

University surveyors looking for remaining island farming forms

By Dotti Farrington

Two follow-up phases of the townwide survey by the University of Rhode Island (URI) on farm preservation are planned. URI is working to get responses from all households on the island.

Reminder letters have been prepared for those who have not sent in early responses, and a second copy of the survey will be mailed to those not answering before the end of the year. URI sees the multi-contact approach as proven in past surveys and critical to obtaining accurate data.

Some 2,500 residents are being asked to take part in the research survey. Their answers might help to save island farms via expansion of profitable activities. The URI Department of Environmental and Natural Resource Economics has designed the survey. It is based on observations that farms provide many amenities for which the owners traditionally are not paid.

The surveys were mailed early this month, and URI hopes that completed forms will be returned within a few weeks. URI plans to have an analysis by February.

The survey is part of a multi-stage project within a \$1.2 million program at URI. Federal and other funding sources have combined to help farms maintain themselves, while continuing to provide services not traditionally identified as a byproduct of food production. Those services include providing and protecting wildlife habitats,

scenic views, and educational opportunities.

One main survey approach focuses on possibilities of paying farms to protect habitats for bobolinks. That bird species is being threatened by significant declines mainly due to a change in farming practices. Bobolinks are valued because they eat destructive insects and certain weed seeds.

URI is asking residents how much they want to help the farms and how much they are willing to pay to do so, including through funds to save bobolinks specifically.

Paying farms to help save bobolinks is theoretical at this time, but could be translated into actual cash for farm owners, depending on the outcome of the survey. Jamestown was chosen for the survey and related efforts because island residents consistently support working farms.

URI's vision is that farms enabled to provide more and better amenities can benefit the public. Jamestown has nine active farms comprising 700 acres, which is 12 percent of the total land on the island.

The Jamestown project serves as a pilot for establishing community-based markets for wildlife protection. While securing nesting sites for bobolinks is the aim of this particular project, URI wants to extend the project to serve as a model to protect other forms of wildlife, for protecting water quality, and for addressing other ecological issues.

Dr. Stephen Swallow, a professor in URI Department of Environmental and Natural Resource Economics, defined two major parts of the project: enlisting farmers, and finding a way to compensate them to adopt new conservation practices. Carol Trocki of Jamestown, a conservation biologist and an instructor at URI, is working

with island farmers as part of the project.

Swallow's role is to devise or identify a market that will compensate farmers who enroll. He has said that Jamestown has a long tradition of supporting ecological programs.

Preservation of farmland and ecologically sensitive areas are issues that the town's residents have supported repeatedly over the years with votes and funding, according to Swallow. The established ecology mindset of residents here led to the town's being chosen for the URI pilot program.

Msgr. Clarke to host holiday fest

The Christmas Festival at Msgr. Clarke School will be held Sunday, Dec. 3, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Pictures with Santa will kick off the annual event from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Games and activities for the children, including a bounce house, will be offered all day. Other features of the festival include cash drawings, raffles, and refreshments.

Fresh cut Christmas trees and wreaths will be for sale. Over 50 fine shops and purveyors of fine gifts, and artisans will offer great gift ideas.

The school is located at 5074 Tower Hill Rd. in Wakefield. For more information, call 789-0860.

For the record

The bagpiper in the page 1 photograph from last week's Press, has been identified as island resident Chris Curren.

Women's center needs help for holiday season

As the holiday season approaches, the Women's Resource Center of Newport & Bristol Counties prepares for seasonal drives.

Each year the Thanksgiving Day Program runs from October through Nov. 21. Donated goods are provided to families in need. Participating in this drive puts the giving back in Thanksgiving and services families deserving of celebration. Donations of gift cards for turkeys, rolls, stuffing mix, canned gravy, and any fixings that make for a delicious Thanksgiving meal would be appreciated.

A second program that services victims of domestic violence and their children is the Adopt-A-Family program. Each year the Adopt-A-Family program runs from late October through Dec. 19. This program is designed to match donors with clients and their families in order to meet family needs during the holiday season. Clients provide a "wish list" and donors help make the holidays brighter by providing materials needed.

Clients who participate in this program are of the Women's Resource Center and their names are kept confidential.

To help the Adopt-A-Family program this year, donors can sponsor a client or a family in need by dropping off a bag of food to our center, such as a "holiday meal" package, providing unwrapped gifts from a client or family wish list and/or gift certificates to stores or local restaurants.

To participate in the Thanksgiving Day Program or the Adopt-A-Family program, contact Constance Vergowven at 846-5263.

The Bird Whisperer

This story is about Cosmo
(In case you haven't heard)
A cockatoo (like me & you)
Who longed to be free as a bird

And so he bided his time
And last Thursday got his chance
His goal was a 100 ft. tree
And he soared to the highest
branch.

There were no ladders that could
reach him
But—here's the deal—he didn't
account
For the firm resolve of a guy with
nerves of steel.

Up the tree our hero, with water
hose, nets and poles, he climbed
you see
Higher & higher then Cosmo
took off squawking, "you'll
never catch me"

Though Peter Coble was spent
—he did not relent
And followed Cosmo like a
hawk—over roof-top
Thro brush & eaves & thrush this
bird he did stalk

Now how he got that bird to
come to him is between those
two.
You had to see it to believe it,
But this much I can tell you
Peter returned him to his cage on
this memorable day
With Cosmo clucking & cooing
& kissing him all the way.

Happy Thanksgiving from Cosmo
(Who's glad he is not a turkey)

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LEGAL TIP

A city can be sued by a motorist injured during a police chase, even though the police had discontinued pursuit prior to the accident, the Nebraska Supreme Court has ruled in upholding a \$2.9 million verdict.

The plaintiff was a passenger in a car that was hit by a driver who was fleeing the police. The chase had reached speeds of 50 to 70 mph before the police officer slowed and ended his pursuit. However, the officer continued to search for the vehicle with his lights flashing. The driver, believing he was still being pursued, sped down a steep hill at 65 mph, ran a series of stop signs and slammed into a pickup carrying the plaintiff. The truck exploded and the plaintiff suffered burns over 70 percent of his body.

The Nebraska Supreme Court concluded that the fact that an officer has terminated a chase prior to the accident "does not automatically insulate the city from strict liability for injuries to an innocent third party" because the "danger continues until the motorist reasonably perceives that the pursuit has ended."

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