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The Land Conservancy Protects WBB Farm in Alden, NY

The Western New York Land Conservancy is pleased to announce that it has protected the award-winning WBB Farm in Alden, NY, owned by Brenda and Warren Bippert. As a result of this project, this important farmland will always be available for agricultural use. Agriculture and agriculture-based business play a vital role in Western New York, where small family farms like WBB have dotted the landscape for generations. These farms and businesses employ thousands of Western New Yorkers and pump millions of dollars into the local economy each year.

With the Western New York economy reeling over the past year and unemployment rates high here, family farms provide a crucial solution to retaining good jobs in our region for years to come. By protecting the WBB Farm and others like it, the Land Conservancy is maintaining the farming way of life *and* boosting the local economy. During this past year, as COVID shuttered local businesses and interrupted supply chains, local farmers like Brenda and Warren persisted in the face of every challenge thrown at them.

Founded in 1946 by Edward Bippert, the Bippert Farm (called WBB Farm since 2007) has been a staple in the Alden community for generations. Today, Edward's grandson Warren and his wife, Brenda, run the farm. They raise angus cattle, hogs, grow sweet corn and pumpkins, and teach their nine grandchildren how to farm.

"Brenda and I grew up on our parents' farms," Warren Bippert said, "and we've been farmers all our lives. Our dream has always been to pass our farm on to the next generations in our family. By protecting our land, we are able to reinvest in the farm and make needed repairs, but it also makes our dream of passing it on to our grandkids much more realistic. We couldn't be more thrilled."

The WBB Farm is now protected through a conservation easement held by the Land Conservancy. This is an agreement with the landowners that prevents the farm from being developed or subdivided. The Bipperts wanted this to happen, and they still own the farm. In the future, no matter who the next generation of owners are, that agreement will still protect the farm and ensure it will always be available for farming.

This permanent protection of the WBB Farm is made possible by a Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets, which is funded by the state's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). Even in a difficult year

for the state's economy, Governor Cuomo maintained the EPF at a record high of \$300 million dollars, making vital investments in the state's agricultural future possible.

This is no small matter. Significant threats to farms here in Western New York and across the state remain. Viable farmland is being sold and developed as commercial and residential properties. Many young people choose to walk away from the farming way of life for other pursuits, even when a farm has been in a family for generations. This trend has accelerated in recent decades. According to a 2012 United States Department of Agriculture study, we've lost 4 million farms nationwide in the past 100 years. During that same span, the percentage of people who worked in farming has decreased from 41% to 1%.

"Our farming heritage is a critical component of who we are as Western New Yorkers," the Land Conservancy's Farmland Protection Specialist, Rachel Chrostowski, said. "Once our farms are lost, they are gone forever. By permanently protecting farms like Warren and Brenda Bippert's we can be sure that Western New Yorkers will always have fresh, local food to feed their families."

Alden Town Supervisor Dean Adamski agrees. "The Bippert family has been raising cattle in the Town of Alden for four generations," he said. "Families like theirs are integral to our community and to keeping our rural heritage alive. Protecting this farm will not only secure our region's supply of locally-sourced food, but will safeguard the agricultural way of life for future generations of Alden residents."

The Western New York Land Conservancy is a regional, not-for-profit land trust that permanently protects land with significant conservation value in Western New York for current and future generations. The Land Conservancy envisions a future in which open spaces, working lands, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty are cherished and protected as part of the landscape and character of Western New York. The Land Conservancy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and is one of 1000+ land trusts nationwide, including 87 in New York State. Land trusts have protected over 56 million acres of land.

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