

Community Farms Outreach Newsletter

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



January 2004

A message from Amanda Cather, our new Farm Manager:

The vertiginous peace of the world flows down to this place....What it needs now is a spell of blooming and that is the kind of work for spring. —Pablo Neruda

Greetings CFO members! As I sit at my desk in the old UMass extension building, looking out at the icy fields as the frozen dawn peeks through the bare tree branches and the morning traffic picks up out on Beaver Street, these words of Neruda's keep coming back into my head. Surrounded on all sides by the hubbub of metropolitan Boston, this wintry landscape feels like a repository for some of the serenity and repose, as well as the hope and anticipation, that grace a farmer's life these short winter days.

With all of this in mind, I'm excited and grateful for the opportunity to be the new farm manager at Waltham Fields Community Farm. In order to get here, I drove across the country from Colorado at the end of December with my husband, father, and son, along with our three big black dogs, Lexi, Levi, and Tacoma. Mark and I left my father behind at my parents' home in Maryland after Christmas and made the drive up the East Coast just before the New Year. We are settling into a spacious apartment in Waltham, just two miles from the farm, and I'm excited to have an opportunity to live and work in this community. Of course, moving at this time of year has its hazards, and our whole family ended up with persistent colds just as we arrived on the East Coast. CFO board members Gretta Anderson, Saskia Oosting, and Martha Creedon made us feel welcome and well-nourished, bringing over soup, bread, orange juice, and other necessities to help us nurse ourselves back to a semblance of health.

As I begin my ninth season as a farmer, I'm back in the area where my love for farming germinated and was nurtured by some remarkable mentors. As a pre-med in college, I worked at a clinic for malnourished children at Boston City Hospital. Although I soon realized that being a doctor was not what I most wanted to do, the problems of hunger and malnutrition in our country stayed with me as I bumbled

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Greetings from Marla Rhodes, our new Administrative and Development Manager:

Hello CFO members! I am excited to be starting my work as Administrative and Development Manager for CFO/Waltham Fields Community Farm. As I write this the thermometer outside has yet to climb above freezing, but it's toasty warm here at the farm offices at the Field Station.

All week long Amanda and I have been hanging on to Derek's every word as he briefs us on the workings of this organization, both in the office and in the fields. He has done a fantastic job of making the transition as smooth as possible for us.

I have been interested in food and farming since my youth, when my mother helped convert a suburban neighbor's lawn into an organic garden. My formal education is in nutrition, including a specialized degree in Agriculture, Food, and the Environment from Tufts University.

I have worked for ProjectBread's Hunger Hotline as an advocate for Food Stamp recipients, and as Program Director for the Cambridge WIC (Women, Infants and Children), a nutrition and breastfeeding program. After a stint at Rodale Research Center in Pennsylvania surveying consumers about their knowledge of local agriculture, I decided I also wanted to learn more about it. My most recent job has been with an innovative program called Red Tomato, which brokers regional produce into grocery stores and advocates for food system reform favoring sustainably-minded family farms.

As a long-ago former board member of CFO, back in its pre-CSA days, I have watched this organization grow and change. I'm looking forward to working with Amanda and the new, enthusiastic board to be a part of that growth in 2004.



Community Farms Outreach
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Board@communityfarms.org

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STAFF

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Farm Manager

Marla Rhodes
Administrative Development Manager

Newsletter Editor
Kathy Diamond
Kathydia@comcast.net

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.

From the 2003 CFO Annual Report

The past year was a period of growth and stabilization for Community Farms Outreach. We are grateful to our members and supporters for the successes we achieved and your continued support in the year ahead. What follows are excerpts from our 2003 Annual Report. The complete report is on our web site, www.CommunityFarms.org.

Waltham Fields Community Farm

The 2003 farming season was very successful in terms of harvest yields, weed management, and the development of two important farm resources: a new harvest tracking system and a skilled crew of shareholder and volunteer fieldworkers. This year has also been notable because of several capital improvements to our farming and CSA operation including the purchase of a mower, new plow and the building of a new distribution shelter.

By November 1, our harvest yields had exceeded those of 2002: 83,551 pounds of vegetables and herbs had been harvested, with a retail value of \$154,017. One hundred and fifty-two WFCF CSA shareholders and fourteen worksharers and farm staff received twenty-one weekly shares. The value of these shares was \$107,890.00, making the average retail value of a WFCF CSA share \$650.00.

Compost and manure was applied to some of the fields and cover crops are now growing on much of the land we farmed this season. The plan for the farm is to increase the amount of organic material in the soil to further increase the soil fertility. On-site composting is one option we are exploring. The single biggest hurdle to making our own compost is the purchase of a tractor with a front-end loader. Since we need to purchase a primary tillage tractor next year, it would be a good investment to get one with a front-end loader.

Produce Donations Program

Meetings were held with three local hunger relief agencies in the spring to identify program needs and to establish a weekly charity harvest and distribution schedule for each program. These agencies included the Waltham Salvation Army, Waltham Red Cross, and Bristol Lodge Homeless Shelters. Food For Free in Cambridge was the recipient of the large surpluses harvested during the season. This season, 27,464 pounds, a retail value of \$46,128. worth of fresh organically produced vegetables were donated to local food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters, bringing our combined totals to 147, 500 pounds since 1995. CSA volunteers organized themselves into a distribution network to pick-up and deliver to local charities on a weekly basis.

Education

During the summer we continued our fifth year working with Cambridge Adventure Day Camp, a summer program serving at-risk youth in Cambridge. Over the course of six

weeks, four groups of children visited Waltham Fields Community Farm. Our educational mission also involves reconnecting adults with where and how their food is grown. Much of this educational experience is hands-on, reflecting the way people have always learned about food production. People come to Waltham Fields from a wide array of backgrounds. While some visitors only experienced a few hours on the farm, many others came to the farm repeatedly throughout the season. Groups include school groups, religious groups, corporate volunteers, and others. Overall, these groups logged more than 4,000 hours of fieldwork with more than 70 visits from more than 35 different groups.

Farmland Preservation Project: Friends of Cornelia Warren Farm

We faced a concern regarding our tenancy at the Waltham Field Station this year because of budget cuts at the University of Massachusetts. However, the University opted not to close the Field Station for the moment. Heat will not be available in our greenhouse, but we anticipate partnering with other tenants who still have heat to start transplants.

The CFO board of directors officially approved supporting the work of Friends of Cornelia Warren Farm (FCWF) as its primary farmland preservation project. FCWF, an informal association of tenants and users, has organized to work with the UMass in developing a master plan for the future of the Waltham site. An ad hoc steering committee, including three CFO representatives, met with Vice Chancellor John Mullin to discuss the future of the site in February and to present a vision statement that the group had developed.

In October, the group met again with Dr. Mullin, to hear an update regarding future site plans in light of the FY04 budget cuts. It was clear from that meeting, that CFO must convene a planning group to develop a proposal for keeping the facility open in the next fiscal year. UMass expressed support for the concept of having the facility be administered by a nonprofit collaborative for a period of from 3-5 years. Over the next several months, CFO will lead the efforts to analyze the complex issues involved in such an arrangement with the goal of developing a resolution that will meet the needs of those who currently use the facility.



Amanda's message (continued)

through my years at college, searching for my next vocation.

Visiting The Land Institute, a sustainable agriculture research organization in Salina, Kansas, on a research trip for my senior thesis in November of 1995, I realized two things: farming not only encompassed all the issues that I was passionate about, but it was the kind of work that could keep me learning (and guessing) throughout my entire lifetime; and farmers were most definitely the kind of people that I wanted to learn from. Through positions at Boston Urban Gardeners, Re-Vision House Urban Agriculture Project, Drumlin Farm, and The Food Project over the next six years, I gradually experienced some of the subtleties of sustainable agriculture, began to value work in community, learned the importance of education for preserving the future of our farms and our local food systems, and, yes, fell in love with tractors.

I met my husband Mark Walter at Drumlin Farm in Lincoln in May of 2000, and we were married there in September of 2001. He was finishing up his graduate studies and elementary teaching certification at Lesley University, where he received his master's degree in environmental education from the Audubon Expedition Institute. During the two years between our wedding and our return to Massachusetts, we lived in Sundance, Utah, and Boulder, Colorado, where Mark taught at the Sundance Mountain School and the Boulder Community School for Integrated Studies and I managed the CSA at Naropa University's Hedgerow Farm. In July, we celebrated the birth of our son, Jonah Rio, in Denver.

We loved living in the West, particularly our excursions to New Mexico, Wyoming, and the wilder parts of Colorado, where we spent time hiking, cross-country skiing, camping, and fishing. Inexorably, though, my love for the Red Sox and my desire to continue to work in the Boston area drew us back to Waltham. Mark is currently searching for an education position with a school or environmental organization and spending his time with Jonah, who is enjoying his daddy thoroughly.

I look forward to meeting each of you, whether at the CSA, annual meeting, in the fields, or in another capacity. I feel incredibly fortunate to have the opportunity to do the work I love for CFO, whose mission is so close to my heart. I'm grateful for all the work that has been done by the board and members to sustain this unique organization and this peaceful patch of land, and I can't wait to get out into the fields to join the effort . . . but that is the kind of work for spring.

*At Community Farms Outreach,
our mission is the foundation that guides our efforts.*

*As our tendrils thicken into a web of vines,
That overlap and interlace,
They form a veritable carpet of magic.
We sow, we till, and we reap:
A farm reclaimed,
A lady's legacy preserved,
Hunger vanquished,
Community created,
Farming honored,
Knowledge restored,
Nature nurtured and nurturing in response.*

CFO: It's about community, farms, and reaching out.

—Dee Kricker

Thank You!

As of January 8th we have received more than 80 donations in response to our Annual Appeal. The total of these donations is about \$7,500. It is not too late to donate to Community Farms Outreach in response to our Annual Appeal. Checks can be made out to CFO and mailed to 240 Beaver Street, Waltham, MA 02452.

SAVE THE DATE: March 19, 2004

for the First Annual Green Space Blues Jam
to Benefit the Waltham Land Trust

Music provided by *Mike Williams and members of the Bruce Katz Band*

Friday, March 19, 2004, 7:30 to 11:00 P.M. at Stonehurst, the historic Paine Estate in Waltham

Tickets are \$40 each and include wine, beer, soft drinks and barbeque dining.

Call Jenn Dean 781-893-5813 or email Dee Kricker @ kricker@vtisp.com.



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- **Hunger Relief**
- **Education**
- **Farm Preservation**