



BIODYNAMIC FARMLAND CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

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NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2020

APPRENTICE PROGRAM

A Big Crew For A Big Year

We celebrated our 25th consecutive Apprentice Program season by welcoming many new faces to the farm. These folks followed in the footsteps of 51 other participants over the past quarter century, who similarly came to our farm to learn something – about themselves, about how to coax food from the earth, about how to relate to each other. As usual it was a lively group who dedicated many hours to our project in the hopes of coming away with something of value for themselves.

This year we welcomed three new faces to the farm. Lia Raz grew up in NYC went to Amherst College, studied French, then travelled the world pursuing her interests in women’s health, permaculture, composting, and on and on. She was a first-year student at the NY Botanical Garden School of Professional Horticulture and for her 5-month internship she wanted to work for a farm where she could learn about holistic farming and farm management so that she could

see “Apprentice,” p.8



Garlic harvesting with a Smith College summer program

WHAT’S HAPPENING AT BROOKFIELD FARM

Regrouping and Moving Forward

Winter continues to redefine itself, sometimes harking back to its snowy past and other times to a more spring-like disorientation. But even if it’s not too sure of itself, I am sure that this is still a good time to take a look back at the year that was. As the days start to lengthen, I am sure that we will be sowing seeds and growing plants again, before too long. But before we get all of the plans laid perfectly well, it’s helpful for us to remember, before it’s gone forever in the haze of every-year-bleeding-into-every-other-year, just what happened here this past season. We went into the growing season hoping to regroup after a very-challenging, rain-soaked 2018. And when the spring sprung wet, we were all in a very re-active mode, wondering if the sun would ever shine again. Just when we were ready to cry, not only did the rains stop, but the weather then cooperated like never before (or maybe again).

see “What’s Happening,” p.6



Will, Lia, Ben, and Marlee muggin’ after another big harvest



Pumpkins & Fall Roots For Days....

GET A HAMMER AND A NAIL

Continuing to Build Capacity Into The Future

As usual, we keep our eye on the long term, while keeping our nose to the grindstone. We try to remember Steven Covey's admonition to "sharpen the saw" and not just continue using it until it is dull and worn. This season was no different as we continued to invest in the future while we took care of the task list in the present.

Buildings & Grounds:

We continue to maintain and improve our "apprentice house" at 20 Hulst Rd. This year our neighbor, Chris Zobel, orchestrated the renovation of the basement kitchen. Since we had to re-wire the basement for the solar PV installation in 2018, he thought it was the perfect time to update the surfaces and cabinets. (And while he was at it, he also repainted a bunch of walls around the

WISH LIST
1-ton Pickup Truck
(runs but can't pass inspection)

basement). We continued to maintain and upgrade our fieldhouses by rebuilding the hip walls of the big fieldhouse before re-skinning that structure. In addition we upgraded the rollup sides on the small fieldhouse and installed a new irrigation system. We also purchased a new, moveable coldframe which will replace the old worn-out one and also allow for the possibility for winter crop protection. And in the middle of the summer, our brother-in-love Farmer Dave Wellborn came up for his annual visit, looking to help out. Not only did he repair a broken wagon and our truck sides, but he repaired our rotted-out harvest shed wood frame structure with a very solid fix.

Equipment:

We made several upgrades to important areas of vegetable & animal production this season. We purchased a replacement for our "chore



Ellen and Ben construct our new moveable cold frame

truck" to get feed, water, and supplies out to the pigs & cows. We also made significant repairs to our dump truck so that we can continue to use it to improve our roads as well as to plow snow (what snow?), to keep the parking lot safe for winter shareholders.

Land:

For the first time we add this category to this part of the newsletter. That's because for the first time in 30 years, the Trust purchased a new piece of farmland. While much of this purchase was made through a loan from the Farm Credit Agency, we needed to cover the closing costs and difference between the loan and the purchase price (\$17,000). We used our capital budget this year to finance this important commitment to our farming future.

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Lia and Will construct new hip walls on the big fieldhouse before re-skinning

LAND IN OUR CARE

Trust Purchases First Piece Of Land in 30 Years!

On Thursday, May 9 our board president, Peter Littell put his signature to the closing documents of what we are all hoping will be a sweet new chapter in the unfolding book of what we call Brookfield Farm. This chapter started in July 2018, when our neighbor, Ed Land, dropped by to see if we were interested in purchasing a beautiful 16-acre piece of land very close to the farm. In fact, this is the closest active agricultural land to our farm and it was already preserved by the State's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program. We were interested as a way of securing our farm's future and of continuing to fulfill our mission to encourage and develop sustainable agriculture. After months of paperwork, application for state waivers, bank loan meetings, and lots of work by many board members, we were finally able to seal the deal. We then turned to the exciting work of "bringing this land into our farm."

We began by building a healthy soil – using cover crops to build nutrients and develop soil humus. We waited for the early spring moisture to drain enough to begin working the land. On a sunny evening in mid-May, I taught our farm guardian-angel, Chris Zobel how to use the disc harrow, and he got the entire 16 acres into great shape. Then on May 30th, Lia pulled the grain drill, dropping oats, field peas, clover, timothy into the warm soil. Then it rained. Then the oats & pea seeds (the "nurse crop") germinated. Then they grew in the hot sun and moderate rains of June and July, until we had a big mass of plant life above the soil. All the while, the slower/lower growing grass and clover, germinated in the under-story, "nursed" the oats & peas. In July, once that nurse-crop reached about waist-high, Ben hooked up the bush-hog to the John Deere and around and around he went, knocking the "nurse crop" down and allowing the clover &

grass to be able to grow into the full, nitrogen-fixing sod we hope they will become. With any luck, all of these plants are growing roots below the soil - that's where the main action is - growing tons and tons of organic matter which will, in turn become plant food once these crops are turned in and we start growing vegetables in 2021.

Sometime in September, our friend Gordy Cook noticed some horse-nettle growing in the northwest third of the field and decided to till that section under. This plant is not suitable for hay (also called "Deadly Nightshade") and easier to eradicate if not left to grow unchecked. We tilled this section in during October and re-seeded to winter rye, which germinated and will continue growing in the spring, before (hopefully) eventually being cut for straw at the end of May, which we will then use to mulch our strawberries in November. Then we will turn the soil again and sow grass and clover there again (and hopefully the horse nettle will be gone).



Our new land on the day we closed the sale

With all of this we are slowly learning about this piece of earth - the soil type, the wet spots, the population of weeds, the baseline fertility - and starting to incorporate it into our future farm mind. This process is best done without rushing, and we feel grateful for the opportunity to take our time, and figure out where we are before figuring out what we will be doing. After 6 months we remain very hopeful for the potential of this land to provide our farm community healthy food for a long time to come.

We are thrilled that we have the opportunity to continue to expand the reach of the most meaningful work we do here at Brookfield Farm – building our farm for the future. This is the first piece of land our Trust has bought since 1993. We aim to nourish an enduring and healthy connection between humans and nature through agriculture on every acre that we steward (whether we own it or lease it). We look forward to sharing this ongoing project with you.



Lia sows cover crops in late May



Ben bush hogs the nurse crop in July



SPREAD THE WORD

Straight From the Field

This year we continued to use the resources of the Trust and our experiences operating Brookfield Farm to provide opportunities for learning about sustainability, food production, energy use, nutrition, and related topics.

Once again, our past apprentice, Leila Tunnell, expanded and enhanced her role as not only our “Farm Educator” but as the “Garden Educator” for the Amherst Public School System. She continued to implement the 21st Century Grant with Amherst Middle School by hosting after-school farm visits in the spring and fall. In addition, she expanded her work to 33 classrooms year-round in the Amherst public elementary schools (every K, 1st – 3rd grade classroom in the district). Under her guidance, 660 Amherst elementary school children visited Brookfield for a field trip in 2019.

In addition, Renee Ciulla brought her UMASS Sustainable Ag class for a one-hour talk about fertility management, and then helped us with the fall carrot harvest in November. This year we again welcomed the UMASS Sustainable Soil and Crop Management class of Massoud Hashemi and The Farm School apprentice program to give them a tour of our growing systems. We also provided a field work experience for the Smith College Field Studies for Sustainable Futures Summer Program to harvest half of our garlic crop. And the Umass Baseball Team, gave us a hand with our potato harvest in November as part of a community service requirement.

Farmers and service providers sought out our consultation about crop planning, connecting farms to local schools, farm labor management, and farm succession. We were consulted by researchers about rapidly deployable temporary farm structures and farm labor. And we were the host site for two UMASS Biology research projects: on sunflowers improving bee health and bird predation on veg crop pests.

We gave workshops and presentations throughout the year. Dan appeared on WBUR for a conversation on the future of farming in April, and then presented as part of a panel “Successful CSA Models” at the Northeast Organic Farming Conference in August. We were featured in an article in the Daily Hampshire Gazette “Valley Bounty Column” in October. And in November, Dan and Karen presented “25 years of building sustainable agriculture – one apprentice at a time” at the national Biodynamic Conference in Saratoga NY.

We also 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, Kestrel Trust, Pelham PTO, and Hartsbrook Farm2Table) and we received kitchen scraps weekly from Not Bread Alone to add to our compost making operation.

GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

Charitable Giving Increases

Once again, we made modest efforts towards asking for support for the outreach work we do on the farm. And once again, those modest efforts reaped greater rewards than we expected. Share fees pay for the food production at the farm. For everything else we do – having school groups on the farm, giving farm tours to local college classes, providing consulting to aspiring farmers – all of these “outreach” efforts are supported by our Annual Fund and other non-solicited donations which we receive as gifts.

ANNUAL FUND

- ❖ total dollars (\$7331) +13%
- ❖ total gifts (62) +10%

SPECIAL THANKS

- ❖ To Anne & Tony Burton for an incredibly generous donation for the “privilege” of celebrating their 50th anniversary in the farm yard: From their invitation: *“They would like you to SHARE their GRATITUDE and WONDER, that they found each other and have been able to learn from each other for so long a time. And, you at Brookfield Farm are the living example of what nourishes us and our world. You guys have fed us for one half of our married life. CELEBRATE with a Toast and Cake.*

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Linda & Ron Help Keep The Farm Pollinated!! by Ben Fishbein

There is a famous quote usually attributed to Albert Einstein that says “If the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe then mankind would only have four years left to live”. It’s no secret that bees are important - some research shows that nearly one third of the food we consume on a daily basis relies on pollination by bees. For us farmers, it’s easy to believe such a statistic as we see these buzzing bees flying around the fields alongside us almost every day in the warm months - and lucky for us, we happen to know where many of the bees we see on a daily basis come from.

Linda Ordoukhanian and her husband Ron Manseau became shareholders at Brookfield Farm in 2013. Around that same time, Linda was just getting her feet firmly planted as a beekeeper. After her first season as a Brookfield shareholder - strolling around the farm and enjoying the evenings picking various PYO crops - Linda and Farmer Dan struck up an agreement for her to set up a few hives somewhere on the property. Ecstatic at the prospect of local pollinators, Dan found the perfect spot: behind our compost pile! Since 2014, Linda and Ron have been taking care of their hives in the hidden meadow secluded behind our field of blueberries and next to a whole lot of manure and compost.

Growing up primarily in urban environments, Linda had been fascinated by the communal nature and teamwork that bees possess. It was curiosity (and moving away from the urban sprawl) that became the catalyst for her to join the Hampden County Beekeepers Association and dive deep into apiculture (the rearing of honeybees). Now she proudly supports about 20 hives, ten of which are here at Brookfield!

Of the ten hives on our farm, the low number of honey produced per hive is around 60 lbs. However, she says she doesn’t really keep track of production, as she “keeps solely for the bees.” Linda is hoping to expand the hives at Brookfield to 15 this upcoming next season! We are extremely grateful for the presence of these important pollinators, and equally for the time and care Linda and Ron have put into their hives. It’s increasingly important for bee populations to be sustained and helpfully monitored by humans as countless hives continue to be destroyed by Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). Reported cases of CCD have been on the decline in recent years, but that doesn’t mean

that the problem has been solved. For more on CCD, check out: <https://www.ars.usda.gov/oc/br/ccd/index/>

When Linda first became a beekeeper she was unaware of CCD and many of the problems stirring up the environment. But after immersing herself into the field of apiculture, finding a passion like no other, and learning of these problems facing our environment (and subsequently bees), changed the way she looks and thinks about food entirely. “Being aware of these things changes your life” she told me.



Linda suits up and tends the bees!

A colony of honey bees exists and thrives through remarkable organization and structure. They consist of three different kinds of adults: workers, drones, and a sole queen. The queen is noticeably larger than drones and workers, she keeps the hive organized and efficient as well as laying eggs to keep the hive buzzing non-stop. “I love checking in on the hives – opening up the frame and searching for the queen knowing there are so many bees producing honey”

remarked Linda, “As much as I am afraid of them, mind you, I love them”.

Many people are afraid of bees and the threat of being stung is enough to make any human run and flail their arms. For Linda, preventing this requires classic beekeeper attire. Donning a white multi-pocketed jacket and a white brimmed hat with a mesh face covering, she heads on in to her hives. “I think I get stung all the time, but the protective clothing I wear rarely makes it a problem - I can’t feel a thing!” Linda told me. “But I understand the bees, no one would like a stranger rummaging through their home.”

Linda’s love for bees has only grown with time. She recently registered for the Master Beekeeper Program at Cornell University to further her understanding and educational background in apiculture. If you would like to get into beekeeping, Linda suggests the best way to start is to take classes with whatever beekeeping club is closest nearby, but warns that it is something that needs genuine care, attention, and love in order to thrive. “It’s hard work! Even if you’ve only got one hive.”

If you would like to take a look at the hives (keep about 50’ away so you don’t get stung), simply walk straight down the road from the far right of the farm, past the blueberries and past the compost, trust me, you’ll see it!

SPECIAL THANKS

❖To Annie Bissett & Lynn Koerbel for their beautiful gift as they were poised to move to Rhode Island after 25 years of shareholder-ness: *“We cannot express the gratitude we feel for you and the land and fields of Brookfield for all the food and soul nourishment you’ve provided in all of the years we’ve been members.”*



“What’s Happening,” cont.

Overall, this past growing season was the “easiest” in our history as managers here at the farm. We harvested and distributed over 290,000 lbs of a wide variety of fresh, delicious produce. Our growing systems (human, mechanical, and infrastructure) were very functional and generally ran without many noticeable hitches. We returned to our previous management structure (General Managers / Assistant Manager / Apprentices / Weeders and had a very successful employment and apprenticeship season as Karen and I also celebrated our 25th season on the farm. The interest for CSA shares continues to evolve: Our Senior Share continues to grow, while all other shares continued a small decline. Our overall number of households remained relatively stable (-730) and our overall retention rate just over 80%. And we were able to begin addressing our long-term land tenure by purchasing our first piece of agricultural land in 30 years. We were able to finance this purchase, while paying all of our loan obligations on time and keeping our capital fund strong. We were also able to maintain a full and dynamic slate of outreach activities, which continue to help us to live up to one of our commitments-to make this farm about “more than just vegetables.”

None of this could be possible without the continued contribution and commitment of shareholders, donors, friends, and relatives who support us financially, emotionally, and spiritually. This is brought into focus when we look back on what happened here these past 12 months; We are reminded again 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 our land. For this we thank you, as always, and hope that through the following pages you can get a glimpse of some of what your contribution has helped to grow and nurture in the past year.

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

OUR FARM YEAR

It Was Good. It Got Better. We Are Trying Not To Pay Too Much Attention.

After Farmageddon 2018, we felt we needed a gift. We were ready to go in 2019, but we were a little shell-shocked after all of the mud and rain. So when the spring started off wet, we reacted – catatonically pretending it wasn’t happening. We could barely get our ground plowed and ready for seeds. Had we broken the earth? These days you have to wonder..... Then the sun shone. Then the earth warmed.



The Fall Harvest Crew brings in a bumper

Vegetable Production 2020

	per share unit	2019 (lbs)	2018
BEEF	6.2 LBS.	3260	2365
BEEF W/TOPS	2.9 BU.	1540	1222
BITTERMELON	0.0 LBS.	0	0
BROCCOLI	6.4 LBS.	3385	1720
BRUSSELS' SPROUTS	2.4 PC.	1255	0
BRUSSELS' TOPS	0.6 LBS	315	470
CABBAGE	20.1 LBS	10574	3978
CABBAGE, CHI.	2.0 HDS.	3204	1437
CANTELOUPES	20.2 PC.	10600	8228
CARROT	23.7 LBS.	12445	11320
CARROT W/TOP	2.8 BU.	1470	2556
CAULIFLOWER	4.5 LBS.	2355	460
CELERIAC	2.4 LBS.	1250	1710
CELERY	3.4 PC.	1763	1631
CHARD	2.8 LBS.	1470	1820
COLLARDS	4.3 LBS.	2275	1294
CORN	2.7 DZ.	8640	7230
CORN, POP	0.4 LBS.	200	0
CUCUMBER	13.4 LBS.	7030	8120
EGGPLANT	9.5 LBS.	5010	5125
ESCAROLE	1.2 HDS.	1250	612
FENNEL	1.3 PC.	690	1223
GARLIC	2.4 LBS.	1250	1250
GARLIC SCAPES	0.8 LBS.	405	450
GREENS	8.6 LBS.	4502	3278
KALE	20.5 LBS.	10772	4844
KOHLRABI	1.8 LBS.	923	501
LEEK	11.5 PC.	6039	4945
LETTUCE	12.8 HDS.	6696	6021
LETTUCE	4.0 LBS.	2095	2177
OKRA	0.0 LBS.	10	229
ONION	15.4 LBS.	8065	6835
PARSNIP	0.0 LBS.	0	0
PEPPERS, HOT	1.0 LBS.	530	805
PEPPERS, SWEET	5.6 LBS.	2950	2305
POTATO	28.4 LBS.	14925	18175
POTATO, SWEET	33.7 LBS.	17675	32280
RADICCHIO	0.8 LBS.	397	579
RADISH	3.7 BU.	1960	1496
RADISH, DAIKON	6.6 LBS.	3485	1825
RADISH, STORAGE	3.1 LBS.	1650	2050
RUTABAGA	9.8 LBS.	5125	575
SCALLION	3.6 BU.	1915	2845
SPINACH	0.7 LBS.	360	1000
SQUASH, SUMMER	13.8 LBS.	7270	8310
SQUASH, WINTER	75.8 LBS.	39800	31725
TOMATOES	17.9 LBS.	9420	9985
TURNIP, HAKUREI	2.6 BU.	1365	1028
TURNIP	9.4 LBS.	4957	1800
WATERMELONS	33.1 LBS.	17400	13200

Then the rain came. Then the rain stopped and the sun shone again. Remember that? We were able to move through the fields and prepare our beds. We were able to put plants in the ground. And when they got thirsty, then the rain came. And when they looked a bit waterlogged the sun shone again. We again, tried to pretend that it wasn’t happening. But we weren’t catatonic anymore. We were ecstatic from



huge pom-pom-sized lettuce to big hauls of early zukes and cukes, plentiful carrots and beets, and then on and on it went. All the way to the end; Tomatoes to melons to winter squash to potatoes to Brussels' Sprouts. Winner after winner. Eventually we had to admit it – this actually happened. We lived through this story. And here it is:

Vegetable Crop Production:

Our overall production was way up from last season (+15%) and from our 10-year average (+5%). Thanks to a very well-rounded lineup, we grew 292,195 lbs. of vegetables, fruits, flowers, and herbs. Despite only having two true bumper crops (Kale: 10,772 lbs and Pumpkins: 12,000 lbs – both Brookfield Farm all-time records) our production totals were the 3rd highest in our history. Our winter storage production (50,530 lbs) was also significantly higher than our 10-year average (12.1%). Our crops went in on time and were generally growing and producing at or above average through the entire season.

In general, vegetable production boils down to three things – water, weeds, and work. When there's too much water (like in 2018), there's nothing you can do. The crops asphyxiate, rot, and die. When there's too little water (like in 2016), you can irrigate – which takes lots of work (hence lots of time and money), but at least if you have the infrastructure (water source, pump, sprinklers) you can have great crops. This season though, we only had to irrigate 2 times – for the entire season. This has basically never happened except in a flood-year. As a result, all we really had to do was take care of the weeds. And considering we had a great farm crew (apprentices, weeders, harvesters) this summer – they made the vegetable production easy.

There were a few notable losers; We continue to be challenged with growing parsnips, which we lost for the 3rd time in 4 years basically

to weed control in the first month. And deer pressure increased again, this time wiping out about 2/3 of our radicchio crop. But overall the winners – early huge lettuce, tons of incredibly sweet melons, beautiful fall broccoli, lots of high-quality sweet potatoes – made this a production season to remember.

CSA Distribution:

With above-average production this translated into increased dis-

	2019	2018	% dif last year	% dif 10 yr avg
Total Production				
total lbs (including PYO)	292145	253930	15.0%	5.1%
total lbs. (no PYO)	252065	223450	12.8%	4.1%
winter share production	50530	54163	-6.7%	-6.7%
acreage planted	28	28.7	-2.4%	-6.8%
crops planted	64	64	0.0%	2.9%
Distribution Comparison				
total lbs per share	471.3	431.4	9%	1.4%
cost per lb. share	\$1.27	\$ 1.39	-9%	5%
avg. lbs. per share each week	18.9	18.0	5%	-1.6%

tribution amounts for our regular season CSA shares. Our on-farm share saw a 9% increase in total share volume, and the Boston share was 11% bigger. The Winter Share was 1% larger than our 10-year average. Our price per pound was \$1.27/lb. (-8%) for the On-Farm Share, \$1.70/lb.(-10%) for Boston shares, and .79c/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 a piece of the risks and rewards of our farm production, a core piece of the CSA

see "Our Farm Year," p.11



The Weeder Crew cleans up the winter squash



These three joined Ben, who returned to the farm for his second season as an apprentice. He did all of our field prep, pulling the plow and harrow behind the John Deere 2355. He learned about mechanical cultivating by operating the International 265 on a wide array of crops. Ben also took on increased responsibility by managing our greenhouse seedling production and then the daily harvest – coordinating our small regiments of harvesters to bring in thousands of pounds of food from the field to the cooler each week – from June thru August. We feel very lucky that Ben has accepted our offer to become our 10th Assistant Manager and will be managing the greenhouse, new-share marketing, plant care, irrigation, events, and the accessible garden.

At the end of the season, with a commitment to creating a 25-year retrospective for the National Biodynamic Agriculture Conference in November, we reached out to all of our past 51 apprentices to ask them if they could share some of their memories & reflections to help make our presentation more meaningful. In addition, Abbe (without us knowing) reached out to the same people asking them to help celebrate our milestone by sending us a small bit of their current soil to honor our Top Soil Award. The response from both of these requests was both heartwarming and illuminating.

teach one day. While here she specialized in making stale seed beds, pulling transplanter while using the Landini 5860. She also seeded all of our finicky crops – carrots, beets, parsnips, and greens with our Allis Chalmers G tractor. When the summer ended, Lia took her skills and hard-working attitude back to Brooklyn to finish her degree. She is hoping to settle somewhere nearby after March.

Will Kebbe grew up Westchester County, NY and studied English and Psychology at University of Delaware. He worked on an organic vegetable farm in NJ in 2018 and he came to us to get another experience of a farm in the midst of a community of people. His tractor time was spent spreading our compost and laying plastic mulch in the spring. He also did a variety of “plant care” jobs, from spraying to cultivating to bed preparation with our JD2355 and Hesston 80-60. Will took his turn at the harvest manager rotation, bringing his personal flair to this job. After the season was over, he decided to head towards the more “social” direction for employment in 2020 – farm-based education, social work, etc



Squad!!

Not only did we hear from most everyone, but for many the reflections revealed the continued importance of this experience in their lives – an example: *“It is impossible to convey the gratitude I have for Brookfield in not only providing an agricultural base but moreover to open me to a vocation that would guide the rest of my life. The apprenticeship showed me that farming could be the medium through which I am able to express my hopes and values with my community. How do you thank someone for providing you with a path for your life?”*

In addition we were able to see a few themes that our Apprenticeship Program had really been able to address:

Women’s empowerment: Women not only have been a big part of our apprentice program but a large num-

Marlee Giacometti grew up in Illinois and just finished her studies in Conservation & Environmental Science at University of Wisconsin in May. She wanted to start her apprenticeship as soon as possible (late May) to learn about farm management and CSA production, with a long-term goal of building capacity for self-sufficiency. Since she got here a bit late, we got her started on the smallest tractor - cultivating vegetables using the Farmall Cub. She eventually took over Lia’s responsibilities for the Landini in September and dug all of our potatoes and roots. Marlee also took her turn at the harvest manager rotation, bringing her attention-to-detail and big energy to this job. We are so happy that she has decided to return in 2020 and take on increased responsibilities in managing field planting and “bulk” harvesting.



Will gets ready to sling some compost



ber of them have gone on to manage their own farms and businesses. **A home for wayward souls:** So many participants identified this as an important place in developing the feeling of belonging to something meaningful that has transformed their lives for the better. **A multigenerational positive feedback loop:** Our community is energized knowing that the younger generation is engaged and being trained to meet the challenges of the future. Our young participants are embraced by the community which enriches their experience of belonging to something worth living for.

On many levels, an apprenticeship is inefficient and time consuming - retraining new people in skilled labor season. We ended this retrospective with a new understanding & commitment that we do it because we want to be part of something which builds capacity
see "Apprentice," p.12

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FANTASTIC STAFF

Our Administrator Abbe Vredenburg (25 years and counting!) & Ken Dziuba our mechanic (for the past 7 seasons).



Marlee cultivates the early tomatoes

FAREWELL BROOKFIELD

Special Thanks to Ellen Drews

Ellen joined us as an apprentice in 2017, after developing her gardening and animal-husbandry skills for a few seasons on farm-based education operations in Minnesota, California, and Massachusetts. She was interested in advancing her technical skills in growing, harvesting and marketing, performing tasks efficiently and safely, and learning how to train others in these techniques as well. She also wanted to learn about managing a farm business; Leading a team of people, making decisions about allocation of time and money, and keeping records to evaluate and advance the business.

Not only did Ellen pursue all of these interests with integrity, determination, and toughness, she also brought a keen sense of humor and helped to create a great work environment for the three seasons that she spent on the farm. She became our 9th Assistant Manager in 2019 and not only was responsible for all of our field planting, plant care, and accessible garden, but she also advanced our CSA share marketing and social media presence. She found a great farm-managers job in Hadley at Astarte Farm where she will be creating and leading a crew of her own at a farm dedicated to advancing no-till agriculture techniques. We look forward to collaborating with her in the years to come!



Ellen gets the irrigation set up

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Carol Wood, Angela Oldham-Barca, Delia Clotfelter, Wheehouse Farm Crew, UMASS Baseball, Christina Vaughan, and Peter Aronson

& OUR FALL HARVEST CREW:

Sam Newman, Aaron Okrzynsky, and Luke & Lonny!!



JP Site Coordinator Joy and her daughter Sophia lighten our August workload



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 other events – both food and non-food related.

We were lucky enough to have Pete Mclean ('10-'12) return for his third year as our Events Coordinator. He started the year with a scavenger hunt in June to help get new shareholders to explore some parts of the farm they might not know about and followed that up later in the month with a bird-walk around the farm fields. In mid-July we had a great Garlic Harvest where a big group helped us bring about 1/3 of our crop from the field to the barn and in late-September, we had a record-setting Pumpkin Harvest where dozens of shareholders brought in tons of pumpkins (but ran out of bins!). In November shareholders were joined by the UMASS baseball team to have a great potato dig and chili supper by the campfire. And we ended our events season with a high-spirited Harvest Dinner potluck celebration in November where Ellen led the efforts to recognize all of the people who contributed to make the farm what it was this season. This included a special to tribute that Abbe put together to recognize Dan

and Karen, with this year's Top Soil Award (collecting soil from over 30 of our past apprentices!).

In addition there were events that others organized around the farm. Rosie Pearson once again celebrated the New Year with a Beating of the Bounds around the perimeter of our patch of earth. And in September coordinated the Annual Art Behind The Barn crafts fair with over 20 vendors. Long-time shareholders Anne & Tony Burton celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in the farm yard in September. And Wheelhouse Farm Food Truck hosted "Burger Night" in the lower field where they served a delicious food on a beautiful fall afternoon in October.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR GUARDIAN ANGELS

- ❖ *Rosie Pearson* for Reiki treatments to the farm crew and organizing Art Behind The Barn!
- ❖ *Farmer Dave" Welborn* for spending his vacation time rebuilding our broken wagon, truck sides, and harvest shed frame!
- ❖ *Chris Zobel* for renovating our basement apartment kitchen and painting the entire space before Ellen moved in March 30!



Garlic Harvest crew hangs it up for the day



Farmer Dave finds the rot and fixes it up



“Our Farm Year,” cont.

model. The numbers show what we already know: on great growing years we are able to reward the many families who share the risks of farming with us while building the farm's financial reserves to serve us in the leaner years sure to come as well.

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 the fields of Gray's Farm 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.

We had 3 calves in February which were raised in Hubbs' pasture (next to our West Field) beginning in July. And then another 3 calves in September who stayed with the herd in the fall. With generally even moisture, our grazing was very easy this year, and the lack of torrential rain allowed us to keep most of our fence lines cleaned in the fall. By February, the herd stood at 11 cows, 1 bull, and 6 calves 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 cleaned out



last year's manure/hay deposit. We shoveled out the barn, and then used the loader 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. At our compost site on Hulst Rd, we gathered materials, (leaves from the town of Amherst, food waste from Not Bread Alone, veggie scraps from our harvest shed, cow manure from Cook Farm in Hadley) but our work was cut short with the big snow storm of early December. We plan to make another 100 tons in the spring. 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.

The farm was also host to 2 apiaries as we continue to welcome these pollinators whenever possible. In 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 (see page 5) for bringing their wonderful bees to play their important role in our farm organism.

see “Our Farm Year,” p.12





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“Our Farm Year,” con’t.

CSA Share Sales:

Continuing the trend of the past 5 years, CSA share sales continue to change. We served nearly as many households (710) last season (-1.9%) and our overall our retention rate remained high - 80.4% (-1.3%), which to us represents shareholder satisfaction better than any other metric. We continued to see a much bigger increase in Senior Shares than expected. This caused our overall share dollars to decrease (-2.7%), while overall households renewing rose (+1.3%). We have an aging community and continue to work to attract the younger generation to our multigenerational farm adventure!

Farm Finances:

Overall, this year our finances were somewhat different than planned, but maintained a sound financial footing. We had a decrease in share dollars, but an increase in wholesale surplus vegetable sales, as well as decreases in labor and equipment costs. We financed the purchase of our new land on Warren Wright Rd though a new loan as well as a down-payment. So in paying all of our loan commitments this year, we needed to use some of our capital reserves (-\$3612) to balance the books. However, we were able to keep our capital account at a sustainable level (\$35,967). Paying our loans and investing in infrastructure (land and equipment) has helped our balance sheet continue to show signs of overall health with our overall assets up (9.4%), and our total equity (\$516,148) rising at an average rate of 3% per year for the past decade.

“Apprentice,” con’t.

for people to effect positive change in the future. We have updated our website - <https://www.brookfieldfarm.org/our-crew-1> - with a more comprehensive list of “where are they now?” We have also posted a .pdf version of the presentation we made at the Biodynamic Conference for you to check out. We hope you visit it and see for yourself just how much more this farm is about than just growing vegetables.

