

COMMUNITY FARMS OUTREACH

ANNUAL REPORT 2006

By CFO Board of Directors and Staff, January 2007

MISSION: Community Farms Outreach promotes local agriculture through growing and distribution practices that are socially, ecologically, and economically sustainable. We forge relationships between people, their food supply, and the land from which it grows.*

VISION: We envision communities in which sustainable agriculture plays a central role in creating universal access to the food and beauty of local farms.*

*New statement, approved by the CFO Board of Directors, 2006. To be adopted by the CFO membership, January 2007.



Growing into Our Second Decade

Building on ten years of hard work and dedication on the part of many volunteers and a few strong staff, in 2006 Community Farms Outreach (CFO) took significant steps forward toward organizational capacity and maturity. As the future goals of the organization took shape through the strategic planning process, the Board of Directors recognized the need for an Executive Director to support and guide that work. In April of 2006, Meg Coward began her tenure as CFO's first Executive Director. Throughout the remainder of the year, the Board and staff worked tirelessly to finish the strategic planning process, which will guide the next three years of hunger relief, education and farm preservation at CFO.

Remarkably, as all of this organizational work was on the front burner, the agricultural operations and charitable programs of CFO were as strong as ever. Under the guidance of Amanda Cather, in her third season as Farm Manager, Waltham Fields Community Farm had a banner year, resulting in our largest harvest on record – despite the loss of our main utility tractor early on in the season. Volunteers pitched in at every level of the organization, working with our staff to bring in the harvests, deliver produce to emergency food organizations, provide meaningful farm experiences to young children, spread the word about our work, and raise the funds necessary to make it possible. By the end of the year, CFO members had pulled together enough donations to allow CFO to purchase a brand new utility tractor for the 2007 growing season.

We are grateful to all who contributed to the work we were able to accomplish in 2006, and look forward to the harvests of 2007.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The ten individuals making up CFO's 2006 Board of Directors committed their time and talents from November, 2005 through January, 2007. In these fourteen months, directors fulfilled their responsibilities of leadership, governance, oversight, fundraising, and planning. One key accomplishment of the Board in 2006 was the creation of a standing committee for board membership. The Board Membership Committee researched and recommended several changes to CFO's bylaws in order to boost and sustain retention, longevity and effectiveness of Board Directors. The Board Membership Committee recruited a strong slate of seven new board nominees for 2007, with 80% retention of 2006 board members.

With the addition of an Executive Director to our year-round staff, the Board began a critical transition away from operational management of the organization and toward a greater focus on governance, support and long-range planning.

This year's major fundraising event, the Spring Fling and Silent Auction, was led by a dedicated group of volunteers, including several board members, and exceeded larger fundraising goals than ever before. This was preceded by a new family event – "Paint and Plant Day" – which was a great success.

Beginning in 2007, CFO will add an Advisory Board to our resources. Members of this board will include:

Molly D. Anderson, *Consultant on Science and Public Policy*

Lisbeth C. Cahill, *Business Manager, The Food Project*

Ben Holmes, *Founder/Director, The Farm School*

Dee Kricker, *CFO Board President, 2002–2003*

Peter K. Lewenberg, *Leadership Giving Officer, MIT Office of Leadership Giving*



Strategic Planning Initiative

A significant accomplishment of the board and staff in 2006 was completion of CFO's first Strategic Plan. The strategic planning process included past board members and other members of the CFO community as well as all staff and board members. Continuing the year-long initiative that began in 2005, the process took many extra meetings and much effort throughout 2006. Supported by a grant from the Crossroads Community Foundation, this work and effort resulted in the drafting and approval of the strategic plan that will guide CFO over the course of the next three years. CFO's mission and vision statements were re-crafted and are ready to be presented to the organization's membership at its Annual Meeting in January, 2007.

Focus

The 2007-2009 Strategic Plan calls for Community Farms Outreach to focus resources on the refinement and growth of the programs based at Waltham Fields Community Farm. We believe this is a realistic yet ambitious plan rooted in the strengths of the organization. As an appropriate next step toward furthering our Mission and Vision in Waltham and its contiguous communities, we intend to build our existing programs through increased capacity and a sustainable infrastructure.

Impact

We will work to realize our mission and vision in several important ways during the next three years. Guided by the goals, objectives and activities laid out in this Strategic Plan, at the end of 2009, Waltham Fields Community Farm will be offering three-season educational programs on the farm to many more local young people; working with strategically recruited volunteers whose first experience on the farm will be a gateway into further engagement with WFCF; distributing free and low-cost produce to a more economically and ethnically diverse population of Waltham residents, whose receipt of that food will expose them to other opportunities for engaging with WFCF; and providing a variety of ways for the larger community to learn about farms and local food through regular public events on the farm. These activities will serve to build Waltham Fields Community Farm into a community asset whose survival our friends and neighbors will want to ensure.

All of these activities will be made possible through the operation of a sustainable, high-production vegetable operation. The Community Supported Agriculture program at WFCF will be enhanced over the next three years through increased shareholder retention focused on Waltham and contiguous communities, more sophisticated communication systems, increased opportunities for community building and education for shareholders.

Waltham Fields Community Farm will also maintain and expand its commitment to local farms and farmers through the recruitment and training of new farmers each year, new distribution partnerships with other local farms, and on-going support of farm preservation in the region.

Through this three-year investment in the programs of Waltham Fields Community Farm, Community Farms Outreach will position itself solidly to consider the larger impact possible beyond the farm in years to come.



FINANCIAL STATUS

Community Farms Outreach entered 2006 in sound financial condition and ended the year in equally sound shape. CFO's income over the year was \$236,047. Income from Community Supported Agriculture shares totaled \$129,285. Additional earned income of \$14,560 was generated from the sales of fruit shares and winter shares. Total operating expenses were \$195,910. An additional \$27,068 was invested in capital improvements. The operating surplus of \$13,069 has been added to the organization's reserves.

We received \$45,450 in grants from foundations over the course of 2006. Foundations that renewed their support of CFO in 2006 include the Charles and Sarah Goldberg Charitable Trust, the Green Leaf Foundation, the Cambridge Community Foundation, the Jane B. Cook 1992 Charitable Trust, the Draper Laboratory Foundation, Foundation M, the Clipper Ship Foundation, the Crossroads Community Foundation, the Waltham Community Foundation, and the George A. Ramlose Foundation. Two foundations chose to support CFO for the first time in 2006: the Vervane Foundation and the Agnes M. Lindsay Trust. The majority of foundation grants received were designated as general operating support; three grants totaling \$10,000 were restricted to support of the tractor purchase, and one grant of \$3,000 was earmarked for board development.

In 2006, CFO received \$51,733 in contributions from individuals. Our Spring Fling and Silent Auction brought in \$14,638. Our original Annual Appeal goal of \$15,000 was increased to \$25,000 in order to make our tractor purchase possible, and resulted in \$25,127 in donations. Individual donations other than this event and appeal totaled \$11,968. We also received \$2,795 from local businesses, civic organizations and places of worship including Cambridge Savings Bank, Watertown Savings Bank, Stanton Insurance Agency, AMD, Flora Restaurant, First Parish Church in Waltham, Parish of the Epiphany in Winchester, and Temple Shalom. Citigroup and Verizon matched donations made by their employees, and IBM gave CFO a community grant at the request of an employee who is also a CFO volunteer.

CFO invested \$27,068 in capital improvements in 2006. We added to our farm equipment a rototiller with mower attachment, as well as a tine weeder cultivator, for a total of \$4,518. In May of 2006, our main utility tractor malfunctioned, and was determined to be beyond repair. Throughout the rest of the season, we rented a utility tractor at key moments. At the same time, we fundraised in order to be able to purchase a new tractor to replace our failed tractor, without jeopardizing the financial health of the organization. At the end of December, we purchased a new Massey-Ferguson tractor for \$22,550.

CFO retained an accountant, John M. Monticone, CPA, of Medford, MA, who completed a financial review of 2005 in accordance with nonprofit accounting regulations. A copy of this review is available at the CFO office.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

Waltham Fields Community Farm

The 2006 farming season was our most productive ever at Waltham Fields Community Farm. A combination of experienced farm management, excellent farm staff, enhanced farm infrastructure and appropriate and efficient volunteer help enabled the farm to grow over 107,000 pounds of produce for the first time in our 11-year history. While the strategic planning process continued, the farm operation experienced another season of laying the groundwork to become the basis for any growth or development of programming suggested by the completed strategic plan. This season, in addition to growing food for our 259 summer shareholders, 52 winter shareholders, and 6 hunger relief partner agencies, we refined and streamlined our existing volunteer and hunger relief programs, purchased new tillage and cultivation equipment—including a new main tillage tractor—and developed a detailed programmatic budget to ensure that our agricultural operation remains financially viable.



Harvest data

In 2006, we grew vegetables, herbs, and flowers on nine and a half acres of land. Our total harvest (excluding flowers and perennial herbs) was 107,316 pounds of produce, which represent a retail value of \$169,734, or \$19,969/acre. Our 259 regular CSA shareholders, ten work sharers, eight farm staff, and three interns received weekly shares from June through October, for a total of twenty distributions. The retail value of one share's produce in 2006 was \$532. In addition, we added a Winter Share for the first time this year. We sold 52 shares (over an original goal of 50), with each shareholder receiving two distributions in November and December for a total value of \$147. The total value of produce harvested for hunger relief was \$32,121, which was a 29% increase over the 2005 season. The donated food was distributed through six organizational shares in Waltham—worth \$3,075—and two bulk donation partners who picked up \$13,672 worth of produce and distributed it in Cambridge and Boston.

Production issues and land care

The 2006 growing season began in a challenging fashion, when record spring rainfall delayed plantings, canceled volunteer groups, and prevented one of our fields from drying out until July. The failure of our main tillage tractor Memorial Day weekend presented a hurdle for our staff as well. Despite these challenges, our growing season was successful and beneficial for our farm, and the extended warm autumn made our first winter share season productive and easier on the staff than it might otherwise have been.

Our composting operation expanded in 2006 with contributions from two local landscaping companies and leaves from the City of Waltham's Department of Public Works. The lack of a bucket loader during the greater part of the season meant that we were unable to turn our windrows as often as we would have liked, but the purchase of a new tractor with a bucket loader at the end of 2006 will enable us to get back on track with our composting in 2007. We are still in need of cheap local sources of animal manure to balance our compost and bring it up to what one New England farmer calls 'fertilizer grade' instead of 'amendment grade.' We bought in cow manure from a local dairy in early 2006. While the manure was expensive, combining it with spring-planted cover crops proved to be a visibly effective addition of fertility for later-season crops, including fall brassicas and sweet potatoes. We will try additional crops of spring-planted green manures in 2007 in addition to purchasing more dairy manure and continuing to search for other sources.

We purchased a Williams tine weeder cultivator early in 2006. While the lack of our tillage tractor prevented us from using it as extensively as we were hoping, the cultivator showed great promise for helping us manage weeds in 2007, particularly in conjunction with our two cultivating tractors. The other capital purchase we made in 2006 was a BCS rototiller with a mower attachment, which greatly improved our ability to manage field edges and pathways where a tractor is impractical. We made great strides in weed control on our farm in 2006, thanks to an exceptionally talented seasonal farm staff and our cultivating tractors, which continued to function throughout the season.

Our need for additional land became obvious in 2006. Historic New England, the owner of our Lyman Estate fields, was asked by the Waltham Conservation Commission to comply with regulations mandating a 50-foot buffer between agricultural operations and bodies of water. They passed this request on to us, and we walked the fields with them marking these buffers in early spring. This could cut down the amount of land available to us at the Lyman Estate in 2007, and very little additional land has become available at the University of Massachusetts Field Station. While we will continue to work on making our existing land more productive in terms of value of produce grown per acre, finding additional land would, in the long run, alleviate many of the pressures associated with our current land management. In the meantime, our staff have developed a new five-year crop rotation plan in conjunction with a new CSA plan which will bring out the strengths of the remaining Lyman Estate land while perhaps enabling us to keep a small amount of land out of production each season beginning in 2007.

Farm personnel

Our farm staff for the 2006 season consisted of a Farm Manager, three Assistant Growers, one full-season Agricultural Intern, and two partial-season Agricultural Interns. They were assisted by an able crew of work sharers. A work sharer exchanges labor for a share of produce. Three work sharers helped the farm staff harvest each week throughout the season. Four work sharers managed distribution operations. Two work sharers coordinated the scheduling of volunteer groups in the field, and another coordinated organizational volunteers.

HUNGER RELIEF

In 2006, we refined our hunger relief efforts based on the "organizational share" model we established in 2005 with the Joseph Smith Community Health Center. Each organizational share was equivalent to 15 regular CSA shares, and incorporated produce identified as useful by our partner agencies. Each week, we provided two organizational shares to the Waltham Red Cross, two organizational shares to Sandra's Lodge, one organizational share to the Waltham Salvation Army, and one organizational share to the Health Center. This system worked very well for both our farm staff and our partner agencies. In addition to the organizational shares, we continued to provide bulk donations through our two partner "brokers"—Food For Free and the Greater Boston Food Bank. Each of these organizations came to the farm once a week to pick up both produce harvested specifically for hunger relief and produce left over from the CSA distributions.

Once again, our partnership with the Joseph Smith Community Health Center continued to be the cutting edge of our food distribution efforts. In the early months of 2006, an intern from Brandeis University worked with us to create a vegetable guide to be used by the nutritional counselors at the Health Center as they handed out produce. The guide provides cooking tips, recipes, and nutritional information. Our hope for 2007 is to work with the Health Center to get the guide translated into the languages other than English spoken by the clients of the Health Center. The staff of

the Health Center continue to be very committed to our partnership—many of them signed up for their own personal CSA shares for the season. At the end of the growing season, they surveyed both clients and staff about our partnership. The results will be very helpful in setting up the program for 2007.

We are grateful to the staff of each of our partner agencies who made our hunger relief work possible in 2006. In addition, three CFO members contributed 200 hours of volunteer labor to provide delivery of produce on a weekly schedule to our partner agencies. The value of produce delivered to our hunger relief partners in 2006 totaled \$32,121.



EDUCATION

Moving us into our second decade of operation, the 2006 season provided the opportunity to make significant strides in the quality of our educational programs. Our track record of providing meaningful experiences attracted extremely capable farmers-in-training, very enthusiastic field volunteers, and a wonderfully qualified coordinator for our Children's Learning Garden. Led by seasoned Farm Manager Amanda Cather all of these participants in our educational programs made important contributions to our work while advancing their own knowledge and skills.

Farmer Training Program

For the first time, in 2006, we were able to hire three full-season Assistant Growers. All three were highly qualified young farmers, each with three seasons of growing experience on other farms. This expanded farm staff made a huge impact on the 2006 growing season. Together with our Farm Manager, they not only produced our largest total harvest on record, but also kept on top of the weeds on the farm in a manner never before realized at Waltham Fields. Beyond farm work, their training was augmented by regular feedback sessions, ongoing in-the-row education, and participation in the Eastern Massachusetts Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (EMass CRAFT). Furthermore, each Assistant Grower was given individual responsibility for one of the three harvest/distribution days and managed that day from start to finish each week.

The impact of our Farmer Training Program can be seen in the fantastic positions offered to two of our Assistant Growers at the end of 2006. Meryl LaTronica has become the Farm Manager at Powisset Farm, in Dover, Massachusetts, a property of the Trustees of Reservations. She will be in charge of launching a 100-member CSA operation at Powisset in 2007. Nate Frigard has become the Farm Manager at the Practical Farm Training Program of The Farm School in Athol, Massachusetts. We are committed to continuing to support the development of new farmers in Eastern Massachusetts.

We are also committed to introducing farming to those with serious enthusiasm but little experience. In 2006, we hired three Agricultural Interns who brought amazing energy and dedication to their work with us. Coincidentally, all three interns were recent graduate students in Boston, with backgrounds in geology, education, religion, and nutrition that contributed significantly to the knowledge that both staff and volunteers gained in the fields. All three reported that the internship with our farm staff was a valuable, important experience, with one commenting, "I would love it if this summer could be the model for my life's career. I definitely plan to continue working on a farm in one capacity or another."

Service Learning Program

During the 2006 season, volunteers contributed a total of 6,537 hours of service on the farm at Waltham Fields. This represents a 10% increase in total hours over the previous growing season, even though many spring volunteers were rained out!

Individual volunteers continued to play a very significant role in our volunteer field labor force, contributing 3,200 hours. The jump in total hours, however, was due to an increased number of volunteer groups, many of whom came for repeat visits to the farm. Especially helpful were the groups who were able to fill in the gaps of previous years—peak growing times in May and August/September when volunteers are traditionally scarce. Together, 50 different volunteer groups contributed 3,337 hours of service in 2006.

Our individual drop-in hours for volunteers continued to be an efficient structure for our farm staff and a very accessible opportunity for volunteers of all sorts. Ranging from high school students to professionals with flexible schedules, individual volunteers worked with us during drop-in hours on a weekly basis throughout the growing season. The structure proved to be particularly useful to students looking to fulfill community service hours.

Volunteer groups in 2006 included schools from Newton, Waltham, Brookline, Watertown, and Belmont. A variety of groups from six different colleges lent a hand: Bentley College, Brandeis University, Boston University, Simmons College, Northeastern University, and Mt. Ida College. Seven corporations sent employees to the farm for a day of team-building and service: Motorola, Adobe, Raytheon, EcoLogic Finance, WilmerHale's Summer Institute, Virtual MGU and Body & Soul Magazine. Nine faith communities volunteered with us in 2006, including Temple Isaiah and Parish of the Epiphany, both of which came for repeat experiences. We also benefited from on-going relationships with Boston Cares, Single Volunteers, the Volunteer Family, a homeschooling cooperative, and the Junior Girl Scouts.

One of the most exciting developments in our work with volunteer groups in 2006 was the opportunity to work with two teacher training programs. Both the Walden Woods Institute and Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom brought groups of teachers out to the farm for a day of learning and service. The feedback we got from both groups leads us to believe that our farm and programs lend themselves well to hosting these types of groups. We hope to continue these partnerships in 2007, and to collaborate with still other teacher training programs in the future.

Children's Learning Garden

Instructors, camp counselors, and campers alike enjoyed our eighth season of working with the Cambridge Adventure Day Camp, a summer program serving low-income youth in Cambridge. In 2006, we increased our investment in the Children's Learning Garden by raising the Coordinator's salary, allowing us to hire a dynamic public school teacher from Cambridge with a background in experiential education. Mark Walter, our 2006 CLG Coordinator, was assisted by four volunteers in creating a wonderful experience for the campers in Cambridge.

In the spring, Mark created new structures to make the Children's Learning Garden feel all the more special for the campers, adding a teepee for a cool meeting space, and a wattle fence around the perimeter of the garden. Over the course of the summer, Mark, the volunteers, and the campers planted and tended corn, squash, beans, and sunflowers in the Children's Learning Garden. Each time the campers visited the farm over the course of the summer, they were provided with a well-rounded experience including a farm tour, tasting of veggies right off the vine, a work project, an interactive educational project, time for fun and games, and a lunch made with fresh produce. The Director of the Cambridge Adventure Day Camp commented that this was a wonderful summer, and the counselors and campers agreed that they had a ton of fun and found the program to be well-structured.

The success of our 2006 Children's Learning Garden program, and that of the past seven summers, has led to a commitment to expanding the program in 2007. We plan to seek out two new partners in addition to the Cambridge Adventure Day Camp, providing twice as many children with this unique experience.

Community Farms Outreach

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Nate Frigard, *Assistant Grower*

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