

NEWSLETTER



HOWARD COUNTY FARM BUREAU

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Message to Members

By: *Leslie Bauer, President, Howard County Farm Bureau*

Happy New Year! As I sit down to write this January message to members, I always like to spend a few moments looking back on the past year. 2024 was a challenging year for many. The weather, among other things, was not our friend. Providing hot, dry weather when we needed rain, and rain when we needed dry weather (doesn't that always seem to be the case?!?). As farmers, we made the best of it, harvesting what crops we could, and many are already looking ahead to the next growing season. As an organization, Howard County Farm Bureau had a very successful year: celebrating our 100th anniversary, launching our first Agricultural Awareness Day, honoring 10 years of our Junior Showmanship Program, sponsoring another successful Christmas Parade, and earning some awards and recognition along the way. None of these accomplishments would be possible without the many who continue to step up, volunteer and speak out for agriculture each day.

Howard County Farm Bureau members gathered in mid-November for the annual dinner. It was great to see so many in attendance, and a good

night was had by all. Board members Zack Brendel, Dan Jacobs, Jay Rhine and Rhonda Winkler were all thanked for their years of service on the board, as each have reached the end of their term. Filling their spots and new to the board are Jake Franz, Tim Streaker, Brittany Stiles and Ben Warfield. I am excited to welcome these new board members and look forward to starting 2025 with a strong board that I know will continue to serve and look out for the best interest of our agriculture community.

The beginning of December brought the annual Maryland State Farm Bureau Convention, held in Cambridge. As usual, Howard County was well

**HAPPY NEW YEAR! **	
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represented at the convention. Howard County Ag Ambassadors Natalie Davis and Kaitlyn Spicer both did a great job competing in the State Ag Ambassador Contest. Maura Cahill, Howie Feaga, Barbara Glenn, Katie Hereth and Rhonda Winkler, along with myself, served as delegates. We spent two days reviewing the Farm Bureau's policy manual. I would like to thank our delegates for taking time out of their busy schedules and spending a few days to help adopt and update policy, as well as review issues of concern for the upcoming year. It is always refreshing to spend time with like-minded people who have the same goals and understand the challenges we as farmers face along the way. I also appreciate that while we may still all have the same goals, that doesn't mean we are all going to take the same way to get there. I enjoy the opportunity to visit with others and hear their perspective on the industry.

While at the convention, Howard County was one of two counties to receive a Silver Bowl as part of the Awards of Excellence Program (Frederick County was the other Silver Bowl winner), recognizing achievement of top scores in all program areas. This program evaluates and recognizes each county farm bureau's activities in the areas of membership, leadership, government relations, fiduciary responsibility, outreach and outstanding county program. The success of our county farm bureau, and the award of this bowl, is a direct result of our board members and our membership. I would like to thank our board, as well as our secretary, Katie Hereth, for all the work they do to support agriculture in Howard County throughout the year. Great programs like Junior Showmanship (thanks Rhonda Winkler!), the Farmers Feed the Hungry Christmas Parade, and Agricultural Awareness Day (thanks Joe Dymek!) help to make our county stand out.

Speaking of standing out, Howard County was incredibly proud when our own Howie Feaga was recognized with the 2024 Distinguished Service to Farm Bureau Award! This award is given to one recipient each year in recognition of their outstanding service in the interest of Farm Bureau and agriculture. Howie has spent years working

tirelessly for the betterment of both Farm Bureau and our industry throughout our county and state. Whenever someone needs help, Howie is always one of the first to volunteer. I was so happy to be present at the convention to see Howie be honored with this very special award. Congratulations Howie!



A few short days after returning from convention, it was time to head over to Lisbon to enjoy the annual Great Lisbon Farmers Feed The Hungry Christmas Parade! It was a crisp, but sunny day, perfect for a parade. The street along downtown Lisbon was lined with spectators, while plenty of tractors and horses filled the parade route. While the final tally is not yet in, it looks like our local food banks – Howard County Food Bank, Carroll County Food Sunday, Farmers & Hunters Feeding the Hungry, and Lisbon Volunteer Fire Company - will all reap the benefits of another successful parade. Thank you to the many hands that make this parade work, as well as to all those who attended and showed support for a fun and festive annual event.

As we turn the calendar to 2025, the start of a new legislative session in Annapolis is just days away. The 2025 Maryland General Assembly will convene January 8 through April 7 this year. Before the session has even started, there has already been some early hints at proposed legislation that could have potential impact on agriculture. To that end, MD Farm Bureau will sponsor its annual Day

in Annapolis on February 5. Following a morning legislative briefing, this is a great time to speak with our representatives in Annapolis about issues that are important to the farm community and our businesses. Additional information and registration for the day can be found on the MD Farm Bureau website, [Day in Annapolis - Maryland Farm Bureau](#).

2024 certainly brought its challenges, but it also saw some success. As we close the books on 2024, I am looking forward to a fresh, renewed start in 2025. I thank our membership for their continued support and wish each member the best as we start this New Year!

2024 Distinguished Service to Farm Bureau Award



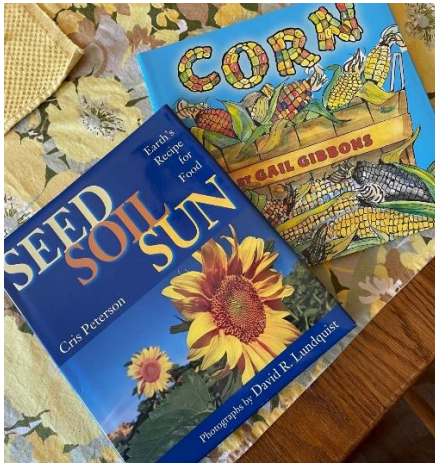
Ever since he started milking cows as a teenager, Howie Feaga has been a lifelong advocate for Maryland agriculture. Howie owns and operates Merry Acres Farm, a horse boarding, hay, and beef farm in Ellicott City. He was born and raised on the farm and bought the family milking herd over time and operated as the dairy owner for 22 years. In 1997, Howie started boarding horses with a 6-stall barn, and in 1998, he built a larger 18-stall barn and ended the dairy operation. The farm's main focus turned to horse boarding while continuing to farm the land. In 2004, he started construction on the arena barn with 21 stalls and began to fill it in the Spring of 2005. Their

pastures are 7-8 acres each, with 6-7 horses per pasture. Howie makes close to 170 acres of hay annually and grows a small amount of wheat and corn, along with selling "Merry Acres Beef". His farm has been recognized for its sustainable agricultural practices, winning the county's Soil Conservation District Cooperator of the Year Award in 1998 and 2011, as well as recognition from **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**.

Howie served on the "Board of Directors" for Maryland State Farm Bureau for 6 years and he served as the President of **The Howard County Farm Bureau** for 12 years. He also served as an out-going President Board Member in the 2020 year. During his time as President, Howie was instrumental in establishing **The Great Lisbon Farmers Feed the Hungry Christmas Parade**, which has raised nearly \$200,000 for hunger related charities in Maryland. The parade is currently in its 14th year and continues to be sponsored by the Howard County Farm Bureau to benefit the Howard County Food Bank, Carroll County Food Sunday, Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry, and the Lisbon Volunteer Fire Company. Another program Howie helped to establish and promote through the Howard County Farm Bureau, is the Junior Showmanship Program. This program is currently in its 10th year and offers hands-on experiences through summer workshops on farms with swine, dairy heifers, lambs, and goats to children ages 5-9. The first Saturday of the Howard County Fair, the children participate in the Junior Showmanship Contest to have a real experience showing animals in the show ring. This program continues to promote future 4-H and FFA members, along with educating the next generation about agriculture. Howie continues to serve on the Board of Directors for HCFB, is serving as District 2 Maryland Farm Bureau Director for Howard, Carroll and Montgomery Counties, and continues to volunteer as chair or participate on numerous Howard County Farm Bureau committees such as policy development, nominating committee, and membership.

We are thrilled to name Howie as the recipient of the 2024 Distinguished Service to Farm Bureau Award!

Air View Farm Donates Books on Agriculture to HoCo Elementary Schools

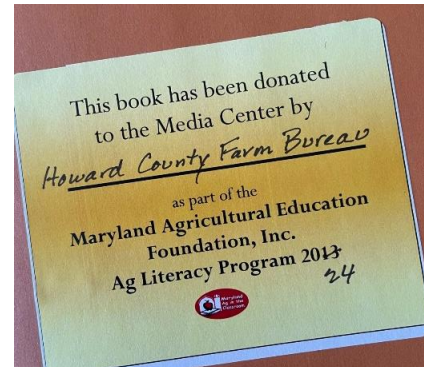


Agriculture Literacy Week happens every year in March. The purpose is to help children increase their awareness of agriculture, farming, and where their food comes from. This year, members of Howard County Farm Bureau read the Agriculture Book of the Year, “Farm Boots”, from the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF) to students at Bushy Park Elementary School and Lisbon Elementary School.

We are thrilled to share that Merhlyn Barnes of Air View Farm in Woodbine, and long-time member of HCFB, recently donated copies of two agriculture books to all 40+ elementary schools in Howard County. Merhlyn tells the story that in 2013 she wanted to help kids learn more about agriculture. So she ordered copies of the MAEF Book of the Year, “Seed Sun and Soil” and another book, “Corn.” Farming and family events got busy and the boxes were buried in the farm office. But when HCFB came by, Merhlyn passed on the books to us for donating. Success! Even after 10 years, these books will now be

distributed to all 40+ elementary schools in Howard County.

Thank you Merhlyn for your lasting impact on kids who will love learning more about agriculture. She and her husband, Bill, have been members of HCFB for decades; Merhlyn served as chair of the Women’s Leadership Committee; and was secretary to the board for 35 years. If you are interested in participating in **MAEF’s 2025 Ag Literacy Week**, stay tuned for more information.



The Great Lisbon FARMERS FEED THE HUNGRY Christmas Parade



Photo Credit: Kenneth C. Visser

Thank you, The Howard County Farm Bureau, for presenting The 2024 Great Lisbon FARMERS FEED THE HUNGRY Christmas Parade!!

Lisbon's "Main Street" was beautifully spruced up and thank you all for your participation! Congratulations to the Winners of the First Annual Lisbon Christmas Decorating Contest!

Best Business: #MagoneFamilyDental - Dr. Nancy J. Magone

Best Home: The Wenta Home

Best Nighttime Display: The Holland House

Most Christmas Spirit: Woodbine Express

Classic Christmas: Bond Homes

Thanks to Conrey Construction for putting up the wreaths on the street! Thanks to our Lisbon Community Member, Bonnie Wingate, for hosting the contest!

A big THANK YOU to all the donations, volunteers, and participants who made this parade such a wonderful event! The number of parade patrons grows each year, and it makes us an even stronger community to be able to come together and celebrate the season and support such a good cause.



We can't wait to see you all again in 2025 when we meet again on the second Saturday of December at 12 noon! So, mark your calendars, for The 2025 Great Lisbon FARMERS FEED THE HUNGRY Christmas Parade, Saturday, December 13, 2025 - at 12 noon with festivities around town - such as Days End Farm Horse Rescue's Santa Village, the 2nd Annual Lisbon Christmas Decorating Contest, and more!

Please check out many more pictures and videos posted on our Facebook Page: **The Lisbon Christmas Parade**



Please visit our website at:

<http://www.lisbonchristmasparade.com/>

Howard County Farm Bureau **Presents the 2025** **AGRICULTURE AWARENESS** **DAY for 7th Graders**

By: Barb Glenn, Chair, HCFB Education and Outreach Committee

On April 9, 2025, Howard County Farm Bureau will once again host the **Agriculture Awareness Day** – a one-day, science-based educational hands-on learning experience about agriculture.

Seventh grade students from three middle schools will learn from experts in Ag about:

- Farming both livestock and crops
- Fruits and vegetables production and nutrition
- Ag technology - drones
- Equine industry
- Environment
- Climate
- Natural resources
- Careers, and more.

When and Where?

The Ag Awareness Day will be held at the Howard County Fairgrounds.

How Can You Help?

We need help on April 9 for set-up and take down at the Fairgrounds. If you want to volunteer some time for an AMAZING cause, contact Joe.

Who Can I Contact?

FOR MORE INFORMATION contact Joe Dymek, joejdymek@gmail.com,
Chair of the Ag Awareness Day Planning Committee

*Supported by Howard County Youth Engagement Program (YEP!) Grant. Thank you Dr. Ball!

UME Strategic Initiative Town Hall Regional Sessions

*Source: Lynn Rubin Traversa, MS, Area
Extension Director - Central Maryland Cluster.
UME*



The University of Maryland Extension is embarking on a strategic planning process to develop a stakeholder-driven plan, granting the university's faculty, staff, students, leadership, and community partners an opportunity to contribute to the institution's future success. To produce a specialized strategic plan that is consistent with the broader objectives of the University of Maryland, we will prioritize strategies that will uplift our community and complement UMD initiatives.

As we move through the strategic planning process, we will routinely provide status updates and information on engagement opportunities.

Please click on the link below to register for the Central Maryland Session, taking place in Howard County at the Fairgrounds, on January 22nd in the

afternoon from 12:30-2:30 p.m. If this session does not work for your schedule, you may register for any of the other sessions listed on other dates at other locations across Maryland.

Direct Registration

Link: https://survey.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8iwC4cNikPyF6Zw

Thank you, and we hope that you can attend this session,

Lynn Rubin Traversa, MS
Area Extension Director - Central Maryland Cluster
University of Maryland Extension
College of Agriculture & Natural Resources
University of Maryland - College Park
Howard County Office -410-313-1911
<http://extension.umd.edu/>

Howard County Agricultural Grant Opportunity Available Now!

Source: Howard County Office of Agriculture



Howard County Drought Relief Grants:

Howard County is providing grants to Howard County Farmers in response to the recent heat and drought conditions in 2024. This extreme weather has negatively affected our farmers.

These grants are administered and awarded by the Howard County Economic Development Authority (HCEDA) in cooperation with the Howard County Office of Agriculture.

Applicants can receive a primary grant up to \$5,000 for losses they incurred due to the extreme weather in 2024. Primary grants are awarded on a rolling basis and will be accepted until **January 30, 2025**.

An additional secondary grant will be awarded as funds allow for farm operations with losses greater than \$5,000. The Secondary Grant is a separate application and must be turned in by **February 15, 2025**.

Farm Operations applying for the grants will not receive more than a total of \$30,000 in drought relief grants (Primary Grant \$5,000, Secondary Grant \$25,000)

All grants will be awarded at the discretion of the Howard County Economic Development Authority and the HCEDA may request additional information or documentation to verify losses.

Howard County Enhanced Agricultural Grants:

Howard County has a grant funding opportunity with a mission to preserve and support agriculture in Howard County. These grants can be used for programing, research, and/or capital investments provided the grants facilitate the expansion, sustainability, and/or education of Howard County Agriculture and administered by the Howard County Economic Development Authority in cooperation with the Howard County Office of Agriculture.

Grant applications will be accepted until **February 28th, 2025** and applicants can receive grants up to \$250,000, however there is a total of \$500,000 of grant funding to be awarded and typically this is spread out among several applicants in values ranging from \$20,000 to \$70,000. Grants will be awarded by the end of March 2025.

Please email grant application and supported documentation to:

Aggrants@howardcountymd.gov

****Links for the applications can be found here:**
<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/agriculture>

If you have any questions email
Aggrants@howardcountymd.gov
or call Kathy Johnson 410-313-6524 / James Zoller 410-313-3861

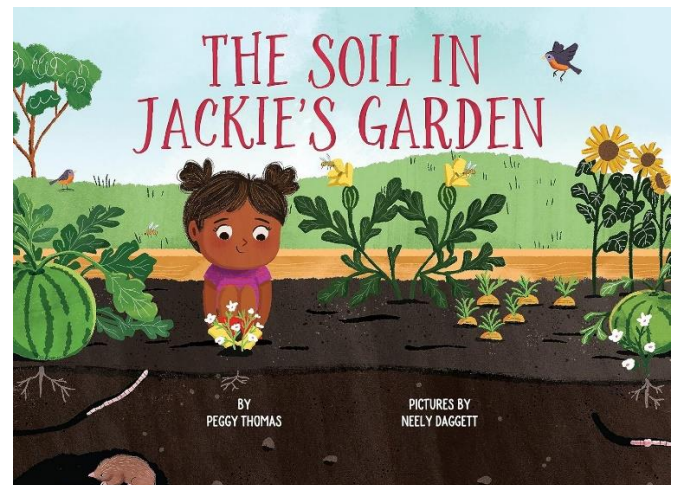
Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation Announces 2025 Ag Literacy Week



Join MAEF and HCFA from March 17th to 21st, 2025, as we celebrate Ag Literacy Week!

This year's featured book is "**The Soil in Jackie's Garden**" by **Peggy Thomas**. For just \$10, you'll receive the hardback book, and an activity kit designed for classroom use. For more information or any questions, please reach out to Tonya Wible at twible@maefonline.com.

To order the books go to
<https://form.jotform.com/243045823966160>



If you want more information about reading during Ag Literacy Week.....or donating this book.....in Howard County elementary schools, contact Barb, glennbarb6@gmail.com.

Thank you for bringing accurate agricultural books, engaging activities, and education to classrooms across Maryland!

Announcements

❖Howard County Office of Agriculture Ribbon Cutting

We have learned that the opening of the new Howard County Office of Agriculture, only the third in Maryland, will be January 14, 2025. If you are interested in learning more about this event and to be invited, contact James Zoller, jameszoller@howardcountymd.gov. The opening of the Howard County Office of Agriculture's newly-renovated office space is at the historic Hebb House. The office will serve as a new home and convening space for the growing Office of Agriculture and collaborating agencies. This new space will provide a central location for farmers and the agricultural community to access government services and support, conveniently located right in Howard County's rural west. More details about Howard County's new OoA, see <https://livegreenhoward.com/news/howard-county-creates-new-office-of-agriculture/>

❖You're Invited the UME Strategic Planning Town Hall in Howard County

University of Maryland Extension is inviting you to join us for a town hall conversation focused on the future direction of their programs. Come share your insights and help shape the strategic plan that will guide Extension's work in the years ahead! Come to any of the following Town Hall sessions and participate in this important conversation.

On January 22, 2025, 12:30 – 2:30 pm, the Howard County Town Hall will be held at the Howard County Fairgrounds, 2210 Fairgrounds Rd, West Friendship, MD 21794.

To more information AND TO REGISTER, go to <https://extension.umd.edu/about/extension-impact/strategic-plan/>

❖American Farm Bureau Federation Convention 2025

Don't miss the AFBF Convention in San Antonio, TX January 24-29, 2025!



❖Maryland Farm Bureau Day in Annapolis

The Young Farmers' and the Women's Leadership committees will jointly sponsor Day In Annapolis. This day of briefings and grassroots advocacy will give you the opportunity to weigh in on important issues that may impact your farm for years to come.

Farm Bureau members will have an opportunity to meet with their members of the General Assembly.



February 5th, 2025

Register Online:

<https://www.mdfarmbureau.com/day-in-annapolis/>

❖National Ag Day

**Agriculture: Together We Grow
March 18, 2025!**



Visit <https://www.agday.org/> for more information and to get involved!

Calendar of Events

*** 2025 ***

JAN 14 **HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF
AGRICULTURE RIBBON CUTTING**
Contact James Zoller:
jameszoller@howardcountymd.gov.

JAN 17-18 **FUTURE HARVEST: FARMING INTO THE
FUTURE**

Place The Silver Spring Civic Building
1 Veterans Pl
Silver Spring, MD 20910

To register: <https://futureharvest.org/2025-conference/>

JAN 21 **SOUTHERN MD FORAGE CONFERENCE**

Place Calvert County Fairgrounds
140 Calvert Fair Drive
Prince Frederick, MD 20678

Time 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Registration: [2025 Southern Maryland Forage Conference
Tickets, Tue, Jan 21, 2025 at 9:00 AM | Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2025-southern-maryland-forage-conference-tickets-1110771390129?aff=oddtcreator)

JAN 22 **UME STRATEGIC PLANNING TOWN HALL
IN HOWARD COUNTY**

Place Howard County Fairgrounds
Time 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

JAN 23 **CENTRAL MD FORAGE CONFERENCE**

Place Fire Company Activities Grounds
1008 Twin Arch Road
Mount Airy, MD 21771

Time 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

To Register:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2025-central-maryland-forage-conference-tickets-1110771390129?aff=oddtcreator>

JAN 24-29 **107TH AMERICAN FARM BUREAU
CONVENTION**

Place San Antonio, TX

<https://annualconvention.fb.org/>

FEB 5 **MD FARM BUREAU DAY IN ANNAPOLIS**

Place Governor Calvert House,
Annapolis, MD

Time 8:15 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

FEB 19 **CENTRAL MD AGRONOMY MEETING**

Place Urbana Fire Hall

Time 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

MAR 18 **NATIONAL AG DAY**

APR 9 **2ND ANNUAL AGRICULTURAL AWARENESS
DAY**

Place Howard County Fairgrounds

**Pesticide Training and Private Applicator
Training Dates and Tests, go to**
<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/pesticide-certifications/>

*Wishing Everyone
a very safe
and
Happy New Year!*



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