

Community Farms Outreach Newsletter

240 Beaver Street, Waltham, MA 02452 781-899-2403 www.communityfarms.org



October 2003

Waltham Fields Is a Community Farm

Dee Kricker, President, CFO Board of Directors

Something's happening here, in these fields, on this land and in our hearts. Magic is afoot. A small patch of six acres, nestled between railroad tracks, a business college and ever expanding athletic fields, is being cared for, tenderly, lovingly. People are farming here. In return, the land is giving back.

Kids are excited to come to this farm. Parents bring them to pick flowers, cherry tomatoes and snap peas. Children plant or weed or maybe climb a bale of hay. Families picnic together on colorful blankets, then do field work or take a tour. They eat homemade cookies, share food and just relax on the grass. The sun, the wind, the rain feel good out here; weather wakens the senses. Hands get dirty working the soil, holding the earth. It's dry or hard or clumped or wet. It's alive. People farm here.



Photo by Dee Kricker

Some come to build, every Sunday, all summer, a new shelter for the produce and for the people who use it: shareholders, coordinators, and young campers who now have a dry, shady place for lunch. Folks ride their bikes out here, take photos, and walk a dog. Every week, someone brings boxes salvaged from the backs of stores for the charity harvest. Others take the boxes, full of lettuce, carrots or squash, in their own cars and drive to the Salvation Army or Red Cross every week, all season. This is a charitable farm.

Once a month, after work, after class, or after putting kids to bed, a group of people gathers to think about the farm. They make decisions, discuss policies and approve a budget. Others take on projects: they create a data base, support computers, design brochures, fundraise, proofread, publish newsletters, give workshops, do research, make calls, set up for gatherings, bake cookies, attend meetings, and on and on. This is a community farm. The community owns this farm.

For many years, no one took care of this land. The fields are weedy, the soil much depleted. It yields what it can, but needs some help. Compost was applied this fall, but not enough. It will take time to replenish and balance the soil. We don't own this land we farm, though we are its caretakers and we may be able to preserve this land forever, as agricultural land. It will take some work and even a little magic, but this is possible. In the meantime, people keep coming to the farm to work and the farm gives back. Savor the harvest!

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Mark your calendars and join us for:

Community Farms Outreach Annual Meeting

Sunday, November 16, 2003 at the Field Station Auditorium

Pot Luck Harvest Dinner 6:00-7:00PM

Business Meeting 7:00-7:30PM

Farm Art Exhibit of photographs, paintings, collage, sculpture and writing. **Interested? Contact** Ariel Dekovic @ 617-823-7474 or arieldekovic@yahoo.com

Presentation & Slideshow 7:30 PM

*Election of New Board Members
Annual Report*

The Western Greenway:

An Opportunity to Link the Lands

presented by Marie Daly, of the Waltham Land Trust

Marie is a local historian who is writing a book about the history and farms along Trapelo Road. She will talk about Cornelia Warren, the philanthropist dairy farmer who bequeathed the land we farm.

Community Farms Outreach

Board of Directors

Board@communityfarms.org

Dee Kricker - Waltham
President

Gretta Anderson - Arlington
Vice President

Elise Hoblitzelle - Watertown
Secretary

Liz Fuller - Waltham
Jane Hammer - Arlington
Adam Lesser - Newton
Anna Linakis - Somerville
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Jonathan Kirschner
2003 Farmhands

Andrew 'Coop' Cooper
Justine Kahn
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Thea Patterson
Children's Garden Coordinator
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Martha Creedon
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Community Farms Outreach, Inc.

Our mission is to promote, support and manage community farms and farms in the community. Community farms are farms that are charitable and educational: growing produce for soup kitchens, shelters and food pantries, educating children and adults about how and where their food is grown and generally to preserve the open space and beauty of farms.

Community Farms Outreach, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit charitable corporation.

Reflections on Delivering Food for Charity

by Janet Yeracaris, CSA shareholder

This was my first summer as a WFCF shareholder, and I was eager to get involved somehow. I tapped into the produce for charity program the farm runs, and drove a produce delivery to the Waltham Salvation Army or the Waltham Red Cross once a week for most of the summer. I want to share some reflections on that experience.

It was certainly satisfying to see how eagerly people often greeted the arriving boxes of fresh farm produce. On a couple of occasions, people practically climbed into the back of my minivan to get at squash and cucumbers, making it difficult to unload the rest of the boxes. People are often eager to see what's in the boxes and to get their hands on it. Potatoes, tomatoes, cantaloupes, carrots—fresh produce is welcomed with enthusiasm. The program is obviously worthwhile, and clearly the need, desire and gratitude are there.

On the other hand, there have been occasions when various greens have been sent back because the kitchen won't cook them (clients complain), and people don't take them home to cook. I offered the kitchen recipes for kale, but they really weren't that interested. Sometimes even lettuce was welcome in only limited quantities. I understand that it is not the mission of these charities to expand the culinary horizons of their clients, but I admit that it was pretty disappointing to me, and I think also to the folks who work on the farm. Anything "mainstream" was very welcome, but the "strange" (and incredibly nutritious!) stuff was not always.

I see this as a problem with the culture of American eating in general. Having a farm share this summer has broadened my horizons in terms of fresh produce, and those strange greens now seem like comforting friends. In the short term, in order to best serve the needs of these charities, the thing to do seems to be to provide more of what they want and less of what they can't handle. But I find myself thinking of ways that I might go to bat for kale in my everyday life. Somehow I want to stick up for food that is fabulously fresh and nutritious, reasonably easy to prepare (once it is familiar), and really tasty (again, familiarity can be an issue). Mainstream America is missing something we shareholders are really enjoying, and there must be some way to spread the word.

The other thing I found rewarding about driving these deliveries was that it was a good exercise in community building. Even though my contact with the folks at the charities was brief, it was nice that it was so consistent. There were regular clients who would recognize my car and come over to greet me and help unload the boxes every week. I find that even these brief interactions make the world a more comforting, secure and predictable place. Food and community building go hand in hand (from church potlucks to private dinner parties to meals-on-wheels programs). I've been pleased to be a small part of the charity delivery program this year, and I look forward to next year!



Photo by Oakes Plimpton

CFO Board of Directors

Nominees for Election at Annual Meeting 11/16/03

*Gretta Anderson (Arlington)	*Liz Fuller (Waltham)
Jonathan Baker (Cambridge)	Carla Gates (Arlington)
Clayton Carter (Belmont)	Justine Kahn (Arlington)
Martha Creedon (Waltham)	Matthew McGuire (Dedham)
Deron Estes (Somerville)	*Chris Yoder (Dover)
Judy Fallows (Watertown)	

* current board member

Hoes, Trowels, and Taste Buds: Experiential Education at Waltham Fields

by Derek Christianson, Assistant farm Manager

“Hands-on” education has always been the motto at Waltham Fields Community Farm. Volunteer groups have been working with us since our inception; they include school groups, religious groups, corporate volunteers, and others. Our goal is to give our community a chance to experience different farm tasks and simultaneously provide them with a better understanding of what it takes to grow the food they eat. Often this education goes beyond learning about the day’s tasks to informal discussions about the merits of organic or local food, and thus begins a volunteer’s exploration into the vast world of food systems and personal choices.

One of my favorite experiences this past summer was a visit by a group of Dorchester youth involved in the Citizen Schools program. They came out for a brief hour on a sunny Friday in July to harvest some vegetables for their “Food Day” salad.

Immediately after a brief introduction about the farm and organic growing methods their counselor quizzed them on what “organic” meant. Eagerly the kids raised their hands and volunteered, “to grow food without chemicals”. Perhaps, a shallow understanding, but it provided the youth with an introduction to an issue that is of growing importance.

As we continued our tour we came to a bed of Mustard Greens. Taste testing is one of my favorite activities for volunteers on the farm. I picked up a dozen large green leaves and offered them to anyone wishing to try them — with one caveat: I wouldn’t tell them what it was, only that it was safe to eat. The children were at first understandably hesitant, but a simple enticement by their leader to take a “good” risk was enough to get the group nibbling at their leaves. A brief delay, followed by a sea of cringing faces and most spitting out their leaves; only to try another bite, by the end of the day one boy was asking for more “spicy lettuce”. A simple example of what Waltham Fields has to offer— a chance to take a safe risk, something that is too rare for the youth growing up in Greater Boston today.

Volunteers come to Waltham Fields from a wide array of backgrounds; in August we were again able to host incoming first-year students from Tufts University and Boston University for a service-learning experience. While some volunteers may only experience a few hours on the farm, many can enjoy the entire season through repeat visits. This summer we developed a new relationship with The Carroll Center for the Blind, with weekly visits from a crew that was able to simultaneously work on their mobility and provide us with volunteer labor.

As we wrap up the 2003 season, we are grateful for the 70+ visits from more than 35 different volunteer groups. Overall, group volunteers logged more than 4,000 hours of fieldwork. The use of volunteer labor continues to be essential to our ability to produce and donate high-quality organic vegetable to local food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. Next year we hope to be able to employ a full-time educator to work with even more educational and volunteer groups.

Cambridge Adventures Day Camp

by Thea Patterson, Agricultural Intern for the Childrens' Garden Program; photos by Judy Fallows

This summer, I organized the fifth year of the Cambridge Adventures Day Camp farming activity. Over the course of six weeks, four groups of children visited Waltham Fields Community Farm. Each group visited three times, so the kids were able to see changes and growth. All of the groups were able to use the children’s garden, a plot that I maintained throughout the season. Included in the garden were bell peppers, herbs, onions, cucumbers, popcorn, and several varieties of tomatoes, as well as some open space where some groups were able to plant sunflowers and lettuce.



I found that the program worked best when we divided the children into two groups. I was fortunate to have Jonathan Kirschner, one of the farmhands, to help me. We usually had one group doing harvesting and garden maintenance, and one doing arts and crafts, and often cooking. We switched activities after about a half-hour. Depending on how much time was left over, we would do recreational activities, like running

through the sprinkler or playing soccer or Frisbee.

The most popular activities were ones that were hands-on and created a feeling of ownership. Children planting seeds or transplants were very careful with their plants, and eager to learn how to care for them. The kids were also very excited to harvest and eat vegetables.

Luckily, we had a large snap pea harvest this year, which was very popular with almost every child. We were also able to harvest flowers from the fallow field, and make salsa using fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, and



peppers. The camp coordinated the groups so that kids who visited the farm in the morning did a cooking activity in the afternoon, often using vegetables from the farm.

Shareholder Judy Fallows helped arrange a vermiculture activity. She brought in a vermiculture bin from home, and petri dishes and eyedroppers. The kids had a chance to see worms close up, and identify some of their anatomy. Judy also generously donated the petri dishes and eyedroppers to the farm. *Continued on p. 4...*

Hanna is almost 10, Jonathan is 8 and Jakob is 5.5 years old. We started working in June and took one week off in September for our annual vacation with the homeschoolers. We worked every Thursday between 6.5 and 8 hours, depending on what needed to be done and how tired we were after 6.5 hrs.

Our dinner on Thursdays was always fresh vegetables that we harvested that same day. We will miss that very much! The kids are very proud of their achievement and tell others how much fun they had working at the farm. Several other homeschooling families are interested in trying this out. My parents came for a visit from Germany in October and we all went to the farm together. They enjoyed the tour given by their grandchildren and learned a lot about vegetables and farming.

We will be working until the last distribution on October 30th and be very sad when we have to leave that day.
Annette Dornhofer, proud mom of Hanna, Jonathan, and Jakob

Cambridge Adventures continued...

After the six-week program, all four groups came back one morning during the last week of camp for a farm Olympics. Six Americorps members and Jonathan helped with the group of 60-plus kids. The kids stayed in the four main groups, and cycled through four activities: bobbing for cherry tomatoes, Frisbee, running through sprinklers, and a race. It was a good ending to a program that will hopefully continue in years to come. --*Thea*

Hanna Dornhofer: The things I like best about the Waltham Community Farm are picking hot peppers and digging for potatoes. I also like working with Jonathan. I always enjoy coming home after the farm for a nice cool shower. The best part is having fresh vegetables for dinner.

Jonathan Dornhofer: Hello I am Jonathan Dornhofer; I am a worksharer on the farm with my family. I like to pick up the share at the end of the day. My favorite vegetables on the farm are watermelon, peppers, carrots and turnips. I also like to ride in the back of the pick-up truck. I like the smell of the flowers but not the smell of the compost. I like to bring the vegetables to the front to be picked up and I also like to help set up the CSA. I like to watch the birds fly away when you come close to them. and it's nice and quiet especially at the end of the field where no cars drive. Just to tell you I am going to be a farmer when I grow up. It was fun to work with the Americorps group which are the people in the grey shirts. I like to work on the farm especially when I can work with Jonathan because he is funny. I like to cut leeks, dig potatoes, harvest peppers, pick cherry tomatoes and harvest turnips. I love the farm vegetables and so does the rest of my family.

Working in the rain can get you very wet but it is still as much fun as in the sun. When I come home I always have an ice-cold shower. Too bad that I miss a farm day because I am on vacation but I learn very amazing things at the farm. I hope I can work on the farm next year, too.

Jakob Dornhofer: I love the dog Utah. The farm is great because I can pick tomatoes, carrots and wash vegetables. I am wondering if there will be strawberries next year. I like to get leeks and have a leeks cutting party.



Community Farms Outreach, Inc.
240 Beaver Street
Waltham, MA 02452

- Hunger Relief
- Education
- Farm Preservation



Photo by Judy Fallows

CFO Annual Meeting -- Pot Luck Harvest Dinner, Election of board members, Speaker, and Art exhibit! At the farm -- November 16, 2003 - 6:00 PM