

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACTS:**

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**\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\***

**20,000 CALL ON MARYLAND OFFICIALS TO SAVE 31-YEAR-OLD ORGANIC FARM**

*Popular campaign on Change.org rallies tens of thousands to save county's only organic seed farm from private development*

**POTOMAC, MD** – More than 20,000 people have joined a [popular campaign on Change.org](#) urging officials in Montgomery County, Maryland, to save a 31-year-old organic farm instead of destroying it to build private soccer fields.

Farmer Nick Maravell, Montgomery County residents, and the Montgomery Countryside Alliance, an agriculture conservation non-profit, are leading the [campaign on Change.org](#) to save Nick's Organic Farm, the county's only organic seed farm. The [online campaign](#) asks the Montgomery County Board of Education and County Executive Ike Leggett to conserve the farm and turn it into an education center rather than letting a private athletic organization turn the farm into private soccer fields.

"We are proposing to Montgomery County that Nick's Organic Farm become a learning center for school children to get a first-hand experience of a working farm that is ecologically sensitive," said Nick Maravell, the organic farmer who has run Nick's Organic Farm for the past 31 years and helped launch the [online campaign on Change.org](#). "Where will our next generation of farmers come from? I say they will come from the cities. We need to start developing urban agriculture experiences so that young people can appreciate the value of food production and perhaps pursue it in the future. Our farm would like to play a role in that process."

"Our brightest future lies in the health of our food system," said Caroline Taylor, Executive Director at Montgomery Countryside Alliance. "If we nurture our children through hands-on learning about where good food comes from and how it is best grown, we will cultivate our food, our health and our local economy. Montgomery County would do well to lead in this endeavor."

Maravell has leased his farmland from the Board of Education for the past 31 years. In March, the Board told Maravell they had rescinded his permit and would be transferring it to the County so that an athletic organization could build private soccer fields. After community members protested, the Board postponed the transfer, allowing the farm to remain on the land for the remainder of the year. Unless the Board or County Executive reverse the decision, Maravell will be forced to vacate his farm in January 2012.

"[The campaign](#) to save Nick's Organic Farm has been started and led entirely by Montgomery County residents," said Sarah Parsons, Senior Organizer at Change.org, the world's fastest-growing platform for social change. "Change.org is about empowering anyone, anywhere to demand action on issues that matter to them. It's been incredible to see how many people have joined this group's [campaign](#) to conserve organic farmland and create a sustainable food education center."

Supporters of Nick's Organic Farm are planning a call-in day to County Executive Ike Leggett on November 16 and will deliver signatures from the [online petition campaign on Change.org](#) to the Board of Education on December 6.

**To view live signatures of the petition to save Nick's Organic Farm:**

<http://www.change.org/petitions/turn-a-30-year-old-organic-farm-in-maryland-into-a-food-education-hub-not-soccer-fields-2>

**Reporters looking to contact Ike Leggett and the Board of Education should try:**

Ike Leggett, Montgomery County Executive  
240-777-2500  
[ocemail@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:ocemail@montgomerycountymd.gov)

Christopher S. Barclay, President of Montgomery County Board of Education  
301-431-7736  
[christopher\\_barclay@mcpsmd.gov](mailto:christopher_barclay@mcpsmd.gov)

Shirley Brandman, Vice President of Montgomery County Board of Education  
301-320-6564  
[Shirley\\_Brandman@mcpsmd.gov](mailto:Shirley_Brandman@mcpsmd.gov)

**Contact information for petition signers in your area can be arranged upon request:**

Sarah Parsons, Senior Organizer at Change.org  
[sarah@change.org](mailto:sarah@change.org)  
860-402-0516

**For more information on Nick's Organic Farm, please visit:**

<http://www.savenicksorganicfarm.org/>

*Nick Maravell has been operating Nick's Organic Farm on Brickyard Road in Potomac, Maryland for the past 31 years. Maravell is a nationally recognized organic farmer, and was appointed by U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to the National Organic Standards Board in 2010.*

**For more information on Montgomery Countryside Alliance, please visit:**

<http://mocoalliance.org/>

*Montgomery Countryside Alliance is a Maryland non-profit that works to conserve and protect farmland in the state's Montgomery and Frederick counties.*

**For more information on Change.org, please visit:**

<http://www.change.org/about>

*Change.org is the world's fastest-growing platform for social change — growing by more than 400,000 new members a month, and empowering millions of people to start, join, and win campaigns for social change in their community, city and country.*

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