



SUGARLOAF CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER November 2014

"Protecting our rural legacy"

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The Bounty in our Midst

Thanksgiving is upon us. And there is no better place in the Washington, DC area to experience the spirit of Thanksgiving than the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve; after all, Thanksgiving started out in 1621 as a day of grace for the pilgrims and Indians to honor the fall harvest.

Driving along Dickerson roads straddled by fields and orchards is a feast for the eyes: oranges, yellows, and blues of pumpkins and squash; fresh green of young winter wheat; dark green of kale; reds of Stayman apples; and the woody brown of recently-harvested cornstalks. Much of these locally grown foods will proudly end up in our pies, casseroles, and salads to share with family and loved ones who gather and give thanks this coming Thursday.

But it is important to recognize that our scenic rural landscape is not an agricultural Disneyland—the land is productive and provides the livelihood of local farmers. The Ag Reserve is a real economic engine of Montgomery County. It employs over 10,000 individuals and contributes over \$287 million to the economy. In a time when many school children think food comes from the store and do not realize that eggs come from chickens, milk from cows, and carrots from soil, the Reserve is a near-by laboratory for kids to visit, explore and learn.

Our Ag Reserve is a living treasure and we all are responsible for preserving it for generations to come. Sugarloaf Citizens Association (SCA) has worked for over 42 years to protect its rural legacy in the face of development pressures, such as mega churches, landfills and a Potomac bridge crossing that would bisect the reserve. As I raise my glass of local wine this Thanksgiving, I will give thanks for the beauty and bounty of our Ag Reserve and toast the farmers who are stewards of the land and my fellow SCA members and friends—past, present and future—for their heartfelt commitment and advocacy.

Happy Thanksgiving!