



MCFB Ag/Member *highlights*

January 2022



Bella Vita Farm, Amy Falcone

What better way to begin to highlight MCFB (Montgomery County Farm Bureau) members and farms, than by highlighting the farm of our Communications Committee Chair, Amy Falcone!

Bella Vita Farm was formed following a family trip to the canyons out west in 2017. Dining at a restaurant in the desert that grew everything on site including fresh lettuces, greens, tomatoes, and fish, *yes, fish*, grown in the desert was intriguing to the family. Amy's husband, and sister, Angie immediately began researching the idea and before long, in 2019, their first crop was harvested! Although Amy and her sister grew up in Ohio on a farm, they admit that they had/have so much to learn about aquaponics. They are active in the farm community as Angie sits on the Ag Advisory Committee, and Amy is a member of the MCFB Board. They are grateful for these connections and the support received from fellow farmers, the local Extension Office and from the Olney-Brookeville community.

Bella Vita Farm was recently interviewed and featured in Al Spoler's "Local Buy" segment on MPT's Maryland Farm and Harvest. Episode 901 focused on their aquaponics greenhouse. The family shared its favorite fish (tilapia) recipe and planted lettuces with Al, allowing viewers to see the symbiotic relationship between the fish and plants and demonstrating how to farm sustainably indoors. A second episode highlighting Bella Vita will air sometime in February 2022, in which Al and Amy harvest and prepare a fresh salad from the lettuces planted in the first episode! Catch the MPT series on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. Visit bellavitafarm.com to see the produce available from the farm or serve yourself from the farm's honor fridge located in front of the greenhouse!



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Young Farmers: The Young Farmers' competition, held annually at the Maryland Farm Bureau (MDFB) Convention, showcases the upcoming generation of farming leaders. We were honored to have two Young Farmers participate this past year! **Caitlyn Gardiner** and **Olivia Scuderi** competed and represented Montgomery County. Olivia won the State Collegiate Discussion Meet! Olivia will be representing Maryland in Louisville at the National Farm Bureau Convention. Olivia is a former Montgomery County Ag Ambassador and scholarship awardee. She attends the University of Maryland and is passionate about agriculture which comes from being raised on her family operation, Fox Hollow Farm in Gaithersburg.

Congratulate Olivia the next time you see her!

Do you know a young adult who is passionate about agriculture? Montgomery County Young Farmers is open to all members aged 18-35. We strive to help members develop leadership skills through participation in educational conferences, networking with fellow young farmers and those involved in agriculture. Provide a platform to promote agriculture and to tell the story of agriculture. Hold local meetings/activities and participate Statewide at the Young Farmer Annual Picnic, Dairy Bar Fundraiser at MD State Fair, Young Farmer Annual Committee meeting, and the Discussion Meet at the MDFB Convention. (Photos: Olivia Scuderi, left; Susan Hilton, middle; Kaylene Lyons, right)

For more information on our Young Farmers program, reach out to Tyler Butler at tylercbutler@gmail.com

The Annual 2021 Maryland Farm Bureau Convention was held in person this year! MCFB had 9 Delegates attend. Each year MDFB recognizes outstanding Farm Bureaus through the County Awards of Excellence. We are pleased to report that our county was recognized in all six categories to include: Membership, Leadership, Government Relations, Outreach, Fiduciary Responsibility, and Outstanding County Program!

William F. Willard Farm LLC has been recognized by the National Wheat Foundation as the winner of the 2021 Soft Red Winter Wheat Yield Contest. The contest had 387 growers apply. Mr. Willard had a dryland yield of 141.41 bushels per acre in Montgomery County! The farm manager attributed the following to their success, "Planting weather was beautiful, the winter was mild, early spring was wet, and then it dried out a few weeks before harvest." We join the MD Grain Producers Association in congratulating the Willard Farm on this huge success!

Visit our website <https://www.mdfarmbureau.com/montgomery/>