

# Community Farms Outreach Newsletter

240 Beaver Street, Waltham, MA 02452 • 781-899-2403 • [www.communityfarms.org](http://www.communityfarms.org)



Fall 2004

## Eat Your Landscape

by Marla Rhodes, Administrative and Development Manager

In a mid-July weekly newsletter that Waltham Fields Community Farm CSA members received, Farm Manager Amanda Cather wrote elegantly about the garlic harvest, and all that is embodied in the act of our growing and eating that pungent little bulb. She summed it up by saying that *"eating produce from [a local] farm is taking your home landscape in, physically. It provides an intimacy with your chosen home place that extends beyond your day-to-day contact with it. It is sharing in the labor of the people who produced it, in the health of the soil, the diversity of the habitat on the farm, the preservation of one small piece of land . . ."*

I like the idea of eating the physical landscape. I get a humorous visual image of sitting at the dinner table, napkin tucked under the chin and fork at the ready, to scoop up the pastoral scene spilling off the plate, of rolling fields dotted with cows and barns and tractors. Upon reflection, though, I realize that my conceptual flight of fancy is really not so far removed from reality. If we don't actively support local farms with our dollars, then the local living landscape will have no means to exist. It will leave our plate, for good. It really is that simple.

I love the built-up human world. I'll admire a beautiful building or cityscape any day. I appreciate asphalt and where it gets me . . . the bike path, the sidewalk, the highway. But I want to know that not so far away I can walk on real living earth and scoop up some of that living landscape into my mouth for supper. It's even nicer knowing that through my financial support of this living landscape, I can help a less fortunate neighbor scoop some up, too. And maybe show some kids how it's done. So, here is a big *thank-you to our numerous members and donors who generously provide us with the means to exist, and who keep our little piece of landscape on the plate.* We hope you'll join them and respond to our Annual Appeal now through the end of the year. As Amanda wrote, "Our farm is not a look back to an idyllic past, but a look forward, a way to reconnect with our land and our community and take part in some of the oldest and most authentic processes we know." Thank you so much for taking part. *Please consider a donation to our Annual Appeal.*

And don't forget to eat your landscape!



Kendra Michaud

## 2004 Annual Appeal

Your donation to our Annual Appeal provides financial support that is essential to our farmland preservation, hunger relief, and educational work. Here are some of the things that your contributions purchase:

- hoes
- harvest knives
- harvest containers
- farm carts
- seed, seeds, and more seeds
- fertilizer
- field labor
- rent for 9 acres of farmland
- a new moveable heated greenhouse
- woodchuck traps
- a tractor
- equipment fuel and repair
- first aid training
- health insurance and liveable wages for our year-round staff
- farmer training
- supplies for the children's learning garden program
- staff time to provide in-the-field education to service-learning groups

See the back page of this newsletter for the Annual Appeal donation form.

## Community Farms Outreach

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### STAFF

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**Assistant Growers**

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Kathy Diamond

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### 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.

## 2004 Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Dinner

As we approach the end of the farming season we think about what we have accomplished this year and envision what's ahead. Please join your fellow community members at the UMass Field Station in Waltham on Sunday, November 21st, for a pot luck dinner, CFO's Annual Meeting, and a reflection of the past year. The pot luck dinner will begin at 6:00 PM and will be followed by the election of next year's board of directors. Following that at 7:30, we will have a speaker from our community. Information on what dish to bring to the potluck will follow. We look forward to seeing you there!!

Questions? Want to help make the Annual Meeting and Pot Luck a success? Contact Jonathan Baker at 617-868-2003 or at [jonobaker123@yahoo.com](mailto:jonobaker123@yahoo.com).

## Thank you to our Supporters

Our work has been made possible this year by many individual donors, as well as civic, religious, and business groups. Special thanks to *Body and Soul Magazine*, *Cisco Systems*, and *Gordon Brothers*. These businesses not only encouraged their employees to volunteer time in our fields, but "sponsored" them with donations as well. Thanks to the *many local businesses and restaurants*, too numerous to mention here (but listed on our website) that sent us items and gift certificates for our Spring Fling and Silent Auction, as well as the individuals who donated increasingly fabulous Auction items, from private vacation homes to canning sessions to bird walks to homemade meals. Thanks to *Verizon* and *Intuit, Inc.*, companies that match their employees' donations to us, and to organizations that also combine volunteer time with monetary donations, such as *Temple Shalom of Newton*, and *Babson College's student photography group*.

We also very much appreciate the support and interest in our work that we receive from charitable foundations. Some of these foundations are first-time donors; others have made annual grants to us for several years. Thanks to *the Green Leaf Foundation*, *the Robbins De-Beaumont Foundation*, *Draper Laboratory*, *the Jane B. Cook 1992 Charitable Trust*, *the Charles and Sarah Goldberg Charitable Trust*, *Foundation M*, *Bank North Charitable Foundation*, and *the Architectural Heritage Foundation*.



Staff members Marla, Amanda, Ryan, Meryl, and super-volunteer Ben

FAYFOTO/Boston

# Hunger Relief and Community Food Security

By Amanda Cather, Farm Manager

Our founder, Oakes Plimpton, started Waltham Fields Community Farm to grow food for the poor. Since 1995, Waltham Fields Community Farm has distributed over 150,000 pounds of organically grown produce to over 25 agencies within local communities. Our hunger relief efforts provide bushels of fresh produce to soup kitchens, food pantries, and homeless shelters, supplying healthy nourishment to people in need. Often, our vegetables are the only source of fresh produce supporting the nutritional needs of these programs. The Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program—members paying for their vegetables—was added later as a way to support the hunger relief work.

Here is how our hunger relief program works today: We have long-term relationships with the Waltham Salvation Army food pantry and soup kitchen; the Red Cross food pantry; Sandra's Lodge, a Waltham shelter for women and children; and Food for Free, hunger relief "brokers" who pick up food at all sorts of local outlets and make sure it gets to various distribution sites, including food pantries, meal programs, and home deliveries, primarily in Cambridge. We sent out a produce survey to each of these partner organizations to find out which crops they would accept and could use, and discovered which ones were unfamiliar to them (kohlrabi) or just too difficult to manage (hundreds of pounds of greens).

Constance Moore, our dedicated hunger relief schedule coordinator, finds volunteer delivery drivers from among CFO members to get our produce to these sites each week. Betsy, Laurie, Janet, or Food for Free's intrepid drivers have been making the pickups. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, they pick up all the produce that we've harvested for donation throughout the week. They take it to one of the outlets, where it is usually distributed to a family or made into a nutritious meal within 48 hours of being harvested.

In addition, this year CFO has partnered with Re-Vision House, a Boston-area organization, to get our produce out to even more folks who might not otherwise be able to access it. Re-Vision House is a Dorchester shelter for homeless pregnant and par-

enting women. For the past five seasons, they've been collaborating with Drumlin Farm in Lincoln on a unique urban-suburban CSA incorporating low-income urban folks. These members would not normally have joined a CSA, but neither would they have visited a food pantry or soup kitchen. This year, Re-Vision House received a Community Food Security grant from the USDA to expand the program and bring in another local farm to grow produce for 50 more families. We have been harvesting produce for these 50 families since June 23rd.

Our work with Re-Vision House goes beyond the traditional vision of food pantries and meal programs. Community food security is defined by the Community Food Security Coalition as "a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice." Community Farms Outreach and Waltham Fields Community Farm are part of a community food security movement that is growing in strength across the nation and around the world.

Our donations to emergency food programs like the Salvation Army and Red Cross are good temporary solutions to the very

real problem of immediate hunger in our community. Working from a community food security point of view will help us become a more active promoter of changes to our local food system—particularly here in our home town of Waltham. We can create programs that connect local residents with their local farms. The Food Security Coalition calls this alliance "non-traditional but natural," connecting hunger relief and farmland preservation in very real ways that you can feel in your (full) stomach.

Radical? Yes, certainly. Necessary? Without a doubt. And only possible thanks to the support (financial and otherwise) of CFO members and supporters.



FAYFOTO/Boston

*Volunteers from Gordon Brothers Group, LLC, pull out weeds at Waltham Fields Community Farm.*

We gladly accept volunteers. If you or your group want more information or would like to schedule a visit, contact [volunteer@communityfarms.org](mailto:volunteer@communityfarms.org).

## Farmland Preservation at the Field Station

by Dee Kricker, Community Farms Outreach and Friends of Waltham Field Station Steering Committee

Last April, CFO submitted a proposal for a joint UMass-CFO planning task force to UMass Outreach and Extension administration. The proposal is an initiative to develop a viable business plan for the Waltham Field Station with the input and support of current users. Hoping to engage the university in a process to address our concerns regarding all aspects of the site, *our primary goal is to keep the facility open and fully operational.* A Steering Committee formed to guide the planning process includes Dee Kricker (CFO), Judy Fallows (CFO), Deb Guttormsen (GROW), Charles McColough, and advisory members from the extended Friends of Waltham Field Station group: Steve Tracy, Jeff Cole, Amy Meblin, Lynn Harris, Molly Anderson, and Marc Rudnick. The Steering Committee has met nine times since April.

In order to formulate a business plan that describes current usage, the SC is collecting and analyzing data about who uses the site, how often, and for what reasons. We are also assessing the physical plant, operational and administrative costs, and staffing levels. For example, the committee has obtained the FY05 site budget and we had a specialist in historic greenhouse restoration provide an assessment of the greenhouses built in the '20s and '30s. There is a recently installed new boiler system for heat, but the roof of the office building leaks, as does the roof of the historic nineteenth century barn. We know that the Field Station is underutilized and some programs have been reduced as greenhouse space has been closed. Among the things we want to know is the amount of revenue currently being generated by

fees and leases and the capacity for generating more revenue. We are very interested in finding out how users' needs can be better met through improved services, equipment, and structures.

Information provided by users indicates that more than thirty groups with a total membership of almost 5000 people use the facilities on a regular basis for agricultural purposes. Among these groups are chapters of national horticultural societies, a farm, community gardeners, a nursery/greenhouse vocational project, and a local land trust. Weekly activities at the site range from demonstrations, workshops, training, and certification exams to farming, gardening, plant sales, standard flower shows and specialized agricultural research projects. *For all these users, the Waltham site is preferred over other venues. After all, as the Eastern Field Station for the Massachusetts College of Agriculture, it was built specifically for agricultural users eighty years ago.*

The results of our work will be compiled and presented to the CFO board by the end of this year. The plan is intended to reflect the interests of the current users and to allow adjustments and modifications as needs change. It will be responsive to community input. Future work of the SC includes exploring various options for increasing revenue by expanding programs and building upon current uses. One such program is a direct farmer's co-op that links small farmers with consumers by acting as a depot for weekly deliveries. On Tuesday, October 26, at 9:00 AM, the SC invites anyone who is interested to attend an informational program by the founders of EcoFarm, a twelve-year-old farmer's co-op in Marblehead and Salem. For more information about this program or related activities of the SC please contact: the CFO Board of Directors at [board@communityfarms.org](mailto:board@communityfarms.org).

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### 2004 Community Farms Outreach Annual Appeal Donation Form

Join us as we work to relieve hunger, reclaim farmland, and reconnect with the knowledge of sustainable food production. Mail this form, with your donation, to Community Farms Outreach, Inc., 240 Beaver St., Waltham, MA 02452.

Enclosed please find a check for:

\$25 Seedling\*       \$100 Farmer       \$500 Community Partner  
 \$50 Gardener       \$250 Harvester       \$1000 Friend of the Land       Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 I wish my donation to remain anonymous.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Donors at the \$25 level or above receive a 2005 CFO membership.  
All donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.