



local food for everyone

Fall 2011

NEWSLETTER

“One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well.” Virginia Woolf

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

VERTICAL GARDENING, RAIN HARVESTING, AND PERMEABLE PAVEMENTS

Discuss eco-technologies with expert Trevor Smith at our Harvest Potluck/Annual Meeting

Join us at the farm on Thursday, November 10th to share a harvest meal and participate in our annual meeting. We are pleased to announce that this year's speaker is Trevor Smith, vice president of the Ecological Landscaping Association, a MCH (Massachusetts Certified Horticulturist) and an AOLCP (Accredited Organic Land Care Professional). Trevor specializes in ecological landscape design including native plant design, living walls, green roofs, rain harvesting, permeable pavements and urban farming. His slide show presentation is sure to be informative and inspiring. All are welcome at this free, annual celebration for volunteers, members and other farm friends!

Harvest Potluck and Annual Meeting

Thursday, Nov. 10th
5:30-7:30pm
At the farm
240 Beaver St., Waltham, MA

Potluck: 5:30-6:45pm

Bring a dish to share (and your own plates and utensils too if you can)!

Potluck suggestions (organized by first letter of last name)

A-L: M-S: T-Z:
Side Dish or Salad Main Dish Dessert

Annual Meeting: 6:45-7:30pm

Vote in our 2012 board members and learn about landscape eco-technologies

TAKE OUR SELF-GUIDED FARM TOUR!

Next time you stop by the farm, pick up a self-guided farm tour from our bulletin board. Packed with information about our work, physical resources, and organic agriculture principles, the tour allows people to

investigate our farm operation on their own time and at their own pace. And for families with young children, the back side of each tour station card features engaging questions for young explorers! We are incredibly grateful to Joanna Rosene-Mirvis for bringing her intelligence, creativity and time to this project. Initiated in 2008, and worked on by both Bentley University's Science of Sustainability class and individual

volunteer Mary Saudade, Joanna built on the foundation of ideas and facts previously assembled and dedicated her summer fellowship from Stanford University's Center for Public Service to bringing this project to completion. We plan to have a virtual version of the tour posted to our website soon – so stay tuned for the on-line version and in the meantime, come on out to take the real thing!



Caption: Board Member Sophia Mansori oversees the graffiti wall at Waltham Farm Day – encouraging reflection on what's meaningful about the farm and its programs and engaging people in visioning for the future of the site. Over 300 people attended this free event on 9/24, celebrating local farming and Harvest for Students Week.



PLANNING UNDERWAY FOR FUTURE USES AND RENOVATIONS AT UMASS WALTHAM PROPERTY

Eight of the eleven acres we cultivate, and the base of operations for all of our programs is at the former agricultural field station owned by the University of Massachusetts. For the last fifteen years we have built up an incredibly vibrant non-profit farm operation at this property, in concert with additional land and building tenants, including GROW (Green Rows of Waltham) Community Gardens, BACE (Boston Area Climate Experiment), Mass Farmers Markets, Boston Area Gleaners and UMass' own regional 4-H program. But each day, amidst all the beauty and good work, the physical structures that once enabled agricultural research and farm support services fall into further disrepair. With this growing liability risk, the land under deed restrictions from historic farm owner Cornelia Warren, the soil classified as prime for agriculture, and the location accessible for a large portion of the State's dwellers, there is clear consensus among UMass property overseers, property tenants and community members that the time has come to create a new vision for the site regarding renovations and program opportunities.

Over the last few months, leaders of the University's Center for Agriculture, the unit of the UMass College of Natural Sciences that has responsibility for the property (and parent unit of UMass Extension), have undertaken an interview process to gain feedback and ideas from former and current Waltham property users as well as other interested parties. Waltham Fields Community Farm has participated fully in this process, and has received several assurances that our desire to continue using the land will be respected. We are excited about the opportunity to help develop resources and additional program partnerships with UMass in order to best serve the educational interests of the region. In addition to participation in meetings and interviews by our Board of Directors and staff, we were excited to open the visioning process to attendees at this year's Waltham Farm Day, through a graffiti wall activity that garnered a wealth of interesting comments and ideas. If you'd like to lend your own voice, please feel free to get in touch with us (see page 2 for contact information).

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FROM THE FARM OFFICE

In a radio interview I heard with farmer/author Ben Hewitt, he talked about his efforts to participate in what he calls restorative agriculture. That term, restorative agriculture, resonated with me, and I've been thinking about it quite a bit these last few weeks. It feels like it really hits at the heart of so many of our efforts.

Each day, I am witness to new ways in which our staff and programs are working to rejuvenate people's lives, pass along agricultural knowledge, and maintain a productive land base. Our article here with John Cook from BU's School of Medicine and seeing the Waltham Fields Outreach Market in action let me know that the kind of agriculture we practice is restorative to human beings in need; tasting recipes that kids in the Learning Garden prepared from vegetables they tended and harvested themselves let me know that we are helping to restore healthy diets for younger generations; daily passes by my window from the man who takes his morning walk around the perimeter of the farm let me know that our presence is restoring his mental well-being; soil tests that show increased organic matter over time let me know that our agriculture is restorative to the fields; and witnessing Larisa Jacobson and Lauren Weinberg participate in our farmer training program this year let me know that we are aiding restoration of the profession of agriculture as well.

As fall sets in, the cold brings with it the sweetness of root starches turning to sugars, and a bounty of cabbage family greens that inspire rich stews and

sautés. While the impending frosts will invariably make us slow down, the farmers will be harvesting into December and distributing storage crops through most of the winter, and we have a number of exciting year-end fundraisers planned to support our charitable work that we'd love for you to attend (see back page)!

Thank you for your continued involvement and support,
Claire Kozower, Executive Director

The Elephant Walk Waltham

**Benefit Restaurant Program • All of October
at The Elephant Walk • 663 Main St., Waltham**

Come on out for a delicious lunch or dinner at The Elephant Walk (Waltham location only) anytime in October and you'll be supporting Waltham Fields.

We're thrilled to be the October beneficiary of the Benefit Restaurant program at The Elephant Walk.
3% of all sales for the month will be donated to us!

Make Reservations Today:

781-899-2244 or
www.elephantwalk.com



WALTHAM FIELDS COMMUNITY FARM

2010 Board of Directors

Rebecca Nesson, President (Cambridge)
Janet Yeracaris, Vice President (Newton)
Nathan Weston, Secretary (Watertown)
Jay Rudolph, Treasurer (Somerville)

Judy Fallows (Watertown)
Alicia Harvie (Cambridge)
Meryl LaTronica (Dover)
Jay Luker (Lexington)
Sophia Mansori (Cambridge)
Margaret Post (Waltham)
Chris Yoder (Dover)

Fall Staff

Claire Kozower, Executive Director
Amanda Cather, Farm Manager
Andy Scherer, Field Manager
Dan Roberts, Field Manager
Erinn Roberts, Greenhouse/Field Manager
Jericho Bicknell, Education & Volunteer Coordinator
Deb Guttormsen, Bookkeeper & Tech Coordinator
Marla Rhodes, Development Coordinator
Larisa Jacobson & Lauren Weinberg, Assistant Growers
Marie Benkley, Rebekah Carter, Kristin Cleveland, and Dede Dussault, Learning Garden Educators
Becca Carden, Fall Intern from Brandeis University

We promote local agriculture and food access through our farming operations and educational programs, using practices that are socially, ecologically, and economically sustainable. We encourage healthy relationships between people, their food supply, and the land from which it grows.

Waltham Fields Community Farm is the official business name of Community Farms Outreach, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization.

Contact Us

240 Beaver St. • Waltham, MA 02452
(781) 899-2403 • www.communityfarms.org

Check out our blog. Like us on facebook.

FROM THE BOARD

This year the farm set a high goal of \$50,000 of produce grown for food assistance efforts. Recently, a friend and I accompanied Claire on a walk around the fields and she showed us the rows behind the perennial garden. They are planted in young carrots and lettuce seedlings and we learned that they are designated for the Waltham Public Schools as part of our food access program. As our produce makes its way into the featured vegetable spot for the next few months in Waltham school cafeterias, we feel good about helping to nourish our community's youth. And we continue to hold free public events, like our recent Waltham Farm Day, so that students get the chance to take their food full circle and see their lunches growing in the field.

This August the Board of Directors approved a new Strategic Plan. The document is the result of many conversations about how best to serve our mission over the next three years while continuing to strengthen the organization and meet citizen needs. To those familiar with us, the plan will feel continuous with what you already know about what we do. It maintains our commitment to growing produce for food access and for our community and focuses on educational programming that brings people on to the farm. It is available on our website and I hope that when you read it, you will feed proud of your support for WFCF.

A few weeks ago I was on the farm with my family for the Empty Bowls Dinner, and I certainly felt proud of my own support for WFCF. The evening was perfect. We sat at a table with a couple from Waltham, one of whom volunteers in the fields. Our children danced in the grass with the other kids while we ate delicious soup made by local restaurants from WFCF produce. The beautiful bowls we ate with and went home with were made by one of our farmers, Andy Scherer. It is inspiring to have a staff so universally committed that they put in this kind of above-and-beyond effort to help make our mission-based programs possible.

Each of us participates in different pieces of the farm's activities, from working the fields, to joining us for events, to picking up shares, to attending programs, to eating the vegetables. I hope that as you reflect on this year you have as many good memories as I do. Perhaps your child experienced one of our excellent education programs, or your company came and volunteered, or you cooked one of Rebekah's blog recipes, or grew your own vegetables from our seedling sale plants, or ate raspberries out in the field. Enjoy the end of the season and thank you for making Waltham Fields Community Farm so meaningful.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Nesson, Board President

FOOD SECURITY CONVERSATION WITH JOHN COOK

The number of children living in poverty in the U.S. has risen almost 20% in the last decade, with over 18% of Massachusetts children now classified as living with food insecurity. The Greater Boston Food Bank and Food for Free of Cambridge, two of the larger local hunger relief agencies that WFCF donates vegetables to, report record increases in public demand for their assistance. And at our own Outreach Market on the south side of Waltham, we've seen almost double the participation from last year to this year, distributing over \$1,500 worth of fresh produce per week directly to families in need.

Despite the best efforts of those working in the food assistance and health care professions, food insecurity on the rise means more of our nation's children are growing up without the opportunity for proper brain development and full learning capacity, the ability to fight illnesses, and the chance to make strong contributions to the workforce. Waltham Fields Community Farm recently caught up with one of the leading experts on child food insecurity, John Cook, to try and put our work into context and gain inspiration for reversing this alarming trend. John is a long-time WFCF member and Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Boston University's School of Medicine.

WFCF: What are some specific things that need to happen to stem the rising trend of food insecurity among households and children?

John Cook: Clearly the #1 thing is jobs that pay living wages. The primary proximal cause of food insecurity in the US is inadequate household resources, or in the extreme, poverty. And the only way to avoid or overcome poverty is for people to have jobs that pay living wages. Unfortunately right now, neither of those components are available to all families. But healthy eating is the goal and solution, for addressing both under-consumption and over-consumption, and that requires access to affordable healthful foods. And that is where WFCF plays an increasingly important role; in helping to make healthful food available and accessible at affordable prices.

WFCF: Do you think the educational programs WFCF offers have a large role to play in addition to our direct food assistance distributions?

John Cook: There is a monumental need in the US for everyone to understand the food system, both locally and more broadly, so we can change it and improve it. We have a national industrial food system developed over several generations that is literally killing us. And it is doing that largely because our level of awareness of that food system is very limited. As children, of all ages, learn about more healthful foods, how they are grown, how they are prepared, and how they can do those things themselves, their awareness of the food system changes in some fundamental and very important ways. Most important, they learn that they can have some control over the foods they eat, and that they do not have to be passive, unaware "consumers" of whatever the industrial food system provides. And that awareness is remarkably empowering. It is the beginning of a very different, healthier understanding of the food system, and the role we all play in it. So the programs WFCF is doing with children are quite literally "seeds of change," in the best possible sense.

WFCF: For those of us who are food secure, and don't have to worry about where their next meal is going to come from, what kinds of things can we do as individuals to help those in need?

John Cook: The first and most important thing food-secure people can do to help food-insecure people is to honestly, on the deepest possible level, accept that they are not different or separate from them. There is no "us" and "them" in the food security picture; there is only us. For one thing, whether we want to accept and admit it or not, any one of us could be food-insecure within a very short time. It only takes losing a job, having a major medical problem, or any number of similar circumstances, to push any of us into food insecurity. And the second important thing is to

realize that we are members of a community, and if some members of the community don't have enough and suffer as a result, then all our lives are diminished. Once these basic realities are accepted, as my Quaker elders say, "Way will open." We will begin to see how to make a difference, and we will do it. Not out of obligation, or out of fear, but out of compassion and hope and realization that we are building stronger community.

WFCF: Food insecurity is tied to so many things, including housing and employment, and even changing weather patterns (climate change). What recommendations do you have for families struggling with putting enough food on the table?

John Cook: The social infrastructures we have built to help people who are food insecure work very well, when they are adequately funded and people are not actively deterred from using them. Those infrastructures include the fifteen or so federal food assistance programs, of which SNAP (previously food stamps) is the largest and most important, but they also include the network of private food assistance sources. My strongest recommendation to food insecure families is to view these two food assistance systems as legitimate parts of the overall food system that are there for all of us when we need them. After all, we pay for them, one way or another, so they are ours; they belong to us. And we should feel no shame, guilt or stigma if we need to use them. That's what they are for, to help keep our communities and their residents strong and healthy. So here again, the recommendation essentially reduces to "learn more about your food system, and actively participate in it."

WFCF: Can you share with us a story of hope from your experiences?

John Cook: This question is a good reminder for me; I spend so much time pouring over "bad news" statistics, like the recent reports from USDA and the Census Bureau on food insecurity and poverty, both of which are at unprecedented levels, that I need to be reminded to think about and remember the hopeful stories. And I've seen and heard so many. One recent hopeful story comes from a project that one of the sites in our multi-site research center started a year or so ago. It's called Witnesses to Hunger (<http://www.witnessestohunger.org/>). Mariana Chilton, the Children's HealthWatch (<http://www.childrenshealthwatch.org/>) principal investigator in Philadelphia started the program by giving low-income food-insecure single mothers digital cameras to document their experience of hunger. And that process has empowered those mothers in ways that are truly extraordinary. They have exhibited their photos in the US Senate office building in Washington, DC, and given testimony before Congressional committees, and they have become incredible witnesses, to the hunger they and their children experience and to the social injustice that underlies it. Those mothers give me real hope.




Gianna and Gina, participants in our new Farmer for a Week summer program, proudly display their freshly-dug carrots, with the tops bound for a natural fiber dye and the roots destined for their families' dinner plates.



240 Beaver Street
Waltham, MA 02452
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{w} communityfarms.org



 Printed on recycled paper

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Harvest Potluck Volunteers

We're looking for 10–15 volunteers to help with our Harvest Potluck on Thursday, November 10th. We need people on the day of the event as well as ahead of time. If interested, please contact Jericho at 781-899-2403 x2 or jericho@communityfarms.org

Fall Field Volunteering – Saturdays, through October 29th

Drop-in volunteers of all ages are welcome to assist us on Saturday mornings. Stay for an hour or up until noon, but please show up at 9am so everyone can get started as a team. Meet at the volunteer kiosk near the container garden.

Winter Share Harvest and Distribution Help

We need a few key volunteers to help us during the weeks leading up to our Nov. and Dec. winter share distributions. If interested, please contact Amanda at farmmanager@communityfarms.org

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

The Elephant Walk in Waltham Benefit Restaurant Program, All of October

All lunches and dinners at The Elephant Walk in Waltham benefit the farm in October. See elephantwalk.com/Waltham for menus, hours and to make reservations!

Killer Party Dishes Fresh from the Farm, Thurs. Oct. 6, 6–9pm

Spend an evening at the farm making a delicious meal with Chef JJ Gonson of Cuisine en Locale. We still have a few spaces left. Register today through our website!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! *continued*

Harvest Potluck and Annual Meeting, Thursday, Nov. 10, 5:30–7:30pm

Bring a dish to share (and your own plate and utensils if you can). Enjoy landscape expert Trevor Smith's presentation on eco-technologies. All are welcome at this free, annual celebration for volunteers, members and other farm friends! See page 1 for more information and potluck suggestions.

REAP Benefit Dinner at Kitchen on Common, Sunday, Nov. 13, 5:30pm

Assist with (R)aising Funds for (E)ducation and Food (A)ccess (P)rograms. Enjoy a wonderful farm-fresh meal with chef Joh Kokubo and Waltham Fields produce. Our farmers will be present for some good conversation. \$50/person plus tax and tip. Seating is limited.

Make Reservations Today! Kitchen on Common, 442 Common St., Belmont: 617-484-4328.

Benefit Concert at Johnny D's with Will Dailey, Jay Psaros and Tim Gearan, Tuesday, Nov. 29, 7:30pm

Join us at Johnny D's Restaurant and Music Club in Somerville for an evening with three of Boston's best songwriters. \$15 admission, check out the dinner/show package.

Make Reservations Today! Johnny D's, 17 Holland St., Somerville: 617-776-2004, www.johnnyds.com

Felt Flower Workshop, Thursday, Dec. 8, 6–9pm

Treat yourself to a creative night out and come home with felted flowers, perfect hand-made gifts in time for the holidays. Save the date and check our website soon for more details.

Flatbread Pizza Company Fundraiser (in Somerville), Tuesday, Dec. 13, 5pm until close

Part of the evening's pizza sales at the Davis Sq. location (45 Day St.) will go to us. Each pizza sold results in a cash donation to the farm! Please bring your friends and family out for some brick-oven pies and bowling. Take out helps us too.