

Celebrate summer

Conservancy marks 30 years of land protection

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Supporters of the Foothills Land Conservancy gathered Saturday to mark 30 years of protecting land through conservation easements.

The annual fundraising event had a celebratory air as many board members and supporters remarked that the non-profit's success over the past three decades is far beyond what they ever expected.

"It's kind of unbelievable," Gail Harris, a founding member of FLC, said of the 58,900 acres of land that is now protected under conservation easements. "Thirty years ago we didn't have any way of protecting land, especially farmland and open land. When we started it in 1985, I had no idea it would develop into something like this."

Fittingly, FLC's annual Summer Celebration was held at Christine Hayworth's Penrose Farm, a working horse farm on Nubbin Ridge Road in west Knoxville, which has had a conservation easement with FLC since 2006.

FLC works with landowners who would like to permanently preserve



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MARY JO ROSE ASHCROFT accepts the Conservationist of the Year Award for her late brother Jack Rose during the Foothills Land Conservancy Summer Celebration.

their property by setting up a voluntary and customizable legal agreement that dictates the lands' possible future use. The conservancy has helped preserve land in five different states, including in roughly 30 counties in Tennessee.

Executive Director Bill Clabough said preserving pieces of land such as Penrose Farm was "a gift to the world" so that

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MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2015

THE DAILY TIMES

www.thedailytimes.com



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FOOTHILLS LAND CONSERVANCY BOARD Member Billy Minser, Foothills Land Conservancy Foundation Board Member Christine Hayworth and Foothills Land Conservancy Executive Director Bill Clabough (left to right) pose for a photograph during the organization's summer celebration and 30th anniversary.

LAND: Conservancy gets \$12,000 in memory of Rose

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future generations will be able to enjoy the natural beauty of the land just as it is today.

"You're sitting on a piece of property that will never change," Clabough said in welcoming the guests to the event.

HONORING JACK ROSE

Guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres, desserts, drinks and views of the rolling green hills of Penrose Farm throughout the evening, and also paused to honor the late John "Jack" Rose III, who died in July.

Rose was presented with a posthumous Conservationist of the Year Award for his work with FLC. His sister Mary Jo Rose Ashcraft and brother Walter Rose accepted the

award on behalf of their family and spoke of their brother's love of sharing his knowledge about the great outdoors with anyone he could.

Following the award presentation, Mark King, president of the FLC board, announced that more than \$12,000 has been donated to FLC in Jack Rose's memory.

King said the board has decided they will match the donations dollar-for-dollar, and the money will go into a Land Preservation Fund, which helps small landowners pay for the costs of setting up a conservation easement, such as appraisals, legal fees and administrative fees.

With those donations, and a recent bequest from the estate of Charlie Klabunde, the Land Preservation Fund is now in

excess of \$100,000, King said.

DEVELOPING LAND 'IN A NATURAL WAY'

Ernie Blankenship, an FLC board member from Maryville, said the conservancy is important to preserve property in the face of rapid development. An easement doesn't interfere with property rights or farming rights, but lets a landowner designate any future uses for the land, he said.

"We are growing very rapidly, especially in Blount County," Blankenship said. "I think what's most important is we have had farm owners, especially, understand the value of it (a conservation easement) and many of them want to pass the property on to their children."

Al Romans, a landowner from Maryville who holds a conservation easement on his property with FLC, explained his desire to preserve natural areas so people can see the "awe-inspiring majesty of God's creation."

He said it's important to have places of solitude in the natural environment where people can "sit and see and wonder and ponder and think."

"In the last 50 years, we've seen these pastures and ridges turned into condominiums and have postage stamp-sized blocks ... that's not how a man is supposed to live," Romans said. "I realized when I'm gone, my children and grandchildren, whoever owns the land, will now be able to see it develop in a natural way."