MEET JERICHO –
EDUCATION & OUTREACH COORDINATOR
AND “FELTER” EXTRAORDINAIRE

Since April 2009 Jericho Bicknell has been WFCF’s Education and Outreach Coordinator in charge of developing and running the children’s and family programs and coordinating the many volunteer groups who help out on the farm from April through October. Jericho is also an expert “felter” and shares her enthusiasm for the craft by teaching felting here at WFCF and elsewhere.

WFCF volunteer Mary Saudade interviewed Jericho about her interest in both agriculture and felting.

Mary: Tell us about how your family was instrumental in your decision to work in agriculture and in developing your craft of felting.
Jericho: Ever since I can remember, my sister and I served as the weeding crew for my parents’ vegetable gardens. I also recall spending many pleasant hours eating vegetables straight from the garden with my friends. As far as felting, my aunt Robin began spinning after mom taught her how to knit, and that’s when they all caught the fiber arts bug. Robin and Jennifer got into felting in a serious way and taught the rest of us. Among us, we have almost the entire spectrum of fiber arts covered. The only piece missing is production and I intend to have sheep someday to complete the picture!

Mary: Why do you think agricultural education is so important and what’s new at WFCF this upcoming year?
Jericho: Through my involvement in agriculture from production to distribution as well as in education I have realized that, although I am fortunate to have been brought up in an environment where I knew where my food originated, many people haven’t. Education is a key piece in providing the whole farm-to-table picture. We have several new and expanded education programs this year. We have more spring and fall after-school programs and we have added additional summer sessions. In an effort to reach a broader age range, we will begin a new pre-school program for 4–5 year-olds as well as a new series of adult/teen workshops. We are also reaching out to the urban core more and will be hosting and participating in several community events throughout the year.

Mary: How does felting fit into the WFCF picture?
Jericho: Workshops focusing on farm skills or using farm products (such as wool) help further our goal of promoting and educating about agriculture in general. I am currently trying out a technique called “Nuno” – felting which combines wool with silk fabric – and hope to teach a class here as soon as I master it. Last year I taught a felting class here at the farm and donated a pair of felted slippers for the silent auction at Sprout, our annual fundraiser and spring celebration. This year I ran a felted bag workshop on Feb 20th, and will again contribute something to the silent auction – maybe a bag, maybe slippers, maybe both!

Come to Sprout 2010 for your chance to go home with handmade items by WFCF staff, such as one of Jericho’s felt creations, or pottery by Farm Manager Andy Scherer and Executive Director Claire Kozower.

SPROUT 2010 HOST HEADS UP THE GREEN ENTERPRISE TRAINING INSTITUTE

The Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation in Waltham and the Workforce Development One Stop Center in Newton recently teamed up to create The Green Enterprise Training Institute, offering training programs focused on two tracks of coursework, Green Jobs Energy Efficiency Training and Green Enterprise Small Business/Entrepreneurs Programs. We are delighted to learn of this initiative and thrilled to be holding our Sprout event at the Museum again this year. The exhibit halls will be open throughout the evening. Check their website (www.crmi.org) for more information about their new job training program as well as what will be on view at the time of Sprout on May 8th.

Save The Date for Sprout 2010:
Saturday, May 8th 5:30–8:30pm
Charles River Museum of Industry & Innovation

Ticket invitations will be sent out soon!
FROM THE BOARD
In 2010 the Board of Directors of Waltham Fields Community Farm will be
drafting the second long-range strategic plan for the organization. With the
mission and vision of the organization as our guide, the commitment, talent,
and ideas of our staff as our inspiration, and the strength of our members,
shareholders and community as our base, we look forward to an exciting and
fruitful process.

As we near the end of our first strategic plan and begin the second
full year of Claire Kozower’s tenure as Executive Director, we can report
that the goals of the first strategic plan have been met and WFCF is
healthier and more mature than ever before. I’d like to highlight just a
few of the accomplishments from the first strategic plan that are
especially salient right now.

Jericho Bicknell, our previously part-time Education and Outreach
Coordinator, will be joining us full-time this year. As the only working
farm left in Waltham and one of few within Rte. 128, we are particularly
well-situated to educate the community about farming and give people a
chance to learn about and participate in growing food. The educational
and volunteer programming Jericho will be offering this year surpasses our
previous offerings in scope and in quality. Be sure to stop by the Learning
Garden when you come to the farm to see it in action.

We joyfully welcome Amanda Cather and Mark Walter’s new baby.
One important aspect of our mission is to provide and model high quality,
sustainable jobs for farmers. We are proud to be able to offer Amanda
and our other full-time staff a benefits package that includes meaningful
paid parental leave.

FROM THE FARM OFFICE
The quote at the start of the newsletter was recently said to me by my pottery
teacher Nan Hamilton of Mudville Pottery, over her excitement as the 2010
growing season nears. In her simple line, “ordering seeds is like ordering hope,”
she captures the beauty of what so much of the winter is about for farmers and
gardeners in this region – true for the scale of production at Waltham Fields
Community Farm as well as for small urban gardens such as Nan’s and my own.

Many years ago, Nan transformed her Somerville yard into a serious force of local
food production, focusing on intensive vegetable gardens and experimentation
with the kinds of fruit trees that pull at my heart strings – apricots, Asian pears,
and sour cherries! About a decade ago, she dug up a thornless blackberry for me,
to which planting I’ve since added two more varieties and am now a huge fan.
Thornless blackberries are a must-have for edible urban gardens, providing year-
round interest as well as decent yields of delicious fruit! For some of Nan’s great
recipes and tips for using the bounty of the seasons, checkout the workshop
section of her website, www.nanhamilton.com – try the Curried Pumpkin
Mushroom Soup, Roasted Eggplant Cascabel, and Berry Bread Pudding.

Backyard gardens and the larger movement to break ground at residences,
schools, community centers and city-owned lots is just one of the shining stars of
our society today, with deep economic, environmental and security implications.
Others include the explosion of the CSA model to areas including meat and
dairy, fish, apples, honey, wine and more; agricultural focus on season extension
and the rise of winter farmers markets; the growth of the slow food effort and
popularity of events like Lauren Nelson’s Homegrown Supperclub (recently held
using stored produce from WFCF’s last winter harvest); and the engagement of
people in farm-to-table activities and critical food systems thinking. As we each
participate in this effort in varying ways, we all need to keep our eyes on the most
important prizes: protection of farmland and our local food supply, transfer of
regional agricultural knowledge, equitable food access distribution channels,
and the adoption of new techniques informed by experience, research and sustainable
management principles. As Waltham Fields Community Farm moves forward after
its first 15 years in operation, we recommit ourselves to these initiatives and are
excited to be working with so many others to benefit the public good.

Here’s to our first 15 years and many more!
Claire Kozower, Executive Director

RECENT NEWS

Amanda Cather, WFCF’s farmer for the last 6 years, is currently on maternity leave and returns in March to run an organic gardening workshop and help us develop new tools and resources throughout the year.

At left: Amanda & Mark with Jonah (age 6) and their new baby Sadie Hazel Cather-Walter (born 1/14)!
THANKS TO OUR 2009 DONORS

The work that we do at Waltham Fields Community Farm is made possible through both financial and in-kind donations from hundreds of individuals, local businesses and community organizations, and foundations. We are very grateful to everyone who contributed to our work in 2009!

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OUTREACH & EDUCATION PLANS NOW DETAILED IN OUR PROGRAM BROCHURE

The 2010 season at Waltham Fields Community Farm promises to be more exciting than ever with new events and expanded programming for adults and children! In order to better spread the word about these great events and make sure all of our members, shareholders, farm friends, etc. can take advantage of our offerings we have put together a program booklet. This booklet includes public events, workshops, benefit dinners, Children’s Learning Garden Programs, Family Programs, group farm visits, as well as information about our drop-in volunteer program. We are thrilled to be able to provide this resource, giving you the chance to see all that we are set to do this year so you can plan ahead to participate in areas of interest. We will continue to update the on-line version of this brochure as necessary, which you can download from our website (www.communityfarms.org) at any time.
WFCF PURCHASES GREENHOUSE FROM MCLEAN HOSPITAL

As McLean Hospital made the sad decision at the end of 2009 to shut down their Community Greenhouse Project on the UMass property, we were offered the option to buy their greenhouse (situated directly next to the one we already own). While this transfer was bittersweet in having to say goodbye to Steve Tracy’s impressive horticultural therapy program that brightened so many patients’ lives, we are grateful to have been offered the first chance to purchase the structure and know that it will be a big asset to our agricultural operation.

WFCF WELCOMES AMY COOK INTO OUR FARMER TRAINING PROGRAM

We are delighted to announce that Amy Cook will be joining our farm staff as a 2010 Assistant Grower alongside Dan Roberts, who is returning for a third year. With an offer on the table to take over some land in Michigan in the near future, Amy is looking forward to participating in our farmer training program to round out her already significant experiences along the farmer career path. She has been involved with organic farming and gardening for over 8 years, including doing a field crew work share with us in 2008 and volunteering numerous times in 2009. For the last 3 years, Amy has worked as a Farm Conservation Planner with the Accelerated Conservation Planning Project, closely collaborating with national and local government agencies to provide farmers with technical assistance around improved natural resource management. She comes to us with a Master of Science degree in Agronomy and a Certificate in Farm Business Planning. We are as eager to learn from Amy as she is from us!

FARM FRESH IDEAS

As the planning phase winds down for vegetable growers in the Northeast, they take their refined production plans and spring into action armed with new strategies, tools and seeds. With a second greenhouse and grant application submitted to the Natural Resource Conservation Service to cost-share a high tunnel at the farm, WFCF’s farmers are welcoming the 2010 season as a chance to delve deeper into season extension, and experiment with techniques to mitigate against wind-swept diseases such as last year’s Late Blight explosion. High tunnels are simplified hoop house structures that can stretch the length of our 200-foot beds. In addition to allowing for earlier and later crop production, greenhouse and high tunnel cultivation are options for trying out protected growing as a management strategy instead of placing crops on a regular spray schedule for disease control.

Choosing disease resistant and well-performing varieties is another important strategy as well, but evaluation is key. Field observations in the tomato crop yielded conclusions that the Legend hybrid variety did not appear to be the shining star of Late Blight disease resistance it had been purported to be, but the Gold Medal open-pollinated heirloom variety was without a doubt the most resilient and fruitful of the infested lot. For the season to come, Farm Manager Andy is excited about building on their fertility successes of last year’s melon crop, especially pleased with the taste and productivity of watermelon varieties such as the red-fleshed Sugar Baby and yellow-fleshed Sunshine. And Assistant Farm Manager Erinn continues her quest to outwit the dreaded pepper maggot and climate constraints to yield a strong fall crop of sweet red peppers; varieties such as Healthy, Pimento, and Round of Hungary are in the 2010 seed order for this purpose.

Also new on the farm this year, we’re gearing up to give the general public more access to our produce. Taking advantage of our new greenhouse, we’re expanding our seedlings sales for the GROW community gardens on the property, and offering two sales for the general public. We add these initiatives without having to sacrifice our ambitious goal of distributing $40,000 worth of fresh vegetables through our food access efforts or having to cut down the size of our community supported agriculture program.

See the Mark Your Calendars section on the back cover for information about our upcoming Seedling Sales on Saturday, April 17th and Saturday, May 8th.

FARM WISH LIST

- More land to farm (lease or owning options)
- 55 gallon barrels with lids for our greenhouse heat sink project
- Picnic tables and benches
- Metal or wood garden arches for our perennial garden
WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Sprout Volunteers and Auction Donations Needed

There are many opportunities to help out with our annual spring fundraiser, Sprout. Join our organizing committee or simply volunteer to help out on the day of the event. We’re also eager to receive underwriting donations and donations of auction gift items.

Volunteer Drop-In Hours Begin Tuesday, March 3rd

Help our farmers get the season off to a great start!
- March Hours: Tues–Fri, 9:00 a.m.
- April–Oct: Tues–Sat, 9:00 a.m.

Stay for an hour or all the way up until noon, but please show up at 9am so anyone present that day can get started as a team. Folks of all ages are welcome! Check our website for orientation events for drop-in volunteers.

Food Access/Hunger Relief

We’re looking for volunteers to help with hunger relief efforts such as delivering produce to food access partners and getting involved with our Outreach Market.

Contact Andy at farmmanager@communityfarms.org.

Job Opportunities

Check our website for our latest postings for field positions and education support.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Amanda’s Organic Gardening Workshop,
2 Tuesdays, March 9 & 16, 6–7:30pm

Join seasoned farmer, Amanda Cather, for advice and planning help for your own gardening adventure this year. Limited to 15 people. $25 for members, $30 for non-members. Pre-registration required.

Farm Programs at the Waltham Public Library,
2 Tuesdays, March 9 & 16, 3:30–4:30pm

Join Paula Jordan in exploring The Risky Life of a Seed (3/9) and Soil Habitat (3/16). Programs are intended for kids ages 6–11 and their caregivers. Free and open to all.

Spring Festival and Seedling Sale, Sat. April 17, 1–5pm

Kick-start the growing season with our seedling sale, information on home composting, soil testing, foraging for wild edibles, and activities for children. April seedlings will include varieties of broccoli, cabbage, kale, lettuce, spinach, and more.

Farm Seedling Sale, Sat. May 8, 9am–12pm

Stop by the farm just in time for Mother’s Day for organically grown seedlings of all your favorite summer vegetables, including basil, eggplant, greens, peppers, tomatoes and more. Spend the early afternoon getting them in your garden, then head on over to Sprout…

Sprout, Saturday, May 8, 5:30–8:30pm

Waltham Fields Community Farm’s annual spring fundraiser at the Charles River Museum of Industry & Innovation. Live Music, Silent Auction, Delicious Food and Open Bar! Event is for adults, ages 21 and over. Tickets go on sale at the beginning of April.

Mild November weather brought forth bountiful winter harvests.