

Small Acreage Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program "SANG" Recipient: Michael & Lauren Adams

Living the Dream via the SANG program; First Recipients of Small Acreage Next Gen Program Finding Success



Michael and Lauren Adams (photo), a young couple living in Keymar, Frederick County, had a dream. They wished to own a farm, make and sell hay, and buy and sell livestock.

Both had experience in farming, and both wanted to purchase their own land. Unfortunately, they were finding it difficult to finance their desire to one day become self-sufficient.

Enter SANG

Until they discovered the Small-Acreage Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program or "SANG" offered by MARBIDCO. The Adams became the very first recipients of SANG, an offshoot of the Next Generation

Farmland Acquisition Program, and part of MARBIDCO's Rural Land Preservation Facilitation Programs protecting Maryland's working farms.

"The fact that there is a program like this is amazing," said Michael Adams. "We would not have been able to buy our property without it," added Lauren Adams.

"It has always been our dream to have land and some animals and be more self-sufficient," said Michael.

SANG helps qualified young or beginning farmers who may have trouble entering the agricultural profession because of relatively high farmland costs and a lack of access to adequate financial capital to purchase smaller farmland properties between 10 and 49 acres in size.

The Small Acreage Next Gen Program is a farmland conservation easement option purchase program designed to facilitate the transfer of farmland to a new generation of farmers and help preserve the agricultural land from future development.

By using the SANG Program, MARBIDCO can provide 40% to 60% of the Fair Market Value (land only) in exchange for a permanent agricultural conservation easement. The farmer can use that money as a down payment to purchase the farmland.

Before applying, the Adams had to work with the county to determine if the property was eligible for SANG.

“The [SANG] application was easy, and all went smoothly,” Michael explained, “but the wait was stressful. There were so many hands involved; thankfully the seller was very patient.”

Farming Backgrounds

Lauren and Michael have interesting backgrounds for beginning farmers. Lauren grew up in Westminster, Carroll County, and was a 4-H member. Her grandfather has a 100-acre farm in New Windsor, Carroll County with pigs and lambs that she once cared for.

As an adult, she became a registered nurse working in hospitals until they purchased the Keymar property. Today she is a home care nurse traveling around Frederick County, then comes home to help at their farm.

For 10 years, Michael was a rodeo contestant traveling up and down the east coast and out west in Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Missouri. He became a farmer, shoeing horses and working at a 1,700-acre ranch in New Jersey.

Later he moved to Maryland from Chester County, Pennsylvania to work for J Bar W Ranch in Johnsville, Frederick County. He also baled hay on the ranches.

Michael currently works as a farrier in Carroll and Frederick counties until about noon each day when he returns to work the farm.

Living the Dream

The couple moved into their 1700s home on the property and spent much of their time renovating and bringing it up to date.

Outside the home, they planted twenty acres of hay and are currently selling it. They have sold hay bales for two summers. The couple first began baling hay into squares but quickly changed to hay rolls.

“We may make a little less money, but it [a hay roll] is so much easier for just the two of us,” said Michael. “I deal with a lot of horse people, and they are moving to round bales.” “And,” joked Lauren, “it’s always one hundred degrees when we do it.”

They took down the unsalvageable barn and now have space for 4-board fencing around a 50x50 foot plot to one day hold livestock. Michael and his siblings built a new barn (above photo) in May 2022 that holds processed hay and farm equipment. An old smokehouse and a large shed, home to Michael’s tools and equipment, are also on the property.

Animal Farm

The Adams recently ordered fifty meat chickens. “We will see how that goes,” said Michael. They plan to add 100-150 more chickens in the future. “They won’t go to waste, we both have big families,” said Lauren.

With 20 acres already used for hay, the additional five acres are on hold until they install fencing and start purchasing steer. To acquire cattle, Michael is collaborating with a customer who may barter hay for a cow or steer.

“He is really friendly and is willing to help,” said Michael. The couple has accomplished much in a year since settling on their dream property. “There is no way we could have done it without the program,” said Lauren of the SANG opportunity