

SINHA FARM: Accepted into preservation program

12 OTHER FARMS: In Millstone may be preserved

Farmland forever in Millstone Twp.

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MILLSTONE TOWNSHIP — An approximately 28-acre farm — a local landmark with a rising sun mural on a red barn, along a rolling stretch of Route 571 — has entered the farmland preservation program.

Owner Betty Sinha received \$796,174, or \$28,750 per acre, for selling the development rights of her property, which is used to raise crops and sheep, according to the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board.

The funds were a combination of state (\$477,704), county (\$191,082) and township (\$127,388) money, said Matt Shipkey, farmland preservation program coordinator for the board.

The county now boasts 9,772 acres of preserved farmland. Of that, 581 acres are in Millstone Township. Freeholder Lillian G. Burry said 12 more farms in Millstone are in the preservation process with the county.

Sinha said her late husband had expressed an interest in seeing the property be "forever farmland," according to a county press release. She could not be reached for comment Thursday.

The Sinha property abuts the 6,304-acre Assunpink Wildlife Management Area — woods, fields, farmland and lakes owned by the state. Route 571, which runs in front of the farm, is called Rising Sun Tavern Road in that section of the township.

"Besides the property being . . . contiguous with the several-thousand-acre Assunpink Wildlife Refuge, this farm is located within a two-mile radius of six other preserved farms," said Joseph McCarthy, agriculture development board chairman.

Another five farms are being looked at for preservation in that area, McCarthy said.

"The next few years represent our last opportunity to preserve the character of Millstone Township that residents cherish," Mayor Nancy Grbelja said. "Preservation monies are not only a much better investment for the environmental future of our town, but also for its financial future. A one-time preservation payment costs far less than the perpetual infrastructure and schooling obligations of additional residential development."

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