Notes from the Field:
Come out to your farm!

It’s been amazing to watch the transformation. We got used to working long days in isolated fields, so far from one another that we had to shout to be heard. There were days when we had to create topics of conversation to keep ourselves going as we weeded and planted through the lengthening days of April and May. And suddenly the beginning of June came, and the fields were full of people of all ages—cutting chives, checking on the progress of the strawberries, picking potato beetles, having picnics and yoga sessions, and enjoying the beauty of this rare little piece of farmland in the suburbs.

These days, it’s become quite common for me to see someone wandering through the fields as I get ready to leave the farm in the evening. They usually move with a reflective stroll, a saunter rather than a stride, as they pause to look at the crops or notice the flight of a blue heron or red-tailed hawk. I usually pull over for a moment to make sure that they’re not up to no good—we have had a few garlic plants go missing this spring—or to see if there’s something they need from me. Most people return my wave, but just as quickly turn away and move on, deep in their own experience of the site. And as soon as I see that peaceful gait, that up-and-down bobbing like a sandpiper’s tail as they bend to look at the crops or something else that’s caught their eye, I put my car in gear and drive on to give the moment the privacy of a moment with this land.

And that brings me to the point of this week’s notes: this is your farm. Welcome back. Come walk in the fields (but stay in the pathways!), or stroll around the perimeter of the property. If you’d like, come on a day when you can work with us in the fields, to plant or cultivate or harvest. Help us rescue the strawberry plants from the nutsedge or the beans from the crabgrass.

Or bring a picnic to the CSA distribution or a third Sunday picnic. Stay a little longer, if you can, and watch the changing light on the fields as the sun sets. Be grateful for the long expanses of grass where kids can run and throw balls and Frisbees. Come out and ask the weary farmers what we’re doing—we’ll be grateful for the opportunity to straighten up from our weeding crouch and talk to you. Bring friends and family. See if you can identify each crop in the fields as you walk down the dusty roadways and admire Linda’s beautiful flower garden. Take a moment at the sunflower house or the raspberry canes in the children’s garden. Spend some time helping Marla in the office. Scare a few woodchucks or geese out of the tomato field. Walk your dog along the hedgerows. Watch the sunset or the sunrise. Help with a donation to a food pantry or homeless shelter.

This farm is here because of you. It exists because you continue to support both the larger mission and the concrete day-to-day goings-on. You are this farm, each and every one of you. Come out to your farm!

The Farm Crew

Volunteer Drop-in Times
Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays
8:30 a.m. or 1:00 p.m.

There’s no need to call ahead, just come at the drop-in times and meet at the distribution shelter or look for farm staff in the fields.

(No volunteers Mondays, Fridays, or Saturdays)
**Pick Up A Tool and Make It New: Mitzvahs and Other Thoughtful Acts**

*by Marla Rhodes*

When you come to our fundraisers, volunteer in the farm fields, sponsor an event that benefits CFO, or make a donation, you are not only participating in charity. You have partnered with us to create a more just world in our little corner—fresh, healthy food to neighbors in need, farmland preserved and respectfully tended, knowledge passed on about how food is grown, and the opportunity for anyone to dig in and get their hands dirty for the best of reasons.

We have been heartened and inspired by how people donate their time and money to our efforts. We especially appreciate when members get their workplace, social club, or place of worship involved. Some members work for businesses that will match their donation to CFO, or will encourage employee volunteerism by sponsoring their hours with a donation. We encourage you to call or e-mail us if you are involved with an organization that might do this, and we will make the contact.

For example, a group of undergraduates from Babson College came out for a soggy day of cleaning up the farm earlier this season. They were all members of a student-run photography business, and their CEO, an undergrad as well, had organized the group work day. It was a drizzly and cold Sunday morning in early April, and I’m sure more than a few were wondering how being in a photo group landed them in the middle of a muddy field picking up debris and clearing last year’s overgrown weeds. Yet a few weeks later, we learned that this student business had elected us to be a recipient of their business earnings for the semester. What a thoughtful act!

Thoughtful acts are what the Jewish tradition of “mitzvahs” are all about. “Mitzvah” translates as both a commandment and a good deed. Many Jewish groups and synagogues participate in an annual Mitzvah Day and our farm has become a popular destination for this May event—we begin fielding calls about it as early as January. This year families and individuals from several temples in nearby communities participated. According to Jewish faith, performing the mitzvah allows one to engage in *tikkun olam*, the repairing or healing of the world.

A poem by Marge Piercy titled “The Art of Blessing the Day” includes these words:

> What we want to change we curse and then pick up a tool. Bless whatever you can with eyes and hands and tongue. If you can’t bless it, get ready to make it new.

Our hope at CFO is that we can offer many opportunities to “pick up a tool and make it new.” If you have ideas to add to our toolbox, we’d love to hear about them.

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**2005 CFO Board of Directors**

The CFO Board of Directors has begun the process of identifying the types of skills, experience and knowledge our 2005 Board needs to successfully addresses the challenges ahead of us. We have identified the need for board members with knowledge about fund raising, finances, farmland preservation, and nonprofit legal issues. Board directors commit to attending monthly board meetings and participating in committee work as needed between board meetings.

*If you, or someone you know, has skills in these areas, time to commit to our work, and interest in a board position, please contact our CFO Treasurer, Deron Estes, at Board@communityfarms.org.*

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**To reach us:**

- **Amanda Cather**: farmmanager@communityfarms.org
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- **Volunteer Coordinators**: volunteer@communityfarms.org
- **Newsletter Submissions**: newsletter@communityfarms.org
- **CFO Board of Directors**: board@communityfarms.org

Community Farms Outreach is a nonprofit organization dedicated to farmland preservation, hunger relief, and education.