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For Immediate Release

Conservation Agreement Benefits Fellowship Farm and Permanently Protects 112 Acres in New Hanover Township

November 27, 2007 – Montgomery County, PA. Hours of planning and a productive partnership between Fellowship Farm, New Hanover Township, and Montgomery County Lands Trust have brought land conservation and additional resources to a social services group with a special mission.

Fellowship Farm is a unique, non-profit organization and retreat center with a rich history. Located in a peaceful, rural setting outside of Pottstown, Fellowship Farm provides a wide array of benefits for diverse groups from the Philadelphia region and beyond.

Multiple resources were pulled together to make this project possible including hours of staff time donated by Montgomery County Lands Trust, strong support by New Hanover Township, a grant from the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and match funding from the Montgomery County Green Fields/Green Towns program. Because of these combined efforts, the majority of the land on which the center rests – 112 acres -- have gained permanent protection. New Hanover Township designated the project a high priority in their open space plan and encouraged the Trust to

apply for the grants. Public access on the preserved land with trails connecting to a New Hanover trail network currently being implemented and a future Lower Pottsgrove trail system are important features of the conservation agreement.

As a result of being able to sell their development rights, Fellowship Farm ensures that the majority of their grounds remain forever free from development. New Hanover Township and the surrounding community benefit by holding onto some of their fast-disappearing open space while Montgomery County guarantees the continuation of a valuable social service and open space resource.

Fellowship Farm focuses on youth and family programs, aimed at “helping people become leaders in their own lives.” They also rent out their facilities to colleges, churches, synagogues, and other groups seeking a restorative setting for a retreat. The original “farm” on which the retreat center rests is fast becoming a forest. The once-plowed fields are now thick with maturing Pennsylvania hardwoods. Trails running through the grounds take hikers over a large portion of the wooded area. A pond, stream and barnyard with a llama, goat, and donkey are other farm highlights.

The rural character and quality of life drew Fellowship Farm to its present location in 1951 to enable its participants to benefit from a retreat setting while doing human relations training. Over the years, surrounding suburbanization made the setting even more precious. As open space disappeared, it became important for the non-profit group to resist the financial pressures of selling a portion of the farm. The completed conservation agreement allows them to gain financial security while preserving the majority of the land.

As a non-profit conservancy, Montgomery County Lands Trust works to preserve and connect the natural areas, farmland, and neighborhood green spaces which contribute to our quality of life, to a clean and abundant water supply and to the health of our region’s economy.

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--- Montgomery County Lands Trust