

Community Farms Outreach

Hunger Relief Education Farm Preservation



NEWSLETTER

FALL 2006

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

The Many Faces of Community Farms Outreach

by: Meg Coward

In my first few months at Community Farms Outreach, I have been so inspired by the wonderful people who are involved with this organization. One of the amazing aspects of the work being done here is how quietly and humbly so much of it happens. But it's important to shine a spotlight on such graceful interactions with the world! For this edition of our newsletter, we are profiling just a few of the many folks who make it all possible. Each profile is written by a different volunteer, staff or board member, and each represents one of the key endeavors of Community Farms Outreach. Together, they paint a picture of a vibrant, productive community making great strides toward hunger relief, education and farm preservation.

With the growing season not even over yet, we can safely say that the efforts of the folks profiled here, countless other volunteers, and our dedicated staff and board members, have made this the most productive year of our work to date. On the farm, our growing capacity has outpaced our old farm equipment, and we are busy raising the funds to make it possible for Waltham Fields to buy a new tractor to keep up! In the board room, we are nearing the completion of Community Farms Outreach's first strategic plan – to be unveiled at our Annual Meeting in January - which will guide us through the next three years.

We hope that you will find your own ways to connect to the many programs underway through Community Farms Outreach. We're always happy to help you make that connection, and we thank you in advance for your support!

CSA SHAREHOLDERS:

Awinja Kelsey

profiled by: Meg Coward

Awinja Kelsey, a resident of Arlington, has been a shareholder of Waltham Fields Community Farm's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program for two years. Three years ago, a friend who was a shareholder went on vacation and asked Awinja to pick up her share while she was gone. As Awinja explains, "I was hooked!"



Awinja and
Jamie Kelsey

Originally from rural, western Kenya, Awinja has lived in the United States for the last eighteen years. Growing up, her family produced about 95% of their own food and bartered for the rest. As they had a half acre of land in total, they "had to be creative!" The primary crops that they grew were collards, maize and beans, and they rotated their crops through their land each year. As she explained to me, "I was a part of each piece of growing food, from the seed to the plate."

A large part of why Awinja was immediately hooked by Waltham Fields was her desire for her children to understand where their food comes from – something that "most kids don't get." The first time I met Awinja, her son Jamie marched up to me and said "I don't like potatoes!" He paused, and I laughed, and then he said, "I only like potatoes from the farm!" Awinja reports that at this point, her children will come to the farm and eat tomatoes right off the vine, that they love veggies they get to pick from the farm, but they really don't like vegetables from the store.

Awinja's hopes for Waltham Fields Community Farm are that we will be able to make connections with many of the immigrant populations in Waltham, many of whom, like Awinja, grew up eating what they grew themselves. And it just so happens that that very endeavor is a part of our emerging strategic plan! Awinja has volunteered to work on this project as part of her studies at the Heller School of Management at Brandeis and we can't wait to take her up on that.

Meg Coward is the new Executive Director of Community Farms outreach. She lives in Jamaica Plain, is a big fan of tomatoes and sweet potatoes, and is thrilled to be a part of this organization.

Community Farms Outreach

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Judy Fallows (Watertown), Vice President
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Chris Yoder (Dover)
board@communityfarms.org

Staff

Meg Coward, Executive Director
Amanda Cather, Farm Manager

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

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

Many thanks to Jen Shepherd for taking ALL of the photos for this edition of the CFO newsletter, to Trina Smith for editing, and to Cheryl Wolfe for layout.

"We love our incredible volunteers!"

Board Membership

We are currently seeking new candidates to serve on the CFO Board of Directors. The next slate of officers will be nominated in November and will begin serving their terms in January. Do you have financial experience? Experience with other nonprofits? A vision about transforming the food system? We are looking for people with many different talents who want to contribute to our farm's continued success. Please contact Judy Fallows at 617-924-5273, judyfallows@alum.mitedu or Kathy Diamond at 617-926-6025, kathydia@comcast.net.

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mairead McSweeney-Shutt

profiled by: Kathy Diamond



This has been Mairead McSweeney-Shutt's first year as a member of the CFO Board of Directors. When she was studying for her MBA at Brandeis's Heller School for Social Policy, she visited Waltham Fields Community Farm to study nonprofit business practices. She stayed on during the 2005 season as a workshare, working in the fields every Sunday in return for a weekly share of vegetables. This year she has been a paying member of the CSA.

Mairead and her husband Jason are originally from the Northwest, but now live in Arlington. Mairead runs afterschool programs in Cambridge at the Science Club for Girls. All of the jobs she has had have been for nonprofit organizations. She attended many CFO board meetings over the years as an employee and has always been impressed by the motivation of CFO's board members.

Mairead likes CFO's culture of excellence and our goal of running our farm as an example for other farms to follow. She says CFO puts into action the ideals she learned at the Heller School. It is important to her that we maintain our founder's mission of giving away food to those in need. She would like to see CFO expand so it can feed and educate more people.

Kathy Diamond of Watertown is Secretary of the CFO Board of Directors. She works as a freelance project manager for textbook publishers.

TRACTORS:

Gus

profiled by: Amanda Cather

A local farmer told me recently that since her tractor is about the same vintage as her father, she thinks about working with that tractor a little like working with her dad. "Some mornings, he's really excited to get up and go to work," she explained, "and some mornings, he's just about ready to retire."

Gus, one of our Farmall Super-A tractors, happens to be about the same age as my own father. He was manufactured in 1950, making him 56 years old this season. Gus came to WFCF in April of 2003, when he was purchased for \$3,000 at the age of 53. He is the one tractor on the farm who does only one job: cultivating.



Now, as many of you are aware, cultivating (essentially, killing weeds almost before you can see them) is a very important task on our farm, and Gus does it very well. He is set up with an offset engine and belly-mounted cultivators, so the driver can look straight down, just past his or her feet, and watch the action of the cultivators as they sweep past the crop. We can put a range of different cultivating tools on

Gus, allowing him to work with 1-, 2-, or 3-row crops, and do different kinds of cultivating. Gus loves to have his oil changed and his sparkplugs checked by the farm staff. He still has quite a bit of get-up-and-go, despite the fact that his alternator is a little bit fussy and does not always charge his battery properly. Gus's biggest hope for the future of the farm is that we can eventually purchase a big tillage tractor and maybe even a slightly larger cultivating tractor to take some of the workload off him and his sister, Gretta. After all, they are almost 57 years old.

Amanda Cather is the Waltham Fields Community Farm Manager. She is in her third season at Waltham Fields. She lives on Waltham's vibrant South Side, and is the wife of science teacher Mark Walter and mother of 3-year-old Jonah. Her only real hobby these days is listening to the Red Sox on the radio. One of her favorite parts of her job is getting to know old tractors.

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HUNGER RELIEF, AND EDUCATION**

Wish List

CFO would HUGELY benefit from donations of the following:

- __ A logo for Waltham Fields Community Farm
- __ A pick up truck
- __ A color laser printer
- __ A collating copier
- __ Scissors (for Pick Your Own)

If you'd like to donate any of these, contact Meg at megcoward@communityfarms.org

VOLUNTEERS:

Allen, Henry and Daniel Feinstein

profiled by: Wendy Cadge

This is the fourth summer that Allen Feinstein and his sons Henry, age 9, and Daniel, age 5, have volunteered at Waltham Community Farms. Allen, his wife Andrea, and their sons live in Arlington Heights. They first became involved with the farm as shareholders, only later coming to volunteer at the farm.

Allen thought it would be "a good opportunity for he and the boys to learn about where food was being produced" and to "lend a hand." They first started to go out on harvesting days several years ago to help search for squash beneath the leaves and to wash the vegetables.

Daniel loved to dig potatoes! Allen told me, "often he would end up looking like one—covered with dirt from head to toe." Henry liked to talk with the farm staff, other volunteers, and whoever else was around. Allen describes their time at the farm as "very rewarding" and invites others to join him and his sons as they dig for potatoes, pull weeds, and chat about baseball, strange weather and lots of other things as they work.

Wendy Cadge is enjoying her second year as a shareholder at Waltham Fields Community Farms. She lives in Somerville.

Editorial Note: One of Farm Manager Amanda Cather's most favorite moments on the farm this season so far was watching 5 year-old Daniel Feinstein explain to a volunteer group of cheerleaders from Mount Ida College how to harvest potatoes.



EDUCATION:

Judy Fallows

profiled by: Jen Shepherd



"To be five again." That thought sprouted in my mind as I spent a pleasant late summer evening in the Children's Learning Garden getting to know fellow shareholder, Judy Fallows. Judy introduced me and three year old ("three and a half!") Ana to a dizzying variety of pole beans...or maybe they were bush beans. ("Bush beans are just short pole beans," clarified Judy.) Her hands enthusiastically pried open the eight-plus inch long bean pods while Ana's eyes widened in anticipation. I couldn't help being reminded of the loveliness that is being a child under the spell of a spirited adult exuberantly sharing her knowledge.

Judy has been a CSA shareholder and CFO Board member for 3 years, but first became involved with Waltham Fields Community Farm six years ago as a volunteer in the Children's Learning Garden. As a science teacher for elementary school and special education students, Judy has set up a garden wherever she worked. "Kids need to move and interact with real things to learn," says Judy.

In the Children's Learning Garden, Judy has used the Seattle Tilth curriculum "Teaching Peace Through Gardening", with children from the Cambridge Adventure Day Camp – a free program for kids from low-income families. The campers come to the farm multiple times each summer to learn all sorts of farm lessons: "bee sipping" (literally sipping "pollen" through straws from artfully placed jugs of juice; learning to pollinate, just like bees!) or how to plant vegetables "Three Sisters"-style.

Volunteer Opportunities

CFO is a small non-profit with a big mission! We rely on hundreds of volunteers to make an important impact in our communities. Each year, volunteers help us in a variety of ways: doing outreach, putting together newsletters, organizing events, solving computer woes....

If you'd like to lend a hand, please contact Meg: megcoward@communityfarms.org.

Judy has always been interested in gardening and growing her own food and enjoys teaching this to others. Her hope is for the farm to continue in this suburban enclave, reaching out to the diverse population, sharing our gardening experience, learning about where our food comes from and the loving process that starts as a seed and ends in the belly.

Back at the garden, Judy explains to Ana how she made earrings with the hot pink beans. I am envious of this toddler. I, too, want to sit underneath a really cool tipi of beans, flanked by swaying sunflowers and looming cornstalks. I, too, want to sit and listen in wide wonder to all that this engaging teacher has to share. I, too, want to be five again. "Meet ya in the bean patch Ana!"

Jen Shepherd is a Watertown resident & proud third year CSA'er. "I have volunteered my time at the CSA photographing the beautiful farm & happy shareholders, also assisting in food delivery to Sandra's Lodge. When I am not daydreaming about heirloom tomatoes, I work as an executive assistant to the CEO of a Waltham-based biotech. company. But I'd much rather spend my time with my husband, Caleb, our three cats, and goofy puppy, Noodle."

Save the Dates!

Sunday, November 19th, Harvest Potluck:

Join us at the Waltham Field Station (home to the Waltham Fields Community Farm) for a celebration of the 2006 growing season!

The event kicks off at 6:00 PM. If you'd like to help organize this gathering, contact Nathan at elbows@spamcop.net. For more details as the event approaches, check our website, or call 781-899-2403.

Sunday, December 17th, Solstice Celebration:

Experience the farm in the beautiful depths of winter, at the darkest time of the year.

Keep your eyes on our website for more details.

Sunday, January 21st, Annual Meeting:

This year we are shifting our official Annual Meeting to January. We will unveil CFO's new Mission and Vision statements, as well as our Strategic Plan for the next three years. CFO members will be asked to approve the new Mission/Vision and the 2007 slate of CFO's Board of Directors.

FARMER TRAINING:

Nate Frigard

profiled by: Rebecca Olson

Nate Frigard was introduced to farming during an “idealistic phase” in college. Inspired by great bounty and the “positive feeling of producing food”, he set out to learn (and ultimately love) the work of farming.



Since then, Nate has gained impressive experience growing, marketing, studying, and teaching at farms in Northern Virginia and Santa Cruz, California. Nate originally thought he would spend this season managing a farm, but he and partner and fellow farmer Jen Smith were drawn to the Assistant Grower positions at Waltham Fields Community Farm for the opportunity to develop management skills and to grow on the East Coast. Although this is his first season farming in New England, the Holliston, MA native says: “unexpectedly, it feels like home.”

From his initial phone interview with Amanda Cather (he and Jen were traveling in India at the time), Nate felt that his goals and the goals of the farm were a good fit, and that Waltham Fields “seemed like a place where work was balanced with learning and having a life”—a difficult balance to achieve in the absorbing work of farming. The work itself combines sharing information with shareholders and managing volunteers with tending crops, harvesting, and planning distributions. One of the main skills that Nate has learned from Amanda this summer is how to prioritize and schedule crops, especially when managing a CSA.

Nate says that he now feels pretty well prepared to manage a farm, should the ideal situation present itself. He looks forward to exploring how farms help their communities thrive by focusing on local food and hopes that in the future CFO/Waltham Fields “is able to meet all of its goals, and meet them all in a rich way.”

Rebecca Olson lives in Waltham and is a first-time CSA member at Waltham Fields Community Farm. She is working on her PhD in Renaissance literature at Brandeis University.

HUNGER RELIEF:

Fernanda Dos Santos

profiled by: Cheryl Weiner

“The most rewarding aspect of my job is giving women access to healthy and nutritious foods they wouldn’t otherwise receive,” says Fernanda Dos Santos, RD. Fernanda is speaking of the partnership she coordinates between the Women’s Health Network (WHN) at the Joseph Smith Community Health Center in Waltham and the Waltham Fields Community Farm.

This two-year-old program is available to women who are low-income and between the ages of 40 to 64. To qualify, they must receive care at WHN and enroll in its cardiovascular disease prevention program. Fernanda estimates that one hundred to two hundred women benefit from the services provided by this partnership each year.

Approximately fifteen to twenty women show up for the weekly produce distributions at Waltham’s Government Center. Fernanda refers to CSA’s weekly distribution list to provide, in both English and Spanish, recipe ideas and information about the produce her clients receive. These distribution events also provide ample opportunities for Fernanda to speak with her clients about scheduling appointments for important health procedures, such as mammograms and cervical cancer screenings. Fernanda believes that this program motivates several clients to develop healthier eating habits. Looking to the future, she hopes to work towards sustaining and expanding this unique program.

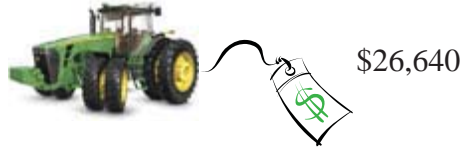
Cheryl Weiner manages the volunteer program at the Women’s Lunch Place, a daytime shelter for poor and homeless women in Boston. She and her husband got involved with CSA this year and enjoy experimenting with all the fun new vegetables!



2006 Community Farms Outreach Annual Appeal Donation Form

As we grow into our second decade, we are steadily increasing our capacity to achieve our missions of hunger relief, farm preservation, and education. We're counting on you to help make all of this important work possible!

Over the last two years, our land base has jumped from six to nine acres. Our farm equipment hasn't been able to keep up! Please consider increasing your gift this year to help us make it possible for Waltham Fields Community Farm to purchase a tractor to meet this increased production capacity in 2007 and for years to come.



\$25 Seedling* \$50 Gardener \$100 Farmer \$250 Harvester
 \$500 Community Partner \$1000 Friend of the Land Other: \$ _____

Total enclosed \$ _____

Please make checks payable to Community Farms Outreach .

Check here if you wish your donation to remain anonymous.

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____ Telephone: _____

*Donors at the \$25 level or above receive a 2006 CFO membership. All donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Mail this form, with your donation, to:
Community Farms Outreach, Inc., 240 Beaver St., Waltham, MA 02452.



2006 Waltham Fields Community Farm Staff:

From the Left, Back Row: Jen Smith, Kathleen Jones, Danny MacPhee, Mark Walter;

Front Row: Meryl LaTronica, Amanda Cather, Nate Frigard, Meg Coward.

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