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## Pa. county honors longtime preservationist

November 20, 2010 | By Kathleen Brady Shea, Inquirer Staff Writer

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Meander along Routes 82 and 162 near Unionville and Chester County's equestrian milieu beckons - acres of pristine pasture and gurgling waterways.

These are vistas that energize Nancy L. Mohr, who was honored this month for decades of land preservation and community outreach, including her role in keeping Disney from buying thousands of acres of open land in 1984.

The multitasking septuagenarian stepped down in July after nine years at the helm of Chester County 2020, a Kennett Square nonprofit that focuses on quality-of-life issues.

A sign of Mohr's successful outreach? The emcee for an evening at the Loch Nairn Farmhouse to honor the preservationist was developer W. Joseph Duckworth.

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Nancy Mohr and John B. "Jock" Hannum Jr., chairman of the Chester County...



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Unlikely alliances are a Mohr specialty, explained Duckworth, of Arcadia Land Co. in Wayne. He said Mohr shared his interest in smart growth and walkable communities.

The tribute to Mohr lasted about two hours and involved a dozen speakers - and that was barely enough to cover her awards and achievements. Carol Aichele, chairwoman of the Chester County commissioners, called her "the mother of open-space preservation in Chester County." Peter Hausmann, chairman of Natural Lands Trust Inc., applauded the "march for sanity" Mohr led for 30 years.

"The way she did it was to get people to talk to each other," said Hausmann.

Mohr also deployed a secret weapon: warm cookies from the oven at Sevnymor, the Newlin Township farmhouse where she and her husband of 54 years, John, raised five children.

"She's very disarming," said John P. Goodall of the Brandywine Conservancy's Environmental Management Center. "She'll take people to a place of agreement. . . . That's her talent."

H. William Sellers, a former director of the Environmental Management Center, said he and Mohr had worked together on the acquisition of the King Ranch, a steer-raising compound that occupied a chunk of five townships.

In 1984, after rumors that the Disney Corp. was eyeing the tract, the conservancy and a residents' group completed the biggest privately funded land-conservation deal in the country. They bought 5,367 acres, protected it with conservation easements, and carved out a 771-acre preserve.

John B. "Jock" Hannum Jr., chairman of Chester County 2020's board, said Mohr's environmental

impact was tough to measure because her work often had involved groups with regional reach, such as the Brandywine Conservancy.

"In a quiet way, she exhibited such passion with an emphasis on sustainability," he said.

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