



NEWS

For Release: April 19, 2006
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SADC Preserves 43-Acre Organic Farm in Hillsborough Township

Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus today announced the preservation of the 43-acre Runnin' Free farm on Wertsville Road in Hillsborough Township, Somerset County.

"Farmland preservation is key to maintaining a strong agricultural industry and to retaining the unique character of our communities," said Secretary Kuperus, who chairs the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC). "We're pleased to be able to preserve this farm so that it can continue to contribute to agriculture and the quality of life in Hillsborough Township for years to come."

Runnin' Free is owned by Mae Giarrusso, who purchased the farm in 1977 and operated it with her husband John Sr., until about five years ago. Over the years, they raised thoroughbreds and beef cattle and grew a variety of crops. Her grandson, John Giarrusso III, currently operates the farm, which is a certified organic farm selling eggs and vegetables.

Mrs. Giarrusso says she pursued preservation because she loves the open space in her community, particularly along Wertsville Road where most of the land is devoted to horses. "I just could not see putting a bunch of houses up," she says. "I want people to be able to enjoy the country, and it's going fast here in New Jersey."

The SADC purchased the development rights to the Giarrusso farm for \$694,432 under its direct easement purchase program. When landowners sell their development rights, they continue to own the land but it is permanently deed-restricted for agricultural use.

The SADC administers New Jersey's Farmland Preservation Program. More than 1,300 farms covering more than 145,000 acres have been preserved statewide, including 27 farms covering 2,280 acres in Hillsborough Township.

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