

A Historic Family Farm

BOARD MEMBER TOBY LLOYD INTERVIEWS FELLOW BOARD MEMBER DAVID GREENE ABOUT HIS HISTORIC FAMILY FARM IN BALTIMORE COUNTY

I like farmers' markets and nothing pleases me more than their recent growth in popularity. They're everywhere, and I thank the consumers for their burgeoning interest in buying products that are locally grown. It's a win-win for sure; consumers get a greater choice of locally grown foods and specialty crops, and farmers have more options to diversify their operations and sell their products at an increasing number of venues. These markets also help keep farms profitable and farmers farming, which ultimately helps maintain open space.

Walking the aisles of my favorite market this fall got me thinking ... how does a small farm operation in our area work? How did the farmers get into the business and what is each farmer's history? Knowing that the variety of answers to these questions would rival the complexity of a beautiful Amish quilt, I asked if I could stop by and talk with fellow Maryland Environmental Trust Board member and easement landowner David Greene to get some answers.

To say David has farming in his blood is an understatement. David lives on a 100 acre farm in Baltimore County that's been in his family since 1786. That's right, he lives on a farm that's been in his family for an eye popping 232 years! The farm is under a



David and Nancy Greene raise sheep on a farm that has been in David's family since 1786.

permanent Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation conservation easement. David raises sheep with his wife Nancy and sells their lamb products at the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival, local farmers' markets, as well as by direct sales.

David and Nancy have been raising sheep on this historic farm since 1980 but it's the farmers' markets that have helped them grow their sales over the past 27 years. Prior to the farmers' market "boom" David and Nancy's options for selling their lamb and sheep products were limited. Their farm did not have a large marketing budget so they sold their livestock for the auction price of that day.

Enter the consumer demand for locally grown foods which changed the farm's sales and marketing strategy completely. "Farmers' markets and the Buy Local movement work together to help small specialty farmers flourish," says David. More access to consumers and greater exposure are two important benefits that farmers' markets provide for the farmers. Profit margins for farmers are tight so the added sales benefits that farmers' markets provide can save a farm's bottom line. Hearing this I realize that the "locally grown" movement is working as a partnership between the farmer and consumer ... each thriving on the needs of the other.

My conversation with David illustrated how critical farmers' markets are to the survival of our small farms and how much of a role consumers play in keeping these local producers in business. Shop at your local farm market and don't forget, you're not just a consumer but a partner to that farmer across the table!

