

SCA Newsletter May 2010
Anne Sturm, SCA President

The Sugarloaf Citizens' Association annual meeting drew nearly 100 people to the Gothic Barn at Linden Farm on April 17 for a morning of dialogue, information, demonstrations and fellowship. Young people from various schools in Montgomery County showed the audience how they used funds for various environmental oriented projects sponsored by the Piedmont Environmental Foundation, an SCA affiliate.

The main speaker was Royce Hanson, the Chair of the Montgomery County Planning Council and one of the original creators of the Agriculture Reserve. Royce is leaving public office in June and presented SCA with a valedictory address that touched the past but largely looked to the future of the Reserve. There is not enough room in this article to repeat Royce's talk, but he shared two major insights that serve as beacons for the work of SCA and other organizations that hope to protect the agriculture and open land legacy of our region.

Royce was clear that while the Agriculture Reserve is unique in that it provides Montgomery County something that few other places have, a protected zone for agriculture in an area that is rapidly being developed for residents and businesses, it is not a sure thing. Pressures will mount as the demand for housing and businesses expand in the Washington, DC area.

A second insight is how the future of the Reserve can be sustained with actions and policies by dedicated politicians and motivated activists. The food producing opportunities in the Reserve will strengthen the will of Montgomery County residents even down county to support the preservation of agriculture land. A further example is placing as much land as possible into the Maryland Land Trust program as a way to make it difficult to route new highways through the reserve.

SCA members are dedicated to do what is necessary to protect the agriculture opportunities in the Sugarloaf region. Royce Hanson leaves a powerful legacy that will serve as an inspiration and guide for years to come.

One other matter that has just appeared as this article is written, involves the routing of transmission lines (PATH) by Allegheny Power Company through agriculture land in our region. The staff of the Maryland Public Service Commission has allowed the PATH application to be presented to the commissioners. Both Virginia and West Virginia have rejected the PATH application for now. We are monitoring the situation and will keep our readers informed.