



# BIODYNAMIC FARMLAND CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

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## NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2018

### APPRENTICE PROGRAM

#### Women In Agriculture

For the 23rd season in a row, your produce was grown by a top-notch group of trainees; They were trading their time and labor, for our information on how to grow produce using sustainable techniques.

When we first started doing this in 1995, you couldn't go to a University to study organic farming. Now you can. You couldn't find very many farms where you would experience small-scale growing in an economically sustainable enterprise. Now you can. But, still, young people continue to find their way to our farm – despite having other options –

because we have a proven track record (see below) for not only using these systems but for teaching others how to use them as well. We don't just have them read books or train people how to drive tractors.

see "Apprentice," p.8



Rebecca, Sunny, and Ellen get the job done



Pumpkin Harvest Party!!

### WHAT'S HAPPENING AT BROOKFIELD FARM

#### Season 31 in the books. What a year!

Winter is here (at least for today)! With the snow falling outside, and the fire crackling inside, time to take a good look back at the year that was before turning our attention to the year that will be.

The growing season is basically a blur – a very long sprint that begins with the greenhouse getting fired up in mid-March and ends with the cow yard being cleaned in early December before the herd returns from pasture to eat hay all winter long. We clean up as much as we can in December – implements to the fieldhouse in the west field, tomato

stakes to the landing near the main greenhouse – before the cold & snowy weather shut us down for good. This year, that happened on December 8. Then we set to the process of taking stock; Zoe worked

see "What's Happening," p.6



Zoe and daily harvest crew bring in the cukes!



## GET A HAMMER AND A NAIL

### Continuing to Build Our Capacity Into The Future

When we budget our finances before the beginning of every season, we make a distinction between the money we will spend on operating and capital expenses. We consider operating expenses to be costs for resources that we will use for one year only. Good examples of these are labor, fuel, seeds, and water. Capital expenses are costs for resources that we will use for multiple years; Tools or improvements that will enable us to produce vegetables (our core product) for years to come. We don't have the cash to purchase every tool or build every building that we would love to have to make growing vegetables easier. We have to set priorities for limited resources. And we have to borrow money. Since 2004, nearly all of these purchases were made using funds that the Trust has set aside for capital improvement. This Capital Account (started from a generous donation from a shareholder, invested wisely by the board, and then set into a very stable fund) is our in-house, investment engine that we use to plan for the future of this project. Every year the farm borrows money from this fund and pays it back to the Trust at a rate of 3% over 5 years. In a typical year with magic of compound interest, we can spend \$40,000 on capital improvements each year, while the capital account remains steady at around \$30,000. Over the past 20 years we have invested more than \$1,000,000 in our barn, apprentice housing, vegetable production equipment and land maintenance equipment. These investments have made our farm more resilient as it faces an always-uncertain future. This year we added a new twist: we funded our management transition (having more money dedicated to management salaries as a percentage of the budget) by foregoing one years' payment for this years' capital improvement. This enabled us to have 3 experienced managers on the payroll, spend \$39,335 on improvements, and end the season with \$31,733 in the capital account.

#### BIODYNAMIC FARMLAND CONSERVATION TRUST (BFCT), INC.

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Dan Kaplan	General Manager
Karen Romanowski	General Manager
Zoe Abram	Farm Manager
Abbe Vredenburg	Administrator

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There goes the new drop spreader for the maiden voyage

This season we continued to invest in the future – here's how:

#### Buildings & Grounds

One focus this year in terms of improvements: repair & improve our fieldhouse structures which had begun to show some wear and tear. We repaired our main greenhouse frame and re-designed the rollup sides on that structure and the big fieldhouse. We also re-skinned the



Our main greenhouse gets a facelift

greenhouse and finished construction of the new hay house at Snyder Farm. We prioritized painting the trim, doors, and fascia of 20 Hulst Rd (where our apprentices live). We continued re-imagining our perennial garden, bringing our herb production to the upper field, removing and rebuilding our community composting area, and cover-cropping the East Side of the garden to make room for new ideas in 2018. We also rebuilt and repaired many roads around the Hulst Rd fields, Snyder Farm, and Small One's Farm.

#### Equipment

We made significant upgrades to important areas

#### WISH LIST

bicycle racks





The new perfecta harrow makes a great planting bed

of vegetable & animal production this season. We improved our bed prep by investing in a one-bed fertilizer spreader and a new “Perfecta” field harrow which makes a nice, smooth planting bed. We also replaced our worn out irrigation pump, John Deere hydraulic motor, and weeder van. In addition, we replaced all of our purpose stick-shift trucks, with smaller, automatic, Ford Rangers which should help us improve safety and overall efficiency.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Roger Fega (Jan 23, 2018) -**

Longtime supporter of Brookfield Farm Shareholder and Board Member.

Consistent positive presence on the farm for over 25 years. Great playlists (*the Jas Farmer*) – a free mind and a connected heart: here’s a typical email (received at the farm, out of the blue on Oct 31) - “is it tomorrow or just the end of



thyme?”

**Anne Levinger (June 21, 2017) & George Levinger (July 3, 2017) -**

Longtime supporters and neighbors of Brookfield Farm. friends. Kind & generous souls, college friends of our founders David and Claire Fortier, committed raspberry pickers, and shareholders for over 25 years.



Peter Littell leads our core staff to explore our story

## FARMING FOR THE FUTURE

### Update on Management Transition

2017 was a big year in terms of how the farm was managed. In all honesty, in the early spring we weren’t exactly sure how it would work out, but we were excited to find out. At the outset, the goal was to deepen Zoe’s involvement in managing more areas of the farm while Dan and Karen began to pull back from day-to-day management and remain in mentorship and training roles while also helping out on many of the farm tasks. To help formalize this transition, Zoe was named Farm Manager and Dan and Karen were called General Managers.

At the end of the season, Dan, Karen and Zoe met to reflect on what had worked and what had not. In transitions, there is always the push pull of taking on and letting go. Key though is open and honest dialogue, which is something that Dan, Karen and Zoe have always shared. During this winter, the three talked about what they all wanted for themselves, but most importantly, how they all wanted Brookfield Farm to prosper.

For 2018, as Farm Manager, Zoe will continue to manage many aspects of the day-to-day activities, but somewhat less than last season. Dan and Karen will become more involved with the apprentices, and will be more engaged in the daily tasks than they were last year. The three of them remain fully committed to making sure that the farm operates at the high level our community has come to enjoy and expect.

As we were in 2017, we are excited for the coming season. For 2018 we will look forward to the successful cultivation of our crops, our management, our apprentices, our farm team and our community.

For the board

Peter Littell, President





## SPREAD THE WORD

### Straight From the Field

It has always been an explicit goal of the Trust to use our experiences operating Brookfield Farm to provide as many opportunities for learning about sustainability, food production, energy use, nutrition, and any related topics.

This year we were happy to have our past apprentice, Leila Tunnel, return as our “Farm Educator,” and continue to build connections between our farm and various school groups. She once again implemented the 21st Century Grant with Amherst Middle School by hosting after-school farm visits in the spring and fall. In addition, she deepened her work as the Middle School “garden educator,” teaching classes, and bringing additional classes to the farm for lessons centered on sustainable food production and healthy eating. Leila also coordinated a growing number of farm visits from area elementary schools as Crocker Farm, Wildwood, Fort River, and the Common School, all brought students for field trips in the fall.

In addition, Kathleen Maiolatesi again brought her Sustainable Ag and Politics of Food classes from Holyoke Community College to the farm for visits in the fall and Renee Ciulla brought her UMASS Sustainable Ag class came out for a one-hour talk about fertility management, and then helped us with the fall harvest. We again gave farm tours to the Farm School apprentice program, a Pakistani exchange summer program at UMASS, and the summer interns from Book and Plow Farm. And we hosted groups for community service days, including the Umass Mens Ultimate Frisbee team who gave us a hand in early November with our celeriac and cabbage harvest when an early freeze threatened these crops. In addition, Zoe worked with a group from the Hartsbrook High School who harvested carrots and

Fort River School connects the carrots to the cows to the compost

heard the biographies of our young farmers.

Farmers and service providers sought out our consultation about annual plans & budgets, winter shares, land lease agreements, use of conservation land in Amherst, guidance for CSAs, excel spreadsheets for record keeping, organizational structures, crop planning product development, and labor management. We were consulted by researchers about farmland habitat for shrubland birds, composting, livestock, and antibiotic use in agriculture.

We gave workshops and presentations throughout the year. Dan taught a 1-credit class at UMASS (Stockbridge School) on “Financial Management for Vegetable Farms” in the spring, and then another on “Crop Planning for Diversified Vegetable Farms” in the fall. He also presented a “Organic Pest Management for the Vegetable Garden” at the Hadley Garden Center and “Vegetables and Cover Crops” at the Master Gardener Program at Holyoke Community College in January.

We continued to use whatever resources we could afford to support our local community. We donated greenhouse space to the Hartsbrook School. We allowed our main barn to be used by the Pioneer Valley Grain CSA for a distribution in January, our back porch and upper & lower fields for Jade Alicandro-Mace’s herbalism classes from April - November, our firepit to a local men’s group to hold weekly meetings, and the ARHS Hurricanes Ultimate Frisbee teams for an after-tournament dinner in May. We donated vegetables to silent auctions for various community groups (Family Outreach of Amherst, Amherst Survival Center, Common School, and Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture) and to the NOFA Conference and we received kitchen scraps weekly from Not Bread Alone to add to our compost making operation.



Holyoke Community College finds out how just how fun it is to dig carrots!



## GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

### Charitable Giving Continues Fund Outreach of All Kinds

Once again, we made modest efforts towards asking for support for the outreach work we do around the farm. And once again, those modest efforts reaped greater rewards than we hoped. Share fees pay for the food production at the farm. For everything else we do – having school groups on the farm, giving workshops at farmer conferences, speaking about our experiences to master gardener classes – all of these “outreach” efforts are supported by our Annual Fund and other non-solicited donations which we receive as gifts.

### ANNUAL FUND & VALLEY GIVES

- ❖ *total gifts (113) +7%*
- ❖ *total dollars (\$11,858) +20%*

In addition, in May we took part, for the 3rd time, in an online philanthropy event –Valley Gives – to enlarge our reach, by focusing our attention on our “Donor Supported Fund (DSF).” We consider this project another form of “outreach” as it gives access to our CSA shares to people who might have a difficult time affording the cost of our share. We were once-again able to secure matching gifts of \$2500 to support this effort, and with this leverage, we were able to raise a total of \$5526 through 46 individual gifts. This season, we provided 4 families with Donor Supported Shares. The DSF stands at \$8933 at

years end, and the gifts this year continued the work of establishing this as an ongoing project.

Our Annual Fund, which consisted of a single appeal in November, yielded \$6331, which is 6% higher than our 5-year average. Generosity continued to be strong with total donations of \$11,858, which is +20% higher than above our 5-year average (\$9920). This

year, we continued to increase our pool of recipients for that money as kindergartners, aspiring farmers, and financially-struggling families all benefitted from your donations. To all of you who made donations, please be assured as to where they went and that they were gratefully received by all.

### SPECIAL THANKS TO

- ❖ *Jennifer Jones-Hughes for donating Equal Exchange coffee to keep the crew moving!!*
- ❖ *Linnea Williamson for donating toys to the sandbox*
- ❖ *Rosie Pearson for donating Reiki treatments to the crew!!*

### SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FANTASTIC STAFF

*Our Administrator Abbe Vredenburg (23 years and counting!) & Ken Dziuba our mechanic for the past 5 seasons.*



### SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

**Kate Bolmarcich, Carol Wood, Amalia Butler, James Cairn, Orion Cable, Martin Legg, and M'dee**

**& OUR FALL HARVEST CREW: Will Thornton & Nolan Benoit**

### FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

#### HIP Builds Accessibility! *(written by Abbe and Zoe)*

The call came in late in the afternoon of our first delivery to Ware and Boston. The voice on the answering machine wanted some advice on what to do with all the food in her box. When I called back to offer some suggestions to our new shareholder she told me that she had cooked the greens, added tomatoes and put everything over pasta. Just like a pro, like a seasoned Brookfield Farm Shareholder. This past season we had some new shareholders at Brookfield who were also new to a CSA share. We have the State's new Healthy Incentive Program, HIP to thank for this.

HIP began in April 2017. It is collaboration between three State departments – DTA (Department of Transitional Assistance), DAR (Department of Agricultural Resources), and DPH (Department of Public Health). HIP received a grant from the USDA to fund this program. Households receiving SNAP benefits are given an incentive – money added back on their EBT card after they purchase local fruits and vegetables. This is how Brookfield Farm is participating. Fruits and vegetables can only be purchased at a farmers market, farm stand, mobile market or a CSA. I

talked to new shareholders who said that they have wanted to join a CSA for a while but did not feel they could afford it, so had not even pursued joining one. The State has made it very affordable. This program was planned to be funded for three years.

Our community thrives on the interconnection between local farms (and their food) and ALL of its people. That's why we have accepted SNAP for 20 years. With HIP (in 2017), we saw a 184% increase in members who pay for shares with SNAP. This helps to level the playing field when it comes to good and healthy food, both in terms of participants' ability to afford it, and in local producers' ability to supply it. You can see this success at area CSAs, farmers markets, and farm stands. HIP allows families to use their SNAP dollars to invest in our local communities. Investing locally is our most resilient social and cultural infrastructure.



Zoo Disc comes up big in the cabbage field!



“What’s Happening,” cont.

on production and distribution records. On membership numbers. On what events happened on the farm. Karen worked on what we bought and sold in the Farm Shop from our neighbor farmers. Abbe worked on entering everything into QuickBooks that we bought and sold during 2017. I looked at the financial reports. And did an inventory of our livestock. And our outreach efforts. And on and on. Eventually it was all written down, and we began to try and make some sense of it all.

Now, with the dust settled, it’s possible to draw some conclusions; Overall, we had a very “easy” growing season – where we never had to irrigate, but we also never had extended flooding conditions. With a great crew and management team, we harvested and distributed over 270,000 lbs of fresh produce. We continued to refine our efforts at messaging, and saw an increase in sales overall - even posting a significant waiting list for the first time in 5 years. We developed our new Senior Share, which seemed to successfully address the wonderful problem of having so many 20+ year shareholders who want to adjust (but not lose) their relationship to our farm. We hit all of our financial targets (income and expenses) and were able to continue to increase the outreach efforts that now spin all around our farm throughout the season. In addition we worked to rejuvenate our management structure to make room for the next generation here at the farm.

None of this could ever be dreamed about without the continued contribution and commitment of shareholders, donors, friends, and relatives who support us financially, emotionally, and spiritually. This is brought into special relief when, while we hear stories of other CSAs struggling for shareholders, we are in the midst of continued strong support from long-time shareholders as well as a whole group of fresh faces. We are more convinced than ever that the most important work we do on this farm is stewarding our relationship with our supporting community of eaters, cooks, nature-lovers, parents, seekers, children, activists, sisters, and soil microbes. For this we thank you, as always, and hope that through the following pages you can get a glimpse of some of what your contributions have helped to grow and nurture in the past year.

- Farmer Dan (for Karen, Abbe, and Zoe)

## OUR FARM YEAR

### Find Some Wood and Knock On It. Please.

After a big drought year in 2016, as farmers we felt we really needed a break. That is a dangerous feeling to have when beginning a growing



Hello? Yes.....the squash harvest is in!!

## Vegetable Production 2017

	per share	unit	2017 (LBS)	2016
BEET	9.0	LBS.	4670	11250
BEET W/TOPS	3.6	BU.	1857	2100
BITTERMELON	0.0	LBS.	0	0
BROCCOLI	9.0	LBS.	4690	3535
BRUSSELS' SP.	5.2	PC.	2690	1755
BRUSSELS' SP. TOPS	1.3	LBS	655	765
CABBAGE	25.4	LBS	16683	12265
CABBAGE, CHI.	3.0	HDS.	4710	3975
CANTELOUPES	1.9	PC.	5000	11375
CARROT	28.1	LBS.	14607	8965
CARROT W/TOP	3.2	BU.	1682	1950
CAULIFLOWER	4.7	LBS.	2420	875
CELERIAC	5.8	LBS.	3200	2925
CELERY	2.6	PC.	1358	1410
CHARD	3.8	LBS.	1995	2095
COLLARDS	1.3	LBS.	700	1190
CORN	3.2	DZ.	11760	4935
CORN, POP	0.0	LBS.	700	700
CUCUMBER	9.8	LBS.	5080	9815
EGGPLANT	5.3	LBS.	2770	6670
ESCAROLE	1.2	HDS.	620	700
FENNEL	1.3	PC.	682	685
GARLIC	1.3	LBS.	1440	1141
GARLIC SCAPES	1.0	LBS.	500	575
GREENS	6.5	LBS.	3405	5385
KALE	12.4	LBS.	6460	7605
KOHLRABI	1.9	LBS.	1000	1120
LEEK	11.9	PC.	14840	6820
LETTUCE	18.7	HDS.	9745	8365
LETTUCE	1.4	LBS.	745	720
OKRA	0.1	LBS.	31	108
ONION	15.9	LBS.	8290	6095
PARSNIP	0.0	LBS.	3100	0
PEPPERS, HOT	7.9	LBS.	1610	1010
PEPPERS, SW.	11.4	LBS.	5915	3655
POTATO	17.2	LBS.	8925	8865
POTATO, SW.	17.5	LBS.	9100	11625
RADICCHIO	1.0	LBS.	500	650
RADISH	4.2	BU.	2199	940
RADISH, DAIKON	3.5	LBS.	1800	1940
RADISH, STORAGE	3.1	LBS.	1635	3240
RUTABAGA	5.1	LBS.	2675	2600
SCALLION	5.3	BU.	2777	3055
SPINACH	4.7	LBS.	2465	285
SQUASH, S.	12.7	LBS.	6625	11210
SQUASH, W.	53.4	LBS.	27750	32430
TOMATOES	27.6	LBS.	14350	16025
TURNIP, HAKUREI	1.7	BU.	890	875
TURNIP	4.5	LBS.	2365	2500
WATERMELONS	13.2	LBS.	14350	8250

season -the chance of having our hopes dashed are so great..... But, hope we did, and luck we had! We set up one irrigation line once. We didn't use it. And then never again. It rained hard at the end of June. But then it stopped. It got real cold at the end of October. But then it got warmer. Of course, there's no rhyme or reason to any of this – we are takers (not makers), when it comes to weather. We just react. And when the weather is consistently good, we just say thank you, and go





about preparing for the worst to happen again.

### ***Vegetable Crop Production:***

Our overall production was down marginally (-.4%) from last year, and just above (+1.2%) our 10-year rolling average. We grew a very-respectable 277,437 lbs. of vegetables (which sounds even better when we say “more than a quarter of a million pounds of veggies!”).

	2017	2016	% dif last year	% dif 10 yr avg
<b>Total Production</b>				
total lbs (including PYO)	277437	278646	-0.4%	1.2%
total lbs. (no PYO)	244166	237246	2.9%	2.0%
winter share production	46550	41585	11.9%	12.9%
acreage planted	29.8	29.5	1.0%	-1.5%
crops planted	65	65	0.0%	7.1%
<b>Distribution Comparison</b>				
total lbs per share	506.2	465.8	9%	10.0%
cost per lb. share	\$ 1.15	\$ 1.25	-8%	-2%
avg. lbs. per share each week	20.2	19.4	4%	5.8%

Variable spring weather allowed us to plant almost all of our crops on time and without incident. Despite a lack of excess warmth, the moderate temps allowed our crops to come in one week early and produce a wide-array of crop “winners” throughout the season.

It wasn’t much of a growing season for swimming, as the temps never soared over 90F for very long before a rain storm or cold front would come through. This led to predictable slow growth and more disease pressure on some warm-loving crops (squash, tomatoes, eggplant, etc). We saw winter squash yields held back somewhat, and we had an

outbreak of late blight on our pick-your-own cherry and plum tomatoes. However the weather didn’t stay wet and cold for long either, so while some yields might have been dampened, they were never completely swamped or lost. In addition, with our increased attention to late blight as an ongoing concern, our remedial methods helped to ensure that our main season crop of tomatoes had one of the highest yields we have ever achieved. The warmer-than-average fall weather also helped us bring in an above-average fall crop – with 46550 lbs (12.9% higher than 10-year average) of produce rolling into the root cellar and greenhouse from September to December.

While there was a general trend of high production (strawberries, onions, carrots, sweet potatoes, etc), some crops were especially notable, with record crops of Brussels’ sprouts, sweet & hot peppers, and leeks all setting a new high bar. There were some crop losses, notably our white potatoes which are still somewhat of a mystery, as they germinated well, grew well, were successfully protected from pests, and seemed to have plenty of moisture. Still, their production (8925 lbs) was only 100 lbs higher than last-years, drought induced all-time low. We are currently doing some research to explain what went wrong (and very thankful that we have so many sweet potatoes to help soften the blow).

### ***CSA Distribution:***

With above-average production we also were able to translate that into increased distribution amounts for all aspects of our CSA. With our crops ripening early, we were able to add a week (25 this year) to the distribution schedule. This year, the on-farm share saw a 9% increase in total share volume (+10% above 10-yr average), the Bos-

see “Our Farm Year,” p.11



Fall Brassicas in their full glory at Small One’s Farm



Rebecca pulls the potato digger!



We have a process for orienting trainees to our systems, having them master those systems, and then peeling back the layers in the fall, to see some of the reasons for the systems and how they are planned and improved upon.

This year we welcomed Ellen Drews, who quickly became acquainted with her surroundings and then jumped in with both feet to all aspects of working on our farm. Ellen grew up in Chicago, studied ecology and managed the student farm at Carleton College, managed a community garden project in Lowell, MA, and worked as an environmental educator at Slide Ranch in Muir Beach, CA, before coming here in April. She wanted to increase her skills in growing, harvesting and marketing as well as managing a farm business. Her tractor time was spent making stale seed beds, pulling the transplanter, and direct seeding all of our vegetable crops using the Landini 5860. She also specialized in direct seeding all of our finicky crops – carrots, beets, parsnips, and greens with our Allis Chalmers G tractor. When the summer rolled on, Ellen brought her super-positive, hard-working attitude to the harvest management rotation. We are so happy that Ellen decided to return in 2018 and take on increased responsibilities in managing our livestock, field planting, and daily harvest.

Rebecca Leung returned for her second season on the farm. She spread all of our compost, prepared our planting beds, and pulled the potato digger, spray rig (and many other tools) with our JD2355 and Hesston 80-60. She also took on increased responsibility by managing our greenhouse propagation and Boston-area CSA distribution. She is currently looking at a few management-level jobs at neighboring farms in the Pioneer Valley – we are happy she will be close by!!

Rebecca Winters (aka “Sunny”) also returned for her second season on the farm. She did all of our field prep, pulling the plow and harrow

“Apprentice,” con’t.

behind the John Deere 2355. She also learned about vegetable cultivating by operating our basket weeder on the Allis Chalmers G cultivating our tender young crops of greens, onions, and roots. Sunny also took on increased responsibility by managing our daily harvest; coordinating small battalions of harvesters to bring in thousands of pounds of food from the field to the cooler each week. When the season ended, Sunny began working at the Hartsbrook School as the assistant director of the Agricultural Arts program.

While it is certainly difficult to train and retrain new people on the farm every season, we do it because we are committed to training the next generation. We are mindful of the personal sacrifices our apprentices make to do this work, without much hope of big financial reward and plenty of uncertainty of how to make these skills practically useful in their own futures. We are proud to be part of their work; hopefully one more positive step on the path towards a new way of relating to our earth around food production.

*And, as usual we continued to hear from our past apprentices..... here's a few highlights:*

**John Dickens ('16)** took pre-requisites and applied to grad school in the field of climate science. He lived at the farm and worked when he could! We consulted with **Will Calkins ('15)** about an opportunity to manage *King Tide Farm*, on an island off the Maine Coast. **Leila Tunnel ('14-'15)** continued and enlarged her role in her 2nd year as Farm Educator of Brookfield Farm, and *Ag Educator in Amherst Public Schools*. **Jake Mazar ('13-'14)** and **Will Van Heuvelen ('13-'14)** had a very successful and expanded 3rd year at *Wheelhouse Farm Truck*, Amherst, MA. **Caro Roszell ('13)** completed her 3rd season at her *New Wendell Farm*, Wendell, MA. **Peter McLean ('10-'12)** left Book and Plow and started *True North*, a new facilitation business based in Amherst. **Tobin Porter-Brown ('10-'11)** left Book and Plow Farm and began working as a farm manager at *Pete's Greens* in Craftsbury, VT. **Aaron Shier ('12)** began working this year as a Program Specialist in agricultural sus-



Sunny rolls the harrow through before the broccoli is planted



Ellen gets set to sow the first spinach seeds!





tainability for the *Environmental Defense Fund* in Washington, DC. We saw **Erin Roche** ('11), who completed her 4th year as a Program Manager at *UMaine, Orono Extension service* at the NEVBG conference. **Kerry Manire** ('07-'11) completed her 6th season at *Provider Farm*, Salem, CT. **Brigitte Derel** ('09) completed her 2nd year at *Full Heart Garden*, Chatham, MI. **Lisa McKeag** ('08-'10) completed her 5th year at *UMASS extension*, Amherst, MA and we went to her wedding in August!! **Adan Martinez** ('07 - '09)

is working as a *litigator* advocating for employee rights, among other things. **Danya Teitelbaum** ('08) completed her 9th season at *Queens Greens*, Hadley MA. **Chris Babis** ('04-'07) continues his work in *Water Resource Management* at UNM and slaying the guitar/vocal scene in Albuquerque NM. **Andy Szymanowicz** ('07) completed his first year as the Master Farmer at *La Granja* in Ibiza, Spain.

**Marc Cesario** ('02, '07) completed his 7th season at *Meeting Place Pastures*, Cornwall, VT. **Amy Smith** ('06) completed her 7th season at *Heart Beet Organic*, PEI, Canada. **Amy Cloud** ('01, '06) completed her 10th season at *Three Rivers Community Farm* in Elmhurst IL. **Jeff Tober** ('03-'06) finished his 11th season at *Fernbrook Farm CSA*, Bor-



Notice any familiar faces from the New England Veg Conference in December?

dentown, NJ, and is now celebrating the Eagles finally winning the Super Bowl. **Scotti Goss** ('03), got married this year and lives nearby in Montague. **Casey Steinberg** ('02-'04) completed his 13th season at *Old Friends Farm*, Amherst MA. **Paul Bucciaglia** ('99) completed his 15th season at *Fort Hill Farm*, New Milford CT and he helped us with lots of consulting this season. We ran into **Rebecca Downing** ('98-'99) at a benefit in Holyoke and she reports having a successful

*psychotherapy practice* in Northampton for over a decade. **Su Wasseluk** ('00-'03) completed her 7th year as *Nurse Practitioner* in Hyannis, MA and we are psyched to see her whenever she picks up her winter share! **Jenny Hausman** ('00) completed her 10th season at *Piccadilly Farm*, Winchester NH. **Don Zasada** ('96-'97) completed his 12th season at *Caretaker Farm*, Williamstown, MA, and continues to work

with us as a collaborator in the CRAFT program. All of these folks continue to have a mighty effect on our food system and we love hearing from them anytime they find the time. If you are not on this list, but you were our apprentice, we want to hear from you! Let us know what you are up to!!



Rebecca manages the Boston share packing



Zoe helps Rebecca get the sprayer ready





## PARTY TIME

### All Work and No Play....

Food production is the basis of our activities on the farm. It's the reason we are doing what we are doing. But we have always hoped that through the production of food, the farm could also become a site for community building – both food and non-food related.

This year Pete Mclean ('10-'12) and Erin Ferrentino (weeder crew '10-'14) were our Events Coordinator. They used their talents to continue many of our traditions, as well as create some new ones. We started the year with a farm open-house and meat sale (the Meat & Greet!) where we showed some new folks around the farm, experimented with a popcorn shucker, did a few work projects, and sold some early beef. On June 10th we introduced the "Bike To Brookfield" event to celebrate the opening of the Farm Shop for the season. In July we had a great Garlic Harvest where we brought about half of our crop from the field to the barn and on August 12, we had

a corn roast in the farmyard. In September, as usual we had a high-energy Pumpkin Harvest Party. And we ended up our events season with a high-spirited Harvest Dinner potluck celebration in November where Zoe gave her first-ever season-review slide show and we gave some special recognition to our shareholder Anne Burton, this year's recipient of the Top Soil Award!



Beekeeper Dan Wright explains how the hives work!

In addition there were many events that other people brought to our farm. Rosie Pearson once again celebrated the New Year with a Beating of the Bounds around the perimeter of our patch of earth (although she did it in February after convalescing from a broken bone from an ice-induced new-years fall). John Root gave a workshop on Wild Edibles around the farm in June. Our local farm partners (Fungi Ally, Local Maple Granola, Dan Wright), provided samples and information about their products and production at our Farm Shop. And Wheelhouse Farm Food Truck hosted a pig roast in our lower field where they served a delicious meal for 75 lucky people on a beautiful fall evening in October.



Wheelhouse Farm Truck makes a great pig roast in the lower field!



**“Our Farm Year,” cont.**

ton share was 25% larger (+13% higher than 10-yr average), and the Winter Share was 7% larger (+10% above 10-yr average). Our price per pound fell to \$1.15/lb. (-8%) for the On-Farm Share, \$1.46/lb. (-20%) for Boston shares, and .71c/lb (-2%) for the Winter Share. We know that there are many (non-monetary) values for purchasing a CSA share. But, we also think that it's good for us to know what the monetary value of the share is from year to year, so that we can compare that to the general marketplace. It also helps us to quantify how shareholders really do help by taking on the risks and rewards of our farm production, a core piece of the CSA model. Whatever way you slice it, the numbers show that when we share the risks, we also share the rewards on a great year!

***Livestock and Compost Production:***

Our herd of beef cattle spent last winter in the barnyard at Snyder Farm. They ate hay (that was grown on our neighbors fields on Southeast St) and left us over 50 tons of manure in the barnyard. They went onto the pastures at the end of April, and spent the growing season grazing the fields at Snyder Farm.

2 yearlings and 4 calves were raised in Hubbs' pasture (next to our West Field) beginning in May. With plenty of moisture our grazing was relatively easy this year, and Karen was able to take advantage of

Special Thanks to Roberta Lojko for making “crew lunch” on Wednesdays in July



Karen uncovers the eggplants (and needs a shower!)

great fall weather and renovate nearly all of our fence lines and pastures at Snyder Farm. The yearlings went to the butcher in late January and the calves were returned to the herd. By February, the herd stood at 11 moms and 4 yearlings all seemingly contented, eating hay again in the barn yard at Snyder Farm on Southeast St.

Before we brought the herd back into the barnyard, we spent a day cleaning out last years' manure/hay deposit. We shoveled out the barn, and then used the bucket to scrape the barnyard and make a great compost pile – about 60 tons. This will be ready to spread in the spring. In April and May, we spread about 200 tons of compost onto our vegetable fields. Using materials gathered between December and June (cow manure from Cooks' Farm (Hadley MA) leaves from the town of Amherst, food waste from Not Bread Alone, veggie scraps from our harvest shed, etc) we were able to make new piles in the North Field near the blueberries. All of this compost represents one of the tangible benefits of our cattle herd to our overall farm health. Not only are there thousands of pounds of nitrogen for our plants, but there are also soil building micronutrients and micro-life that help ensure our soil is able to grow nutrient rich plants year after year after year.

see “Our Farm Year,” p.12



Our herd of cows enjoying the early April grass





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**“Our Farm Year,”** con’t.

The farm was also host to 3 different apiaries as we continue to welcome these pollinators whenever possible. At Snyder Farm, the West Field, and the filter strip at the back of the compost piles, we have active hives that bring insect activity to all corners of our farm. We thank these hard-working people for bringing their wonderful bees to play their important role in our farm organism.

**CSA Share Sales:**

While we hear many reports of other CSAs having difficulties with share sales, our fortunes have continued to trend upwards. After seeing declines in our waiting list for the past five years, we not only sold out our shares earlier (May 20) but had nearly 100 people on a waiting list by the end of the season. Overall our retention rate was up 82.3% (+2.6% - right at our 10-year average), which to us represents shareholder satisfaction better than any other metric. We continued to hone our marketing message that have do have shares available, and we also introduced our new Senior Share. Considering that so many of our members have been with us for more than 20 years, and have different life-style needs as their lives change, we wanted our share offerings to reflect these changes. This share proved to be a

successful way to keep long-term members at the farm in a way that worked for their changing situations. We are incredibly thankful for our multi-generational character and feel that this new development represents a strengthening of our farm community.

**Farm Finances:**

Overall, this year our finances went just as planned – we used our capital reserves to partially fund a management transfer while keeping our sales strong and expenses controlled. We had an overall negative *Net Profit*: (\$1563.91), it was actually better than planned (\$2408). Our overall income (1.9%) and expenses (2.1 %) were up slightly over their budgeted projections. We were able to fully fund our transitional management structure and give pay raises to all employees. In addition, we were able to fully pay back all loan commitments this year, purchase much needed infrastructure improvements, and leave our capital account with a higher ending balance (\$31,733, +5.5%) than expected. Our positive financial position has helped our balance sheet continue to show signs of overall health; our long-term liabilities were down to \$289,326 (-4.4%) and our total equity (\$513,040) has risen 22.4% in 6 years.



Special Thanks to our Weeder/Harvest Crew who kept our crops clean and picked!