

Community Farms Outreach Newsletter

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

240 Beaver Street, Waltham, MA 02452 • 781-899-2403 • www.communityfarms.org



Spring 2006

Community Farms Outreach Welcomes Executive Director

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I'm thrilled to announce that Meg Coward has accepted the position of Executive Director of Community Farms Outreach. CFO's search for our first Executive Director began in the fall of 2005, and Meg stood out, even in a large pool of highly qualified candidates.

Meg's experience in the key areas of our work—farmland preservation, hunger relief, and education—is extremely impressive, yet only part of the story. Her passion for her work makes up the balance. Meg is dedicated to creating community-based sustainable agriculture, and to finding new models for connecting people with each other, their food, and the farmland from which it grows. As CFO moves into its second decade, I'm confident that Meg's deep understanding, commitment, and enthusiasm for CFO's mission will enable us to move ahead to meet our many challenges and opportunities.

Meg brings a facilitative leadership style that was developed over the course of her career at several locally-based, national non-profit organizations. Most recently serving as Program Officer at the *Merck Family Fund*, Meg has also been Dairy Manager, Program Director, and Associate Director at *The Farm School* in Athol, MA. She also developed and managed innovative programs at *The Food Project* in Lincoln and Dorchester, MA, where she worked as Assistant Farmer, Program Coordinator, and Director of Core Programs.

Meg has a Bachelor's degree from Oberlin College and a Master of Divinity degree from Harvard Divinity School. She currently serves on the Board of Trustees at *The Food Project* and *Resource Generation*, and is a member of the Portfolio Advisory Committee at *Mission Hill School*.

I'm confident that CFO's members and friends will join me in welcoming Meg Coward to Community Farms Outreach. You can meet her at the Plant & Paint Family Fling (April 9th) or the Spring Fling and Silent Auction (May 6th).

Martha Creedon
President, CFO Board of Directors

"I want to be with people who submerge in the task, who go into the fields to harvest and work in a row and pass the bags along, who are not parlor generals and field deserters, but move in a common rhythm when the food must come in or the fire be put out."



Meg Coward

Ten years ago, just as Waltham Fields Community Farm was getting started, I came home from my first day of work on a farm in Lincoln. I had never so much as set foot on a farm before that day. I was drenched, covered in mud, and tired to the bone. And I was ecstatic. I had just spent hours upon hours pushing a Planet Jr. seeder back and forth, and I could not remember ever having felt so satisfied. I can still feel the particular excitement coursing through me when I look back on that rainy afternoon. I had never felt so purposeful, so useful, or so grounded, in my life.

Weeks later, I stood under a tent on that same piece of land, in front of sixty sweaty teenagers from all over Boston who had just spent the morning working in the fields. Together, we talked through the connections between our lives, the work we were doing together, and our quote of the day: "Everyone can be great. Because everyone can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve . . . You only need a heart full of grace, and a soul generated by love." At the time, I was taking a class at Harvard focused on the civil rights movement. I had just turned in a paper examining Martin Luther King's shift from a focus on racial justice to economic justice. As soon as I had printed it out and dropped it in my professor's mailbox, most of my arguments were a distant memory. But that day on the farm, the teenagers and I felt the indelible impact of Dr. King's words.

These are two of the transformative moments that have been the foundation for my work since that first season on the farm in Lincoln. There have been many more: calling the cows into the barn and realizing that they knew my voice; eating strawberries in the garden with a six year-old who had never tasted them before; watching two teenagers from completely different walks of life cry as they hugged goodbye at the end of a summer together on a farm. Over the past decade, the work has come to take much more serious tones in my life. Changing the state of farming in this country, the food we serve to children, the development of farmland, the fracturing of communi-

Community Farms Outreach

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Amanda Cather **Farm Manager**



Newsletter Editor

newsletter@communityfarms.org

Community Farms Outreach, Inc.

Our mission is to promote, support, and manage community farms and farms in the community. Community farms are farms that are charitable and educational: growing produce for soup kitchens, shelters, and food pantries, educating children and adults about how and where their food is grown, and generally to preserve the open space and beauty of farms.

Community Farms Outreach, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable corporation.



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ties: these are hard rows to hoe! Yet the transformative moments keep me going. They give me the energy to create more opportunities for more people to connect to each other, the land, and their food in productive, healthy, joyful ways.

Over the past few months, as I have started to get to know many of you, what I have enjoyed the most are your stories. Hearing about your transformative moments on the Field Station farm has helped me understand where the abundance of energy that has gone into Community Farms Outreach's work for the last ten years originates. When I first started reading through the history of CFO, I was amazed that so much had been accomplished already, largely through volunteer labor. The track record gives me great confidence and excitement in what lies ahead for CFO's second decade. I am thrilled and so grateful to join you as your Executive Director.

As I begin my work with CFO, I hope to hear many more stories! I want to get to know each of you, to hear about your transformative moments: that time that you helped harvest potatoes and realized you had no idea how dirty dirty could be, or the time you dropped off food for the soup kitchen in Waltham and had a long conversation with the chef about fresh produce. These are the experiences we'll build on together, and provide for many other people. There's a ton of work ahead of us—good work, important, critical work—all built on these moments when we come a little closer to realizing how we want to walk on this earth.

"Hopi vases that held corn are put in museums; but you know they were made to be used. The pitcher cries for water to carry and a person for work that is real."

—Excerpts from *To Be of Use* by Marge Piercy


Meg Coward
Executive Director, Community Farms Outreach

Volunteer Spotlight: Marian Friedman

by Helene Newberg

Marian Friedman fell into the farm volunteer habit as a result of a work requirement in place when she first joined the CSA in 2001. "Over time, my interest has expanded from eating locally and widening the variety of vegetables that I eat to the farm's hunger relief programs. I have also expanded my volunteer 'season' to year round," she said.

While Marian enjoyed work in the fields, she also saw a chance to become more involved. This past year, in addition to taking on responsibility for publicizing the Spring Fling & Silent Auction, she volunteered to collect some basic information about Waltham-based businesses and their community relations programs and areas of emphasis. "Marla Rhodes, the development manager, used the information to good effect for a late summer mailing about hunger relief. Longer term, CFO can use the information to encourage future donations and to reach out to groups of volunteers from the immediate area of the farm," Marian explained.

Marian commits about eight hours a month to farm activities. Through her workplace, she was able to get a computer printer donated to the farm. "My favorite crop is tomatoes with peas a close second. Even though the tomatoes come later in the growing season, I most look forward to the initial weeks of CSA share distributions. Although I've been a CSA member for a long time, each year I marvel at just how lucky I am to be eating such fresh and wonderful food." 

Attention: Parents, Aunts, Uncles, and All Other Friends of Children!

**Plant & Paint, a Family Fling for Community Farms Outreach,
is coming up on April 9th from 10:30 A.M.–12:00 NOON.**

Plant & Paint will help the farm prepare hunger relief crops for the growing season. At *Plant & Paint*, children of all ages can

- plant seeds for early summer crops.
- paint beautiful farm and garden signs.

The seedlings and signs will be featured items at the Spring Fling & Silent Auction on Saturday evening, May 6th (see page 4). The goal is for children to have fun while helping the farm get ready for another great season of sustainable farming.

Plant & Paint will kick off at 10:30 A.M. on Sunday, April 9th, at the UMass Field Station in Waltham. The event should wind up by noon.

RSVP requested (not required) to Laurie Rothstein at laurierothstein@yahoo.com or 617-576-2352. It is also fine to simply arrive at the Field Station at 10:30 A.M. on April 9th.

Donations accepted but not required. Nutritious snacks will be included. Also, we might be making stone soup. When you RSVP, we'll fill in the details.

As this is a family event, all children who participate must be accompanied by adult. For questions, please contact Laurie (laurierothstein@yahoo.com or 617-576-2352). 🍌

Plant seeds and paint signs with CSA member Jesse Simmons, age 7, on April 9th!

"I made an apple pie to help the farm last year. I like helping the farm because the farm helps people get food. It was fun making the pie because it's fun cutting everything up and using a knife (with my mom supervising). I hope that other kids help this year donating food to the farm. I hope that kids help to plant seeds and make signs this year. See you in the spring!"

—Jesse

If you have an item to donate to the Spring Fling & Silent Auction, send an e-mail to Julie Johnson at cfo_donations@yahoo.com

If you would like to join Jesse to plant seeds and paint signs, call her at 617 576-2352.

NEEDED!

Volunteer hardware and software gurus to troubleshoot CFO's technology on an as-needed basis. We could use some help with Access. Call 781-899-2403.

SAVE THE DATES!

Calendar of Events

(All events will take place at Waltham Field Station, 240 Beaver Street.)

Sunday, April 9, 2006, 10:30 A.M.—NOON

Plant & Paint Family Fling

Saturday, May 6, 2006, 7:00—10:00 P.M.

Spring Fling & Silent Auction

Sunday, May 21, 2006, 4:00 P.M.

CSA Orientation

Thursday, May 25, 2006, 4:00 P.M.

CSA Orientation

Party for farmland preservation, hunger relief, and education!

Try out the salsa, and we don't mean tomatoes!

CFO's annual **Spring Fling and Silent Auction** will be held on Saturday night, May 6th, at the UMass Field Station in Waltham. Doors open at 7:00 P.M.

The party starts with a group salsa lesson by *Salsa Happens!*, dance teachers to the stars and the double-left-footed. Also expect an eclectic mix of music, delicious food, good company, and an exciting variety of auction items on which to bid—all to benefit the work of Community Farms Outreach.

You can bid on personal gifts, experiences, and luxuries, plus a brand new range of items for hunger relief efforts, including seedlings and signs created by our farm family children at *Plant & Paint* (see page 3). Closer to May 6th, you can preview a sampling of Silent Auction items at www.communityfarms.org.

Tickets are \$25 each. If you reserve tickets by 5:00 P.M. on Monday, May 1st, you will be entered into a special drawing for a valuable dinner for two gift certificate. Only those who reserve tickets by May 1st will be eligible for this drawing (one chance per ticket). For reservations, please return your payment with the form (at the bottom of this page). All tickets will be held at the door.

The Spring Fling and Silent Auction supports programs that are vital to our nonprofit mission and status:

- The donation of organically grown produce to local soup kitchens, shelters, and food pantries—over 150,000 pounds have been donated since 1995!
- The Children's Learning Garden program, which serves youth through a partnership with Cambridge Adventure Day Camp
- Service-learning opportunities for children, adults, families, and community groups, as well as farmers in training
- Farmland preservation

For more information and details on how these programs benefit our community and the future of local agriculture and the environment, please read the Program Overview at <http://www.communityfarms.org/Programs.htm>.

You are important to the continued success of the work of CFO in the community—providing fresh and nutritious food to low-income individuals, teaching children and adults about sustainable food production, and preserving local farmland. Please join us on May 6th to ensure that these programs continue. If you can't attend, send a donation and you too could win the special restaurant gift certificate.

We thank you in advance! 🍷

Community Farms Outreach 2006 Spring Fling and Silent Auction

UMass Field Station
240 Beaver Street, Waltham, MA 02452

Saturday, May 6, 2006, 7:00 P.M.–10:00 P.M.

\$ _____ I would like to reserve _____ tickets at \$25 per ticket

\$ _____ I would like to make a contribution to Community Farms Outreach

\$ _____ Total enclosed

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail _____ Telephone: _____

Please make checks payable to Community Farms Outreach and send to 240 Beaver Street, Waltham, MA 02452. All tickets will be held at the door. CFO is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.