

## **They Determine Their Land's Future Use**

Land use activities have always been important to the Huey Family. Every since Leon, a retired state police officer, and Paula, a retired nurse, purchased their Pheasant Hill Farm in 1986, they have been involved in the future of land use in Jefferson Township. This was during the time a housing explosion was taking place in Berks and surrounding counties. Leon decided one way to help lead local efforts to manage land use was by becoming a township supervisor. "It became apparent that the loss of farmland was becoming an issue that needed to be addressed" Leon said. With the help of his fellow supervisors, and county land preservation specialists, through a county Planning Commission program known as AZIP (agriculture zoning incentive program), Jefferson updated their zoning ordinance. Providing for a future for farmland, they placed a vast majority of land in an agriculture zone limiting the number of new residences in that area of the township. Leon also encouraged other surrounding townships to follow suit, and today, most northern and western townships in Berks provide for agriculture land through zoning. But that was only the beginning of Leon and Paula's goal of "Preserving our land for the future generation for open space as well as a continued use for agriculture." They applied to the Berks/Pennsylvania Agriculture Land Preservation Program. Their 42 acres was accepted in 2008 and will be agriculture land forever. The land is now rented by a local farmer, producing hay and corn to feed livestock. The next step they have now taken is giving the farm to their son, Jason, and daughter in law Melissa, so it will stay in the family. Jason is involved with Berk's Counties food system being plant operations manager for Dieffenbach's Potato Chips Inc. at their new Bethel Plant and Distribution Center. The main product produced there is their sweet potato chip. When asked what can be done for the future of the food industry in Berks County, they stated, "We need continued progress of land preservation and financial assistance to farmers. We also can be thankful and support the program preserving farmland around us and throughout Pennsylvania. This insures that crops essential for affordable food can be grown for all." The Huey family activities are an excellent example of how landowners can determine the future use of their land.