

Community Farms Outreach Newsletter

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



Spring 2004

Educational Opportunities at Community Farms Outreach

by Amanda Cather, Farm Manager

Marla came into the office yesterday morning with a new spring in her step. "I was lying awake in my bed last night thinking," she said, "and I realized that people can have so many different experiences on the farm—it made me excited about all the opportunities that we have to educate people here." As we talked, she outlined three types of educational experiences that she had imagined visitors to the farm might have:

- **Insight:** An "aha!" experience—"I didn't know that Brussels sprouts grew that way!"—that can happen on a farm tour or while working in the fields
- **Communion:** An experience of connection with the land or one another that occurs while working, either alone or in community, or while encountering the land through a walk, a quiet meditation, or a picnic lunch
- **Compost:** An experience that challenges visitors to begin to work on breaking down ideas and become more thoughtful about issues of food and connection to the land in our community, fostering questions like "why are you the only farm left in Waltham?" or "what does sustainable farming mean?"

These experiences, of course, can happen to people of any age, with any level of familiarity with the farm (I have the communion experience about once a day, and it is always a revelation). They are the real beginnings of the education component of our mission: educating children and adults as to how and where their food comes from.

People come to Waltham Fields Community Farm through many channels—the Children's Learning Garden, our CSA, a food pantry, as a part of a volunteer group, as an assistant grower, board member, or participant in a service-learning program. All of these people are included in our educational mission. They come for several reasons: to learn about or contribute to solving the problems of hunger and food insecurity in our society; to support local farms and farmland preservation; and, perhaps most elusive and most profound, to feed a hunger for community and for positive action that is at the heart of many individuals' feeling of disquiet in these troubled times.

Our work in education at Community Farms Outreach is part of a national and international movement that connects individuals with a new sense of hope and power. We are one of what Frances Moore Lappe refers to as many international "entry points" into the realization that we are not isolated activists working on "issues"—the environment, fair trade and labor, food security, biotechnology, sustainable agriculture, social and economic justice—but are part of something larger: a slow, steady, growing movement towards sustainability and justice in our society and in the world.

Learning "where your food comes from" opens many doors into issues of energy, labor, and the environment. Thinking about "where your food goes to" brings up issues of hunger, food security, and malnutrition in this society where we produce more than 3,000 calories per day for every man, woman and child. Most importantly, connecting with the production and distribution of food provides children and adults with a powerful, positive context in which to explore these questions while putting their hands to work. This is the real power of our educational mission at Community Farms Outreach—to engage each person with whom we come into contact in profound education through simple tasks undertaken with great love.

Throughout the growing season, we'll welcome service learning groups, children's classes, and individual volunteers to the farm every week. Every time we teach a child to plant a seed, work with a volunteer to hoe a bed of broccoli or winter squash, complete a harvest for charity with a committed group, or talk to a CSA member about our production methods, we'll be providing entry points into contemplation of the larger issues that Community Farms Outreach has taken on. Through all the insight, communion, and compost experiences that groups and individuals have this season on the farm, we'll be moving as a community towards the frontiers of learning about food production and distribution and their meaning in our society. As Lu Hsun wrote in 1921, "There were no roads to begin with but when many people pass one way a road is made."

Community Farms Outreach

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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.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Spring Fling Sunday, May 2, 5:00–9:00 PM

3rd-Sunday Farm Picnic Sunday, May 16, noon

Historic Waltham Days

Field Station Open House June 12, 10:00 AM–2:00 PM

3rd-Sunday Farm Picnic Sunday, June 20, noon

Farmland Preservation at the Field Station

Preservation of local working farms is central to the mission of Community Farms Outreach—“to promote, support and manage farms in the community and community farms . . . and to preserve the open space and beauty of farms.” For several years we have been concerned that the community farm we manage, Waltham Fields Community Farm, is in danger of being closed. Unprecedented economic challenges faced by UMass Extension, the program that manages the site on which our farm is located, have limited UMass’s ability to adequately maintain the Waltham Field Station facility and there has been talk of the site being closed.

In 1999, an informal group known as the Friends of Cornelia Warren Farm (FCWF) began meeting periodically to discuss options for the continued use of the Waltham Field Station. A subcommittee of the FCWF group crafted a Vision Statement that proposed a Agroecological Education Center that would generate sufficient revenue to maintain and grow the Field Station’s infrastructure and programming. Subcommittee members met with Dr. John Mullin, UMass Amherst Vice Provost, twice in 2003. As a result of those meetings, we were encouraged to explore how Field Station users might engage the University with a proposal to assume more responsibility at the site. Dr. Mullin made clear the advantages of a 501 C (3) nonprofit organization partnering with UMass. Over the course of the past five months, a transition has occurred whereby Community Farms Outreach, Inc. has taken the initiative to lead and consolidate the efforts formerly undertaken by FCWF.

In February of this year, the CFO Board of Directors voted to accept leadership of efforts to maintain and preserve the Waltham Field Station. CFO’s Farm Preservation Committee is leading this effort. This committee represents the interests of a large number of Field Station tenants and regular users who comprise the newly formed Friends of the Waltham Field Station group. CFO has held several recent public meetings of the Friends of the Waltham Field Station. Site tenants and other users of the Field Station continue to be concerned about closure of the site. This past year, we have witnessed reductions in staff time and closure of some of the heated greenhouse spaces. Consequently, some long-term tenants and valuable programs have been forced to leave the site. At this key juncture, we believe it is in our mutual interest to act now to prevent any further reductions in services at the Field Station.

Kitchen Composting Workshops

Community Farms Outreach will be offering a series of composting workshops this spring to help you return some of your kitchen waste to the soil—either your own or ours here at the farm!

Effective Microorganisms Workshop

James Harrison, a former farmer now living on the North Shore, will present a workshop in May on composting with effective microorganisms. As part of this workshop you will receive an air-tight collection bucket and lid, biodegradable liner bags, EM inoculant, and simple to follow instructions. The cost of this workshop is \$40/household for CFO members, \$50/household for non-members.

Worm Composting Workshop

Judy Fallows, a noted local nutritionist, educator, and CFO board member, will be leading a family-friendly workshop in May on composting food scraps at home using a simple worm bin. The cost of the two-hour workshop is \$40/household for CFO members, \$50/household for non-members, and includes a bin and worms for families to take home.

To sign up for one or both of the workshops, please contact us at walthamfields@communityfarms.org or (781) 899-2403. We'll schedule the workshops when we have a minimum number of people interested. Let us know what days of the week work best for you. See our website for more detailed descriptions.

Boston Cares, and They Show It: CFO Awarded Outstanding Community Partner of 2003

By Marla Rhodes, Administrative Development Mgr.

On February 9th, Boston Cares recognized us with an award for being an Outstanding Community Partner of 2003. We were one of only two organizations honored in this category (the other was the Greater Boston Food Bank).

Boston Cares organizes and leads team-oriented volunteer service opportunities in greater Boston. Community Farms Outreach has brought many Boston Cares groups to Waltham Fields Community Farm over the past years. They have become a significant source of volunteer effort on the farm—groups affiliated with Boston Cares made over twenty visits to the Farm in 2003.

Clearly the farm is a special place, and it was through the efforts of outgoing staff members Derek, John, Ellen, and Jonathan that visitors last year felt especially valued. I'm confident that we can continue to cultivate that special relationship this season.

Come to the CFO Spring Fling on Sunday, May 2nd

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! CFO's 5th annual Spring Fling and Silent Auction will be held on Sunday, May 2 at the UMass Field Station in Waltham. Festivities begin at 5:00 with a family-friendly farm tour (weather permitting) and the opening of the Silent Auction. Auction bidding will close at 8:00. **Silent Auction items can be previewed on our web site: www.communityfarms.org.**

This will be an evening filled with contra-dancing, great hors d'oeuvres, and good company. Dan Pearl (caller), David Langford (fiddle) and Peter Barnes (keyboard) will once again provide lively music and instruction for our contra dance. We've arranged for the first set of music and dancing to be especially child- and novice-friendly. Later, music and dancing will be geared toward adults.

Door prizes are a new twist to this year's Spring Fling, so bring your friends, bid high and often, and enjoy the dancing!

To buy tickets, complete the form on the last page of this newsletter and send it with a check to CFO. All tickets will be held at the door. Tickets purchased before May 1 will count toward the Feinstein Foundation's proportional matching donation program (see article on page 4).



Farmland Preservation (continued)

The CFO's Farm Preservation Committee, with the help of site tenants and users, has created a proposal that will be sent to Dr. Mullin. We propose that Community Farms Outreach, representing the Friends of the Waltham Field Station, be involved in all future planning processes for the site, as a vested community-based partner with UMass Extension. We propose immediate establishment of a standing joint UMass-CFO Waltham Field Station Task Force, with responsibility to develop and present a viable business and operations plan for the Waltham Field Station within one year.

If you would like to become involved in our work, please contact the Farm Preservation Committee at fpc@communityfarms.org. Our members are Martha Creedon (chair), Judy Fallows, Clayton Carter, Chris Yoder, and Dee Kricker. For more information, contact the committee or check the CFO web site (under "Programs").

Fundraising Challenge for Hunger Programs

The Alan Shawn Feinstein Foundation in Rhode Island is giving away \$1 million, to be split among non-profit agencies throughout the country helping to fight hunger. *For any donations we receive between March 1st and April 30th, the Feinstein Foundation will send us a check for our share of the \$1 million proportional to the total amount raised.* The more we raise during these two months, the higher the proportion of money we will receive as a match.

Please consider making a donation, renewing your membership, encouraging a friend or local business to become a member of CFO this spring ...and send us the check by April 30th! You can also donate on-line via our Web site. Check it out!

Better yet, get your school, place of worship, or employee to sponsor a fundraising project in the next month! Please contact Marla Wednesday-Friday at developmentmanager@communityfarms.org or at 781-899-2403 if you have an idea for a project.

Historic Waltham Days Open House

An Open House at the Historic Waltham Field Station will be held on Saturday, June 12, 10AM-2PM. It will include a number of agricultural and horticultural displays and activities, as well as a plant sale. Exhibits include composting, a farm tour of Waltham Fields Community Farm, the New England Rose Society's display gardens, and more. For more information see www.communityfarms.org.

Fruit Shares for Sale



Apples, peaches, pears, plums . . . fruit shares will cost \$60 for ten weeks of half-peck bags this season. The fruit will be delivered to the farm twice a week and will be available for pickup during the normal CSA pickup hours, Thursdays from 4:00-7:00 and Sundays from 3:30-6:30. Send a check for the full amount of the share to CFO, attention Farm Manager, by June 1 to ensure that you get a share of the sweet bounty!

Volunteer Opportunities

Orientations to Fieldwork

Sunday, April 18, 1:00-2:00 PM
 Sunday, April 25, 10:00-11:00 AM
 Thursday, April 29, 6:00-7:00 PM

Drop-in Volunteer Days

Please arrive at 8:30 AM or 1:00 PM
April and May:
 Tuesdays, Thursdays, & Sundays
From June on:
 Sunday through Thursday

Leave a message at 781-899-2403 if you're coming to volunteer but haven't yet been to a fieldwork orientation. (Don't expect a call back.)

Visitors

The farm is open to visitors Sunday through Thursday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM (lunch break at noon).

The farm is closed Fridays and Saturdays.

Community Farms Outreach 2004 Spring Fling and Silent Auction Sunday, May 2nd, 5:00-9:00 PM

\$_____ I would like to reserve _____ tickets @ \$20 per ticket (children 12 and under are free).

\$_____ I would like to make a contribution to Community Farms Outreach.

\$_____ Total enclosed

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

Please make checks out to Community Farms Outreach and send to 240 Beaver Street, Waltham, MA 02452 (or pay at the door on the day of the event). All tickets will be held at the door. CFO is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.