COMMUNITY FARMS OUTREACH
Doing business as
WALTHAM FIELDS COMMUNITY FARM

ANNUAL REPORT 2007
Written by CFO Board of Directors and Staff, January 2008

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.

Strengthening our Roots and our Reach
Guided by our new strategic plan, 2007 was a year of internal and external growth for Waltham Fields Community Farm. In order to build the strength necessary to achieve our goals, we expanded our staff capacity by making our Executive Director full time, adding an Assistant Farm Manager, and doubling the hours of the Children’s Learning Garden Coordinator. These steps allowed us to raise the money we needed for our growth, refine our Hunger Relief and Service Learning programs in anticipation of future growth, and more than double the number of children in our summer program.

With renewed commitment to the community of Waltham, we ventured off the farm this year like never before. We became active participants in the Waltham Interagency Council and the Healthy Waltham initiative, and worked with students from the Heller School at Brandeis to envision new collaborations with other Waltham non-profits. All of these conversations have led to exciting plans for 2008. Slightly farther off the farm, our dedication to supporting other local farms, and a desire to expand our CSA program, led us to form partnerships with Picadilly Farm in New Hampshire and Verrill Farm in Concord. These were very successful new ventures, and we are thrilled to increase our role in the local food movement.

All of these efforts were made possible by the board, volunteers, and donors who continue to step up their great support as we strengthen our roots and our reach. We are ever grateful.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
In December 2006, the board approved its first strategic plan. In 2007, it was extremely gratifying to see the first year of the plan come to life in the form of exciting new programming, staff and board development, successful fundraising, increased community involvement, strong financial control, and continued success of our core programming.

In 2007, the Board of Directors continued its transition from operational management toward governance, support, and long-range planning. Board members dedicated immeasurable time and talent, coming together as a whole each month, and working regularly on committees to ensure that the organization fulfilled its mission, developed appropriate infrastructure, and met its responsibilities. Some highlights from this year’s work include:
• Excellent board recruitment and board development activities including a day long orientation, trainings, a thorough update of board guidelines, and the development of an emergency action plan for the board.
• Complete revisions of personnel policies having direct financial and legal implications for the organization. We are especially pleased to have succeeded in crafting and approving our first ever parental leave policy.
• Major support for the spring fundraiser and the annual appeal.
• Major support for Waltham’s 2007 Earth Day Celebration.
• Implementation of a new savings policy and revision of financial policies and procedures.
• Development of our first programmatic budget, long-range capital plan, and reserve budgets.

The revised policies and procedures place more of the day-to-day responsibility for the management of the organization on our three full-time, year-round staff positions. In particular, our Executive Director is now fully integrated into all policies, taking on some responsibility for financial and contractual decisions that had previously been the exclusive responsibility of the board. Our staff continues to grow in size, experience and impact. Executive Director Meg Coward and Farm Manager Amanda Cather were joined this year by Assistant Farm Manager Andy Scherer. The board is especially pleased and fortunate to work on a regular basis with Meg Coward, who is always willing to share her insight, limitless enthusiasm and many talents.

FINANCIAL STATUS
We began 2007 in good financial standing, making our biggest capital purchase to date (a new tractor) at the end of 2006 without depleting our reserves. As we build capacity to achieve the goals outlined in our strategic plan, our annual revenues and expenses grow with us, and the budget for 2007 reflected this. Through increased staff capacity and significant support from board members, volunteers, and donors, we were able to achieve our goals for both earned and contributed incomes, and actually came in under budget.

Our total income for 2007 was $294,613. Earned income from the sales of shares in our Community Supported Agriculture program accounted for $170,600 ($151,000 from Regular Season shares, $9,100 from Fruit shares, and $10,500 from Winter shares). In addition, we generated income from our Children’s Learning Garden for the first time. Though the program is highly subsidized, we did generate $666. The remainder of our income was donated by individuals, foundations, businesses, and faith communities. Total operating expenses were $258,166. We also made annual payments to our reserve accounts: $5,000 in Capital Reserves, $7,585 in Emergency Reserves, and $7,970 in our Benefits Reserves. The remaining surplus of $15,891 was split amongst our reserve accounts according to the budget category that drew the surplus.

We received $56,250 in grants from foundations over the course of 2007. We received renewed operating support from the Charles and Sara Goldberg Trust, the Green Leaf Foundation, Foundation M, the Waltham Community Foundation, and the Vervane Foundation. Joining those supporters in 2007 were the Barron Family Fund, the Nathan and Lena Seiler Family Foundation, and an anonymous donor through the Boston Foundation. In total, we received $36,750. In 2007, we received record amounts of project-based foundation support. Draper Laboratories’ Corporate Foundation renewed their support of our Children’s Learning Garden, and the Clipper Ship Foundation provided renewed support for our Hunger Relief program. Joining them this year for the first time was the Ramsey McCluskey Family Foundation,
which provided critical support for the expansion of the Children’s Learning Garden. In addition, both Project Bread and Middlesex Savings Charitable Foundation provided new project support for our Hunger Relief program. In total, we received $14,500 in project support in 2007.

In 2007, CFO received $64,251 in contributions from individuals. SPROUT: A Benefit for Waltham Fields Community Farm, a sold-out fundraiser in early May at the Paine Estate, brought in $22,980. Membership dues accounted for $11,186. The Annual Appeal in the fall pulled in $25,503 in contributions. Other individual donations totaled $4,582. We were also supported by a number of local businesses, including IBM, Energy Credit Union, and Reynders McVeigh Capital Management. Many other local businesses contributed through in-kind donations of auction items for SPROUT (those donors are listed on our website). Faith communities offering financial contributions included Temple Shalom, Temple Beth Elohim, the Edina Community Lutheran Church, the First Parish Church in Waltham, and The Chapel.

CFO retained an accountant, John M. Monticone, CPA, of Medford, MA, who completed a financial review of 2006 in accordance with nonprofit accounting regulations. A copy of this review is available at the CFO office.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
Our farm operation was ably guided in 2007 by Farm Manager Amanda Cather. In her fourth season, Amanda brought seasoned experience and wisdom to her management of the farm and oversight of all of our programs. Three major changes to our agricultural operation in 2007 made significant impacts on our farm. First, our regular season Community Supported Agriculture program (CSA) grew from 250 to 300 shareholders, and our winter CSA doubled in size to 105 shareholders. Second, we established a new partnership with Picadilly Farm, a new family farm in Winchester, New Hampshire, which grew all of the potatoes and winter squash for our CSA. Third, we hired a new year-round Assistant Farm Manager, Andy Scherer, whose role includes oversight of our Hunger Relief and Service Learning programs. In the context of both experience and change, our farm had another very productive year despite some consistent weather and pest challenges.

Harvest data
In 2007, we grew vegetables, herbs, and flowers on nine and a half acres of land. Our total harvest was 106,829 pounds of produce, which represent a retail value of $176,268, or $18,554 per acre. Our 302 regular CSA shareholders, seven work sharers, five farm staff, and four interns received weekly shares from June through October. The retail value of one share’s produce in 2007 was $526, including $40 worth of winter squash and potatoes custom grown by Picadilly Farm and $10 worth of sweet corn purchased from Verrill Farm. Each winter shareholder received one distribution in November and one in December, for a total value of $129, again including $40 worth of potatoes and winter squash from Picadilly Farm. The total value of produce harvested for Hunger Relief was $32,178, which was slightly higher than the value of our 2006 donations.

Production issues and land care
The 2007 growing season was challenging on the farm because of an extended period of dry weather during the heart of the growing season and the incredible abundance of animal pests. These challenges were countered by the effectiveness of our new tillage tractor, purchased in very late 2006, our other equipment and irrigation systems, and our hardworking seasonal farm staff. Our operation proved its resiliency and flexibility in rebounding from the drought and pests in July, and taking advantage of
our strengths to go on to have a productive fall harvest and what some CSA shareholders called “the best harvest yet.”

Sustained fertility continues to be our greatest agricultural challenge, given our high production goals and our urban location. In 2007, we continued to purchase inputs from off the farm to support this fertility, including composted cow manure and bagged organic fertilizer, but several factors contributed to a shift towards increased on-farm fertility creation. First, our new loader tractor enabled us to turn our compost windrows more regularly, allowing us to speed up our composting process. Second, our relationship with the City of Waltham brought us significantly more leaves in the late fall of 2007, which we will use in a variety of ways in 2008, including as a raw material for compost manufacture and as a cost-free mulch for our crops. Third, we connected with a local school that can provide us with horse manure at no cost. Fourth, our second year of spring cover cropping with field peas yielded impressive results, and our cover crop management improved overall, due in part to improved weed control on the farm. All four of these factors should contribute to healthier soil and healthier crops in the long term.

Pest management, and particularly the management of woodchucks and squirrels at our Lyman Estate field, was our other significant challenge in 2007. A tremendous population of these pests ate a large portion of our cucumber, watermelon, and summer squash crops. They devoured transplants just after they were set in the field, ate young squash and cucumber fruit when the replanted crops began to bear, and chewed watermelons as they ripened. We estimate that these pests caused a loss of 75% of our cucumber and squash crops and 65% of our watermelon crop in 2007. We are exploring the use of a combination of crop choice and possibly buried fencing to deter woodchucks at the field in 2008.

**Farm partnerships**

While our land base did not expand significantly in 2007, the creation of two strategic partnerships with other farms allowed us to increase the size of our CSA to over 300 shares while maintaining our level of donations; increasing the productivity of our existing land in terms of dollars per acre grown; and allowing us some flexibility in our crop plan, which proved to be important in a challenging weather year. This season, we purchased sweet corn wholesale from Verrill Farm and distributed it to our shareholders over five weeks. Sweet corn is a crop that our CSA shareholders have often requested, and which we have chosen not to grow on our farm because of its high nutrient requirements and its low dollar value. The low cost and high customer satisfaction associated with this partnership made it a very successful one for us this season.

Our agreement with Picadilly Farm to custom grow winter squash and potatoes for our shareholders freed space in our crop plan to grow more economically viable crops while decreasing the amount of double-cropping necessary in our fields. This flexibility proved important when dry conditions forced us to change the location of some fall crops which we had planned to plant at the Lyman Estate field, which has no irrigation. The partnership was also beneficial for Picadilly Farm, a new family farm run by WFCF’s former Farm Manager, Jenny Wooster. Our partnership generated as much income for their farm as one of their farmers’ markets, while requiring only a fraction of the costs associated with that market. This partnership, therefore, created opportunity on both sides: building access to urban markets for a rural enterprise like Picadilly Farm, while allowing our farm and organization to reach more people while continuing to develop in an environmentally sustainable way.
Farm personnel
Our farm staff for the 2007 season consisted of a Farm Manager, an Assistant Farm Manager, two Assistant Growers, and four partial-season Agricultural Interns. They were assisted by an able crew of work sharers. A work sharer exchanges labor for a share of produce. Our work sharers helped the farm staff harvest each week throughout the season; managed distribution operations; ably maintained our perennial herb and flower garden, which has long been a challenge for our farm staff to manage; and published our CSA newsletter. Another committed volunteer managed our Third Sunday Gatherings this season – opportunities for shareholders and members to share a meal together and learn about a topic pertaining to local foods and farms.

It is difficult to overstate the positive impact of our new Assistant Farm Manager, Andy Scherer, on our farm operation. Andy has not only learned our agricultural systems and practices at Waltham Fields, but has made a substantial contribution to improving those systems after only one season on the job. He has a creative and experimental mind, well-grounded in agricultural reality, which will serve the farm operation well as he takes on even more leadership in future seasons.

HUNGER RELIEF
This was a year of research and evaluation for our Hunger Relief program, as we prepared to move forward with some of the exciting programmatic growth outlined in our Strategic Plan. Andy Scherer focused his efforts both on the logistics of the program, and on building more in-depth relationships with the staffs of our partner organizations. At the end of the season, Andy interviewed staff members from each of our partner agencies extensively. Andy’s conversations allowed us to collect data on how well our current program is serving the needs of our partner organizations, and how an expansion of this program could best serve them.

We also used these interviews as opportunities to discuss additional options for distributing our produce to members of our community who do not currently access it through our CSA or our existing hunger relief partnerships. These ‘food access’ outreach efforts will represent a step in a new and important direction for WFCF, as well as a return to some of our deepest roots. We continued to explore possibilities with other Waltham-based groups including the Heller School at Brandeis, the Power Program, the Waltham Family School, and the Waltham Public Schools. In addition, Hannah Ramer, an intern from Brandeis, worked with us all fall to research the state of hunger in Waltham, and the many agencies working to address hunger. As a result of all of these conversations and research, we will move forward in 2008 with creating a community-based mobile farmstand that will sell produce at reduced prices in strategically chosen Waltham locations. We will also continue a partnership with Healthy Waltham, and launch a new partnership with the Waltham Public Schools to bring local produce to elementary school students in the fall.

As we laid the groundwork for our growth, we continued to distribute produce on a weekly basis throughout the summer and fall to our six Hunger Relief partner organizations. We continued to grow a wide variety of vegetables for our four Waltham-based partners: Joseph Smith Community Health Center, Sandra’s Lodge, the Salvation Army, and the Red Cross Food Pantry. We also grew a large quantity of a few targeted ‘bulk’ donation crops for our two food broker partners: Food for Free, and the Greater Boston Food Bank. Despite the challenges of our growing season – in particular the failure of our cucumber crop, one of our primary donation vegetables – and the expansion of our CSA program, we were able to donate slightly more produce this season than in 2006, for a total of $32,178.
EDUCATION

Farmer Training Program

Our Assistant Grower positions continue to be the heart of our Farmer Training program at WFCF. Intermediate-level training for those who want to pursue a career in farming is not easy to come by, and our focus on this stage continues to make an impact in our immediate farming community and the larger community farm movement. In 2007, equipment operation and maintenance, weekly planning meetings, the opportunity to work with and lead volunteers and interns, ownership of a CSA distribution and harvest day, and regular feedback sessions and field walks were important components of Assistant Growers’ unique management training experience at WFCF. Our two Assistant Growers, Kate Darakjy and Martin Lemos, made great contributions to the farm this season.

College students from Cornell, Rice, Mt. Holyoke, and Tufts filled four summer farm internships in 2007. All four brought a range of experience, and were incorporated into all of our work and programs. The impacts that this experience had on our interns will undoubtedly continue to unfold. One intern returned to school and became the coordinator of an on-campus garden project; another is applying for post-college fellowships in food policy and hunger prevention. Intern Anna Wei reflected, “The farm has taught me to see beauty in [its] complex system. Yet…there is also simplicity in the idea of the feedback loop between the farmer and the farm – as we care for the land, it nourishes us in return.”

As part of their education, Interns and Assistant Growers attended the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA)’s summer conference, and participated in the Eastern Massachusetts Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (EMass CRAFT). Farm Manager Amanda Cather is on the steering committee of EMass CRAFT. As a result of strategic recruitment efforts, this was also the most diverse group of Assistant Growers and Interns we have had on the farm, and that range of backgrounds enhanced the learning experience for everyone.

Individual volunteers at WFCF also make a powerful connection to sustainable farming which sometimes prepares them for seismic shifts in their career and lifestyle. This season, one of our long-time volunteers decided to pursue a career in agriculture in his home state of Connecticut, beginning with an internship at a highly respected CSA in the northwest part of the state. His experience on our farm, and the one-on-one support he received from our farm staff, helped pave the way for his decision. We are very proud that WFCF can play this role in creating new farmers who become our colleagues.

Service Learning Program

Volunteers have been at the heart of Waltham Fields Community Farm since its inception. Our goals for all volunteers are that they learn something new about local foods and farms, and that they are able to contribute to the efforts to feed their neighbors in need. Under the guidance of Andy Scherer, this program thrived in 2007. The coordination of volunteer efforts had for many years been managed by a volunteer offsite. In order to enrich the experience that volunteers have on the farm, and more seamlessly link the volunteer schedule and the farm operation, the new Assistant Farm Manager position includes volunteer coordination as a primary responsibility. This season proved the wisdom of this step forward. By having a full time staff person who knew the needs and timing of the farm, we were able to increase our efficiency many fold and use volunteers, both groups and individuals alike, to the farm’s advantage.

All told, volunteers contributed 3,576 hours to the farm in 2007. Starting in March and going until the end of October, we had volunteers every week helping the
farm staff with every task imaginable. Over this eight month period, a total of 1,070 volunteers came to the farm to help grow, care for, and distribute our food to thousands of people in the greater Boston area. Roughly 35% of our volunteer hours contributed this season came from individuals during our “drop-in” hours. Nearly 200 dedicated individual volunteers came to the farm over the course of the season to help the farm staff on a regular basis. We were very lucky to have so many willing and helpful community members to help us over the course of the season.

The remainder of our volunteer hours were contributed by groups (please see our website for a full list). Although most groups were local we had volunteers literally from across the country and around the world! We had groups from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Minnesota and even some folks from Ghana, Israel, and Ukraine! In total, 56 groups came to the farm this year. We had participants from thirteen schools and universities. Ten faith communities helped the farm this season. Several corporations sent employees to volunteer this year. We also had several groups organized by Boston Cares, Single Volunteers of Boston, and Young Alumni Volunteer Association. New additions to our volunteer roster were members from several special needs group homes where participants practiced life and job skills. We are very grateful to everyone who volunteered with us this season.

Children’s Learning Garden
The Children’s Learning Garden Program for the summer of 2007 was indeed a success. In addition to continuing our long-standing relationship with the Cambridge Adventure Day Camp, Waltham Fields Community Farm established new relationships with the Girl Scouts from Camp Cedar Hill and the Waltham Parks and Recreation Department. In order to make this possible, we doubled the hours of our Children’s Learning Garden Coordinator position, and secured additional funding from the Ramsey McCluskey Family Foundation. We were thrilled to have Mark Walter, an experienced and enthusiastic teacher, join us again as our CLG Coordinator.

Our goals for kids who come to the farm are that they enjoy themselves in a peaceful place, discover many new things, and think about where their food comes from and what they eat. We hope they will relax in the summer sun while learning how to tend a garden they can call their own. From feedback we received from all three programs, we know that we reached this goal with every group of kids who came to the farm this summer. All activities - planting, watering, weeding, harvesting, composting, pollinating, playing, journaling - gave the kids an authentic, well rounded, and important experience.

The garden itself was also bountiful this summer. We grew three different kinds of popcorn and three different kinds of gourds along with some pumpkins. The flowers planted in the garden thrived and became part of the pick-your-own flowers on the farm. Our beans were taken by the leaf hopper, but the purple hyacinth bean weathered this infestation and is now climbing up the bean teepee along with the gourds. We also had the installation of a sculpture made by a local artist to help color our garden. As the programs took off, with so many kids pitching in, we were actually able to expand the Children’s Learning Garden to include a pumpkin patch on the farm.

Over the course of the summer, we worked with two hundred and twenty children – a massive increase over the 75 children we served during previous summers. Our new partnerships were very productive, and we plan to continue working with both agencies in 2008. In fact, our work with the Waltham Parks and Recreation Department was so successful that we plan to expand the Children’s Learning Garden to include spring and fall programs with that agency in 2008.
Community Farms Outreach
Doing business as
Waltham Fields Community Farm
240 Beaver St. Waltham, MA  02452
(781) 899-2403    www.communityfarms.org

2007 Board of Directors
President:        Martha Creedon (Waltham)
Vice President:  Judy Fallows (Watertown)
Secretary:       Kathy Diamond (Watertown)
Treasurer:       Greg Burns (Somerville)

Laura Bethard (Allston)
Ellen Gray Wasson (Waltham)
Matt Grygorcewicz (Somerville)
Heather Harris (Waltham)
Mairead McSweeney-Shutt (Waltham)
Rebecca Nesson (Cambridge)
Ana Rivera (Arlington)
Samuel Robinson (Waltham)
Elanor Starmer (Cambridge)
Stephanie Thurrott (Dedham)
Chris Yoder (Dover)

2007 Staff
Amanda Cather, Farm Manager
Jane Anna Chapman, Bookkeeper
Meg Coward, Executive Director
Kate Darakjy, Assistant Grower
Vinny Errico, Farm Intern
Sara Franklin, Farm Intern
Martin Lemos, Assistant Grower
Josh Levin, Farm Intern
Andy Scherer, Assistant Farm Manager
Mark Walter, Children’s Learning Garden Coordinator
Anna Wei, Farm Intern