

# FREEDOM FARM NEWS



YOUTH FROM CAMP DEERPARK  
PLANT SEEDS IN THE GARDEN

## Community. We need each other!!!

Many years ago I was introduced to the idea of community while attending a college retreat on nonviolence at the Agape Community in Ware, Ma. We discussed the physical outward forms of violence which systemically permeate our culture. More importantly, we reflected on the inward changes needed to break the chains that bound our minds, spirits to the numbing acceptance of violations against self and others. Our facilitators suggested that we take a closer look at the subliminal messages of repression against women and the poor in media images. They asked probing questions such as, "What are some reoccurring patterns of violence?" and "Does might make right?"



SIGHT OF NEW HOOPHOUSE



FOOD, FAITH, & FELLOWSHIP



MMF VOLUNTEERS

Whether it was the aura of seclusion in 32 acres of wooded land, the delicious vegetarian meals (I was a meat eater back then), or the thought provoking discussions/reflections rooted in Gospel teaching, I was hooked. With all the wonderful lessons learned that weekend, what truly blew my mind was watching someone go into the garden, harvest food, cook and eat it. You see, I grew up eating a lot of canned vegetables in the inner-city. Little did I know that weekend would have such a profound impact on my life. A life that will be built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and his call to love and service.

When we think of the word “community”, some people revert to images of communes, polygamy, or religious fanatics controlling the minds of the masses. I would like to offer a different image. Picture a place where people live and work together, pray together, and serve the needs of the surrounding neighborhood and beyond. A place where conflict and struggle is just as much a part of life as laughter and peace.

In Acts 2 Luke writes of the fledgling Christian community, *“all who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the good will of all the people.”* Acts 2:44-46

A life lived in community should not be based on the merits of the individual alone, but rather the unity of individuals who are rooted in the transformative witness of Christ’s call to have a personal relationship with him. Out of this intimate connection comes a love ethic that moves your spirit to loving and serving your *“neighbor as yourself.”* Leviticus 19:18

Soon after our first son Josiah was born, we moved out of Menno House, a Mennonite community house in lower Manhattan. We moved to an apartment in the Bronx, where we lived as a single family unit for three years. Life was definitely different starting a family outside the communal structure, but it wasn’t too long before we created a community of our own. Along with Ann’s family we bought a farm in Orange County, NY, in the town of Mount Hope. We quickly experienced God’s presence, confirmation, and blessings, saying, “This is what I have in store for you...”

In last year’s newsletter, we mentioned that we didn’t have a Fall harvest because of critter damage. Many of you, our extended community, volunteered your time, muscle, and/or financial resources for which we give much thanks to God for you. I want to point out two neighboring communities who offered their assistance. The Bruderhof community(Fox Hill) in Walden, NY helped purchase and set up a double fence to keep out the deer. It worked extremely well. This year’s harvest was bountiful. They also helped, along with the members of Camp Deerpark and Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship (MMF) church, build a second hoop house (outdoor greenhouse). Hoop houses enable us to extend the growing season and share more food with our neighbors in need. MMF members provide helping hands in the Spring and Fall each year. Individuals such as yourselves continue to support our efforts to serve and be a presence for God in the world.

We are still praying for God to send us members who will help us grow in community. Working as a full-time farmer and fireman takes up a lot of time. If you feel led by God to help grow food and serve others, give us a call. We are in need of an intern/volunteer coordinator who can farm and lead young people in day to day tasks. Since things love to break down on a farm, we are in serious need of a maintenance director/grounds keeper. Lastly, we pray God will send a part-time development director to take on grants that cross our desk - and another farmer.

For us at Freedom Farm Community, life is strong, intense, wonderful, challenging, spirit-filled, messy, includes conflict, beautiful, and blessed. I wouldn’t want to have it any other way.

# Summer News and Haikus by Katrina Kennel

This summer, I was fortunate to live and work at Freedom Farm Community. I was met with incredible hospitality and generosity; encouraged in collaboration and creativity; and challenged by flexibility and patience. The support from everyone involved in the community, made it a space of rejuvenation and personal growth for me. The double-daily prayer meetings, encouraged me spiritually and gave me plenty of opportunities to pursue my own faith. Edgar and Ann were brilliantly patient at explaining everything about growing food, and teaching me the basics of farming. Many of the wonderful people at Camp Deerpark, took me in and made me feel welcome. The incredible library spread out through every nook and cranny kept me intellectually engaged and always learning new things. With all of this, it would be impossible to not enjoy my time at the farm, but by far, my favorite part of the experience was meeting all of the wonderful people who passed through. Volunteers, visitors, and family members came for varying lengths of time, but I was able to work alongside each of them and hear some of their stories. Unfortunately, the end to this internship came all too quickly. I will treasure my time at the farm, and remember this experience as a beautiful representation of community.

Since it is nearly impossible to fully describe the summer, I wrote a series of FreeFa Haiku to try (I cheated once, but it was too funny to pass up):

People need veggies  
And a place of quiet rest  
Welcome to the Farm.

Today is Tuesday.  
Let's have hummus for dinner.  
Who's leading the prayer?

A trip with NASA  
Ends in happiness for J  
And a new Bball.

Micah got a chick,  
Chick, Jesse, Chipper, Lucky,  
What will we call it?

There are 40 youth  
Loading a bus, on their way,  
To our place. Right now.

To avoid bad smells,  
**DON'T PUT MEAT IN THE COMPOST.**  
We won't let it go.

Ode to Ann's best soup:  
I love potato leek soup.  
Let's have it again.

Cukes, lopes, raspberries,  
Tomatoes, eggplant, swiss chard  
Arugula, kale.

Where could Edgar be?  
If it's 5 in the morning  
Farming with a smile.

Groundhogs ate the food.  
Matt's gun\* in an umbrella sleeve  
Will surely stop them.

Are you going out?  
Let me give you a water  
Bottle. Or seven.

Have you seen the yurt?  
Poison ivy, broken step  
With love, Team Chaos

Hospitable Frank,  
Yes, we'll see the Alpacas.  
This week, I promise.

Welcome, everyone!  
There is plenty to do here,  
Let's work together.



\*Bb gun

# Valleys and Hills by Ann Rader

It's already time for a new season at the farm! And time to reflect on the season that has just come to pass.

## Hard times:

Edgar's mom, Rosetta Hayes a.k.a. "Mima", passed away July 7, 2015 from recently diagnosed uterine cancer. Mima has been with us many times at the farm, shooting hoops with the grandkids, teaching us to cook collard greens... She shared her enduring faith with us - and loved her family unconditionally. We miss her so much.



Mima at Freedom Farm (with baby Micah, Josiah, Grandma)

11/20/39-7/7/15

## Highlights:

THANKS for help in building and paying for a double (solar) electric fence. We watched with glee as a young deer looked in at the enticing produce, and scampered off to the woods to find more accessible food elsewhere. Freedom Farm Community was able to share well over 1,700 pounds of fresh vegetables and fruit this year. This is small potatoes for big farm operations, but for our small volunteer team - it's an exciting victory.

This past season we had more direct contact with the people who cooked and ate our produce - which was a real treat. To name a few -- Chef Rick and Jason at Camp Deerpark worked hard to serve hundreds of guests from New York City, children to seniors, wonderful hot meals on a simple budget. Chef Rick transformed our winter squash - even the squumkins (an inadvertent cross between pumpkins and winter squash) into heavenly soups, roasted calabaza, etc. Participants in our local Otisville Mt. Hope Presbyterian Food Pantry seemed as pleased to meet the farmer as I was to meet them.





Thank God for our interns and volunteers. Matthew's enthusiasm for the growing process was thoroughly infectious --- *look at the tiny green watermelons emerging!* Katrina got me to laugh again the way I did as a girl - helpless over a melted tub of peach gummy rings. She weeded so thoroughly we called it "threading." We couldn't have asked for more brilliant interns. Matthew's dear cousin Jenny joined the team for 3 weeks, and as the healthiest eater I know, inspired us to eat more greens than ever. To our volunteers, many of whom returned to the farm this year, and interns --- Thank you so much! We love you.

*For you shall go out in joy,  
and be led back in peace;  
the mountains and the hills  
before you  
shall burst into song,  
and all the trees of the field shall  
clap their hands. (Isaiah 55.12)*

*Joy.* Even our valley burst into song when youth from Camp Deerpark belted their praises under the night sky. *Peace.* At our next campfire, young adults from Foxhill Community sang their hearts out in four-part harmony.

Thank you for your precious time, labor, bagged leaves and compost, recycled containers for produce, scrap wood, used cars, donations, prayers --- these are all vital signs to us of the divine. They give us hope. They give us courage. They make this Freedom Farm Community.

## My Awesome Summer at Freedom Farm by Matthew Johnson

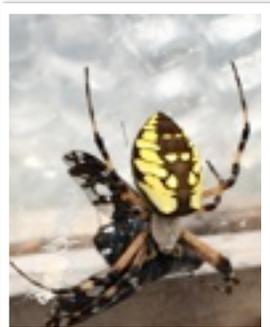
When I began my summer this year there was a surprising lack of purpose. Where in previous years I was content to stay at home, I no longer felt the need to. Instead I felt a calling, a calling to do something. When my Biology professor sent out an email to all the Biology majors with an available internship in sustainable agriculture through a place called Freedom Farm I thought, "This is what I'm looking for, what do I have to lose?". I feel that God led me there and I couldn't be happier He did. When I began here I had little experience with growing food, but throughout the summer by discovering and relating what I've learned in my Biology classes, I began to understand. I became inspired to learn more and try it out for myself, even after I left.

I learned to work with the plants, insects, and all the animals of the environment. All except for the groundhog, who in his stubborn heart never yielded to reason and in his selfish mind thought only of himself and not the toil put into the garden. Although I never reconciled with this beast that stole food from the mouths of the hungry, I took comfort in a dream. A dream of fresh lean meat cooked over a piping skillet and served with eggs.

While I encountered many things I expected on a nonprofit organic farm, I also experienced many things I did not expect. One such experience was the community. Unlike so many other places I had encountered in my life, the concept of "come then move on" did not exist for this family. Instead I found a community that behaved like family that stretched far beyond blood relations and extended to every person willing to be a part of it. It was a sense of acceptance that I had experienced nowhere else. The hardest part of this internship is not the labor, the separation from home and family, or the fear of new experiences. It's the goodbye. The leaving of one family to be with another, knowing the two cannot both be given your time. But the hope comes with the promise of this community, this family, and you take that promise with you when you leave. A promise that does not hastily speak "goodbye", but instead beckons "until we meet again".



# YEAR IN PHOTOS





Freedom Farm Community at "Rock the Block" in Middletown  
hosted by Rock of Refuge church

## COMMUNITY NEEDS

1. INTERNS AND INTERN COORDINATOR FOR GROWING SEASON
2. HELP WITH REPAIRS (BROKEN SCREEN DOORS, WINDOWS, YURT STEPS, ETC.)
3. VOLUNTEERS TO HELP WITH FARMING
4. PRAYERS
5. LONG TERM COMMUNITY MEMBER

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