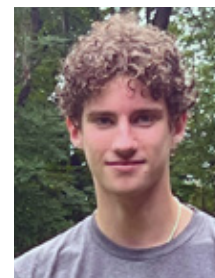
A recent graduate of Columbia University, Camille Czarny has a keen interest in sustainable agriculture and regenerative farming in the Hudson Valley. This summer she interviewed farmers throughout Dutchess County and beyond on their practices and hopes to be able to utilize what



she learned as she pursues a career in environmental agriculture. But of her notable summer memories, one of her favorites was when DLC President Becky Thornton gave her a tour of the Jesse and Gayle Bontecou Wildlife Conservation Preserve.

For the second summer in a row, the DLC was honored to accept a "Millbrook Engage" participant in their internship program. Hutch Gellert, a junior at the Millbrook School, brought his passion and enthusiasm for learning and teaching to our many Education and Outreach programs this summer. "I couldn't imagine a better opportunity to learn about the world around us than everything I was able to do this summer," he said.

Our summer interns were indeed exceptional, and we wish them well as they continue their education and begin what will no doubt be extraordinary careers. 🌿



NATURE OF THINGS

DLC Communications Manager Doug Ohlandt journeyed to the headwaters of a stream in Dutchess County for a conversation with an Eastern Brook Trout named Phil.



DOUG: Hello, Phil. It's nice to meet you.

PHIL: Likewise, Doug. That's quite a trek you made up those steep hills to get to this spring-fed pool.

Q: Well, you "brookies" (also known as *Salvelinus fontinalis*) like cold water, so I knew I was in for a bit of a hike to locate you.

A: We sure do. We look for clear, cool, oxygen-rich pools, and we definitely don't like them dirty. Little to no silt in the water suits us just fine. These areas are getting harder to come by in our natural range from Hudson Bay in northern Canada all the way

down to Georgia. The waters are getting a little warmer in the south than the 66° Fahrenheit maximum we thrive in. Hopefully, it doesn't get that way up here.

Q: I hope not as well. It's getting harder and harder to find Brook Trout these days.

A: Well, we always were a little sneaky and elusive. We like to be around escape cover as much as possible – woody debris and trees in streams, rock ledges, undercut banks – so we can flee from predators like snakes, birds, snapping turtles, and even larger trout.

Q: Brookies have some interesting characteristics in their fins and their coloration, don't they?

A: That's right. We have an adipose fin on our back, just before the tail. You only see those in salmon, trout, and some catfish. Our tail fins are slightly forked as well. But what really sets us apart are the wavy cream-colored lines on our backs and the tops of our heads called vermiculations. Those lines break apart on our sides and become round red spots with pretty striking blue halos. We're really proud of the way we look and boy do we look nice when we reach our full length of ten to fifteen inches. The females are absolutely gorgeous when the sun refracts through the water and hits them! Boy oh boy!

Q: Speaking of females, you only breed once a year, correct?

A: That is indeed correct. Females look for loose, clean gravel and then dig a pit called a redd that's about four to twelve inches in depth. Typically, this takes place in later summer or early fall. That's when we males begin looking for females. It's uncommonly rare for a female to accept more than one male mate, so you have to be pretty showy and good about fighting off the other males. Once the eggs are fertilized, they'll incubate in the redd for about four to six weeks and then hatch. Once they've reached the age of two – I know, that's really young to you humans – they're full-grown adults. Most of us brookies will live to about five to seven years old. I'm three right now, so I've still got a long life ahead of me if I can avoid being eaten, at least by the way I look at things.

Q: Well, thanks for your time, Phil. It was a pleasure chatting with you.

A: And you as well, Doug. But do me a favor – don't tell anyone where you found me. We like to keep our homes secret.

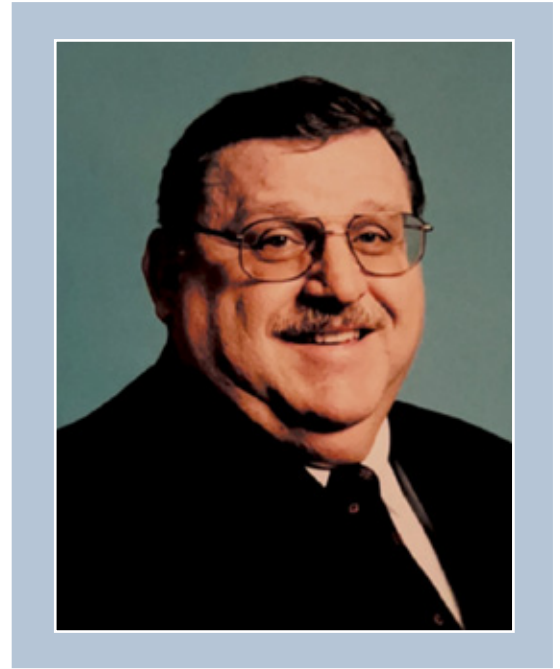
Q: Will do, Phil. I promise I won't let anyone in on where you live.

A: Thanks! 🍃

IN MEMORIAM

Dave Tetor

Long-time DLC board member Dave Tetor passed away on August 20th with his family by his side. Well-known as an expert on Dutchess County agriculture, he served as an Ag. Extension Agent for the Dutchess County Cornell Cooperative Extension. He was a former Supervisor for the Town of Stanford and often spoke at town meetings in support of Open Space and Farmland Protection Plans. He was responsible for creating the popular and successful 4-H milkshake booth at the Dutchess County Fair. As a board member, Dave was instrumental in helping the DLC establish its collaboration with the Columbia Land Conservancy to form the DLC-CLC Farmer Match Program. He encouraged landowners, especially farmers, to preserve their land through the purchase of development rights program, leading to the protection of 49 working farms, and turning the tide on what farmers thought of PDR. A key presenter at DLC's workshops and events, he knew the farmers, and the farmers knew and respected Dave Tetor. Dave organized a farm tour for Dutchess County legislators to get them more involved in protecting farmland, as well as volunteering at every single one of the DLC's Farm County Tours, where he offered comments and insights on the current state of agriculture in Dutchess County and New York State. Dave could often be heard speaking on WHDD and WRWD radio early morning talk shows on agriculture in the Hudson Valley as one of the most well-known experts on farming in Dutchess County, and his voice was heard across the county. He will be deeply missed by the DLC, the farming community and far beyond. 🌿



Parker Gentry

Parker Gentry, a long-time DLC supporter and advocate, passed away on July 2, 2024 at her home in Millbrook surrounded by her family. A beloved and popular member of the community, it is hard to imagine a social or sporting event without her. A consummate sportswoman, Parker was an avid rider, skier, shooter, golfer, tennis player and more. She served as Joint Master of the Millbrook Hunt for 15 years. Her passion for sport in the field and stream was only equaled by her love for her family and friends with whom she shared every kind of adventure around the world. As elegant as she was athletic, Parker was a “head-turner,” especially on the dance floor. Her authentic nature coupled with her sense of humor made her a much sought after companion at any party. Her generosity to the Dutchess Land Conservancy was constant and steadfast and continues in the form of a very generous bequest that will live on in her name. The DLC is incredibly grateful and humbled by her heartfelt gift and her dedication to ensuring this area’s incredible landscape will be preserved for the future. She will be deeply missed by the DLC, the Millbrook community and far beyond. 🌿

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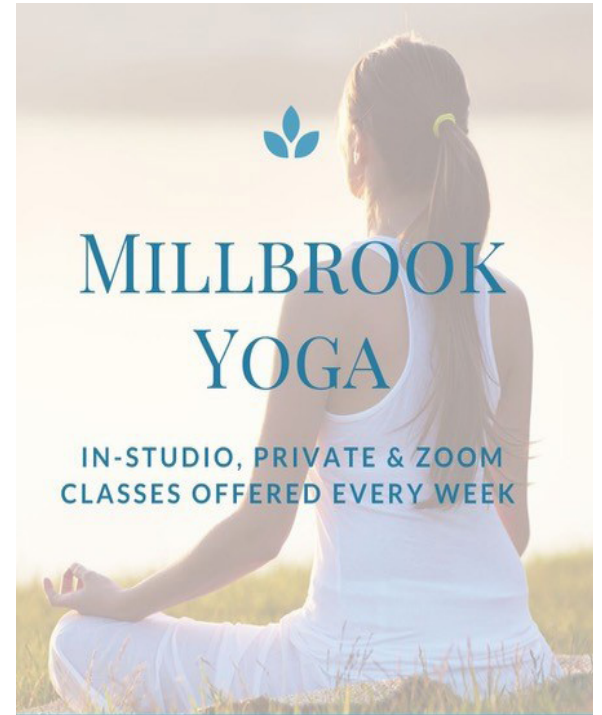
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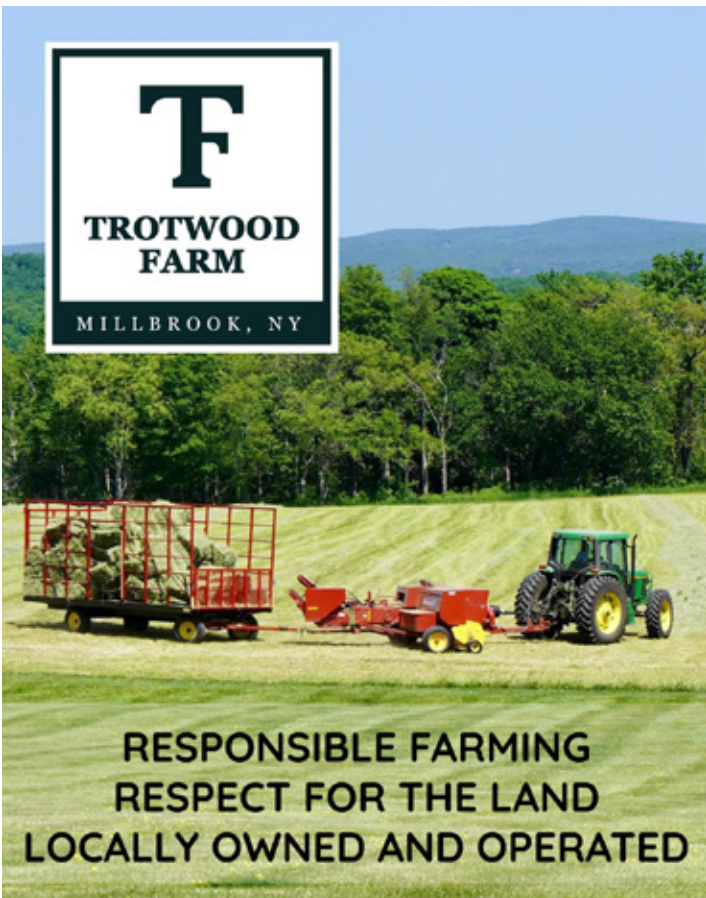


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