



MARC News – Fall 2020



MARC hosted a **reception on October 8th** to thank Rachel Brannock for her 4+ years at MARC, first as an Intern, and then Managing Director. The reception was also a chance to introduce three other newcomers to the Ag Center: Gina Porter, Baltimore County’s new Farm Manager; Dave O’Neill, the new Interim Managing Director of MARC; and Kris Mervine, the County’s Regional Coordinator for Nature, Agriculture, and Environmental Centers. The event was held outside in the courtyard of the main building, and attendees enjoyed delicious finger food, wine and a variety of excellent beers from Justin Harrison’s **Farmacy Brewing** and **Gunpowder Falls Brewery**. Everyone had so much fun they forgot to take photos!



On September 16, Dan Colhoun, a stalwart MARC supporter, presented a “Careers in Agriculture” program in collaboration with the County and the TALMAR program at Cromwell Valley Park. The TALMAR program specializes in encouraging Veterans to enter small-scale sustainable agriculture and the program MARC co-sponsored introduced the veterans to tractor driving and opportunities for employment in the industry. Dan spoke to about 15 individuals recently retired from the service who were eager to learn how they could find new opportunities in the field of agriculture. Several got a chance to drive a tractor, and Dan has worked diligently to set up day-long farm visits for those veterans who wanted to take their exploration one step farther.



Due to COVID, MARC severely curtailed its normal activities. The Farm remained beautiful and lots of families and several local artists came to enjoy the environment. MARC planned to restart **programs** this month, however on Nov. 17th, the rise in COVID 19 infections and deaths in the County prompted our County Executive to close all County Park's indoor facilities. Our outdoor facilities are still open. Come and enjoy them!



MARC and Gina Porter organized a **farm-wide cleanup** on Saturday, October 17th. The County provided a 30-yd. dumpster and MARC enlisted over a dozen volunteers to clean up various sites around the farm. By the end of the day, the dumpster was full of junk, including old machinery, broken pallets, and other eyesores. Piles of scrap metal, old tires, and more pallets were set aside for later removal. Volunteers worked hard and were rewarded with Gina's chili for lunch. Overall, it was a very productive collaboration!



Grants are an important source of revenue for MARC. We are waiting to hear whether our proposal to Martin Marietta submitted by board member Polly Roberts that would go toward the construction of a permanent STEM-based activity will be funded. We also submitted a small grant application to the MD Ag. Council for funding increased costs for “Farm Sprouts” made necessary by COVID, and are also exploring grant possibilities from USDA, the MD Grain Producers Utilization Board, and the Chesapeake Bay Trust.



The “**Perimeter Trail**” has been an important part of the facility, but with the building of the Equine Therapy arena and associated fencing, the perimeter has been somewhat restricted, and not obviously available to farm visitors. A small group of MARC donors has committed to fund the changes to the current fencing that would open up that part of the trail system again. The plan includes new maps and signs or refurbishing those already in place. The goal is to make the large looping trail around the farm more accessible to the public, and actively encourage them to use it.. We also hope to have some grading done to make mowing easier on the north side of the perimeter trail shown in these photos.



At the end of the year, the terms of three board members will expire. **Outgoing board members** include Bill Edelen (President), Rick Bernstein, and Wayne McGinnis. Scott Welsh resigned from the board in September.



Because of the shutdown caused by the pandemic, MARC decided last spring to plant corn in all the available plots along the main driveway. In October, we had a window of weather to **harvest the corn and get a cover crop planted**. We are grateful to Lippy Brothers for the prompt harvesting, to Baltimore County for the cover crop seed, and to MARC volunteers for doing the planting the cover crop shown here as it sprouted!



MARC has installed a **Little Free Library** at the top of the alley, and it seems to be getting a lot of use. The idea is to stock it with books for all ages, hopefully with an agriculture theme. People are free to take a book and return it or return something else in its place. If you have any books you would like to donate to the LFL, please drop them off at the MARC office. Any books related to farming or horses, especially children's books would be most appreciated.



There was a **Halloween Schooling Event** held in the new outdoor arena on Oct. 31 and Nov 1. Only 5 competitors were in the ring at any one time to ensure social distancing, but there was a full schedule of riders throughout the day. The new jumps were used for the first time. Saturday was a great success, but Sunday was marred by horrible weather.



The **Shafer-Ellis Pavilion**, generously donated by supporters of the Mt. Carmel Hounds, has become one of the most popular sites on the farm. It has been a great place to meet during COVID! During the fall colors, the view from the pavilion was spectacular. Some outside groups have begun to book the pavilion when MARC isn't using it. LEAD MD recently booked a day as did a private family. MARC collects a modest fee for each rental.

Because COVID is resurging, we will not be renting it to groups. It is, however, open to families or individuals to use it on a first come/first served basis for picnics.



MARC has not made a focused **fund-raising effort** for some time. With renewed optimism about MARC's relationship with Baltimore County, we have sent out an appeal letter to about 200 individuals who have supported us in the past and donations are coming in to help MARC remain active. We are expecting to resume more normal operations by gradually adding events starting late-spring or early summer if the pandemic permits. MARC absolutely depends on public support to keep going, especially when so many of the activities that keep us viable were cancelled due to COVID!

Whether you received a letter or not, any donation would be most appreciated!

Our mailing address is : MARC 1114 Shawan Road Cockeysville, MD 21030

Can You Help Baltimore County Public Schools?

Seed Donations Needed

Baltimore County, like just about every other school system, is re-writing our curriculum for the virtual world. However, we are still trying to provide students with meaningful hands-on opportunities. As a culminating event for our grade 5 curriculum, we want to create a countywide experiment where students grow some sort of edible plant at home. The data on growth would be shared and students would have the opportunity to compare their results to other students. What we are looking for at this point is a place to obtain seed for this project. We are confident that schools have cups students could grow in along with potting soil, but large quantities of seed are what we really need right now. If there is a way to create some sort of direct donation of seed, we could distribute it to schools in time for the start of our March project window. Thank you for your consideration. Please contact [Eric Cromwell](#) directly with any donation opportunities. He can be reached by phone at 443-809-2063.

