

Freedom Farm

2009-2010 SEASON

COMMUNITY NEWS

ISSUE ONE



*cherry tomatoes(l)
cilantro seedling(m)
(above) Haquyen
(MMF volunteer) planting
seeds in soil blocks*

Food For Thought: Sustaining Life over Profits by Edgar Hayes

It is 12 PM on a beautiful Saturday afternoon, and you are standing in the checkout line of the neighborhood supermarket. You've just drudgingly gone from aisle to aisle filling your shopping cart with canned goods, meats, dairy, "fresh" produce, and other essential items for the week ahead. You pause to note the collective 'beeps' ringing throughout the area as each item rolls along the conveyor belt to the anxiously awaiting price scanner. The cashier interrupts the reverie with a droned "paper or plastic?" You respond in kind with "paper please." He begins to bag your groceries while you dial up the cost onto your credit card. When finished, in one breath, he emits a droned "have a nice day, next in line please" without even looking at you. You again respond in kind, "you too."

While pushing along your cart through the automated doors and into the parking lot, you pause for a moment to ask yourself- where was the connectedness with this person and with this food? Where did it come from? What hands toiled the land, harvested this crop? What natural resources were used up to get these products to this supermarket? These and many other questions must be asked to understand our food system.



The crisis of our food system today is that it is intertwined with a non sustainable market driven by profits before people and the environment



Micah and Josiah hamming it up at the pumpkin table



(L) Rows and rows of delicious and nutritious leafy greens

(R) Leafy greens & onion seedlings soaking up the sun rays



Our food system has undergone many changes in the past 50 years. The way in which many families eat has gone from local farm food to factory farms from long distances to our neighborhood supermarkets; from home cooked meals to fast food take-out; from whole foods to processed, synthetic, cloned, or genetically modified food sources.

Do you know what your “food’s chain” is? What was the process or journey of a particular food from it’s creation to your plate? How many hands/places did it pass through? Under what conditions was it grown (organic, genetically modified, chemically, cloned)? Was it produced with the individual laborer, consumer, or environment in mind or was it just for profit?

In the book of Genesis chapter 1 God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation; plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.”

God also said “it is good” and so it was since the beginning of time. Seeds were saved to produce “fruit” from one generation to the next. The time honored tradition of saving seeds is still practiced today on family farms and heirloom seed supply stores. Along with the seeds that go into it, the land is also cared for and nurtured (sustained) in a way that naturally gives back what was taken away.

The crisis of our food system today is that it is intertwined with a non sustainable market driven by profits before people and the environment. To get a small understanding of this, we have to take a look at the science of genetically modified organisms (GMO) as it relates to seeds. The idea behind GMOs is to produce a bigger, better looking, pesticide/herbicide/disease resistant crop- for example: weeds can wreak havoc on a farm. So companies like Monsanto created a way for a plant to withstand the effects of their own company- created herbicidal spray by altering the seeds genetic makeup. During the growing season, farmers spray their land and crops with the herbicide. The weeds near the crop die off while the crop remains alive. It sounds good on the surface, but what effects will it have on the environment, on the human system? Another form of GMO in the system is “terminator gene” technology, developed to force farmers to buy seeds every year. When a plant(crop) reaches a certain maturation stage, a toxin is given off to destroy the embryo of the seed. It’s ability to reproduce no longer exists. When a farmer harvests this crop and tries to save the seeds for the following year, they won’t produce anything. The seeds are worthless. They have to go back to the seed supply store year after year to purchase seeds. Monsanto’s profits increase tremendously, because it holds the patent on this technology. Has there been adequate testing and oversight before this technology was introduced into the food system? We have to ponder this question and many others in our hearts and minds as we reflect on the Creation story. God created the earth in all it’s splendor and beauty to support and sustain life through the existence of a seed. Here at Freedom Farm, those same seeds passed down from generation to generation are used to grow bountiful food. That food in turn is used to support soup kitchens, shelters, food banks, and other organizations in need. We are called to share our food ‘with those who have none.’ (Luke 3:11)

It is our hope that in the end, God will look upon what we do here and say, “It is good.”



NEWS FLASH!



Bronx Family To Join Freedom Farm

Yes! You've heard it here first folks. The Torres-Fleming family has moved from the **posh** South Bronx to take a walk on the "wild" side. No more **cushy** streets and **padded** apartments for them. They've downsized to grazing cows, roaming deer, gathering their food from **outdoors**, and pulling weeds. Soon they will be hugging trees and eating granola. Yes! God is an **awesome** God. Who will be next? Will it be corporate bank's CEOs? Will it be You? Stay Tuned!!!

Poetry Corner

by Amanda Joy Rader

We scurry around Freedom
Farm---
This treasured cast of spirits.
Ann, E, Alexie, and I in a
symbolic movement of the
message we share with incoming
friends

UBUNTU

I am, we are
food, physical, spiritual, creative
dancing the dance gifted us in
humbled awareness-- its *life* that
dances us

we just open our hearts, minds,
spirits to the tantalizing mystery
Born from love and compassion
for our perfect yet seemingly
imperfect selves, our energies
exude out,
crisscross, tangle, tango,
exponentiating possibility and
power of love, of community--
in wholeness together



Volunteer Place



Sylvia



Kirk

Carla



Haquyen

Mica & Grace



*Dan Menz-Erb
Dan Hood*

*Michelle,
Ann, &
Micah*



*Manhattan
Mennonite
Fellowship*



*Marion, & Paige
St. John's Church
Boalsburg, Pa.*

Thank you for all the great help you beautiful volunteers (also those not pictured) gave to Freedom Farm this year. You might have heard us say "we couldn't have done it without you" before, but trust me, a small community living on this big farm truly cannot do it without your help and God's, so thank you very very very much. We are always in need of your support year round. If you know of anyone who is worthy of the task of pulling weeds or doing a manure run, please pass on our information to them. You can come for the day to escape the "noise" of life. We also invite you for a short or long-term stay. Just fill out the intern application on our website.

A letter from Ann

Dear family, friends, and community,

Another year has passed and life at Freedom Farm continues to be an adventure. Every day is different here, as community-building involves hospitality, Edgar's firefighting schedule varies from week to week, and Josiah (7) and Micah (3) are full of new ways to express themselves (great when its art, tough when its Kung Fu Tiger moves on each other).

We're looking forward to winter 2010 which, like 2009, involves a lot of planning - for the food and people (including us) that God will help grow in the coming year. Edgar orders the seeds we don't have (for a diverse crop of veggies, fruits, and flowers), and plans the gardens' rotations to sustain the soil. This past year has been a stellar year for greens (collards and kale), some of the first crops we plant (around February), much to the delight of our local soup kitchens since they are very popular there and because more folks have been needing free nutritious food in this tough economic climate.

Edgar and I survived the busyness of last Spring (the planting season) with the help of a few volunteers and the "help" (hee hee) of Micah's entire Busy Bee Preschool, (@ 50 3 and 4 yr. olds), who planted zinnia seeds to grow for Mother's Day and walked to visit Freedom Hill Farm's cows and chickens (our neighbors in ministry). Participants in Camp Deerpark's *Food and Faith Retreat* visited Freedom Farm and Freedom Hill Farm as well, after a "From Seed to Plate" organic gardening workshop with us at the camp.

We were excited when John and Alexie Torres-Fleming, and their children, Patrick (8) and Grace (4) came for the summer to help with everything during Alexie's sabbatical from 15 years of work as executive director of Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ) in the Bronx.

In the summer, YMPJ and Camp Deerpark, our local Mennonite Camp that hosts youth from New York City,



each sent a weekly group of around 20-40 young people to Freedom Farm to experience planting, harvesting, farm-cooking, and reflection on God's love, manifest in the land and in one another.

Soon after the Torres-Fleming family settled in and youth summer sessions began, my cousin Amanda arrived on the scene for the summer, just in time to help finish constructing the yurt, a permanent livable tent for interns and guests. With Dad as project manager, our little team finished the project in around 4 days. The four kids (Josiah, Micah, Patrick, Grace) tried to help but um... we're glad no one got hurt and thanks to Mom for helping with childcare (the hardest and one of the Most important jobs on the farm.) Come check out the yurt! It could be yours while you farm with us during the 2010 growing season!

The pathway to the yurt is a work in progress - our summer youth each painted a rock as an expression of themselves, as part of an exercise related to the "We are because I am, I am because We are" theme we did with Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice. We reflected on community as a place where each member is celebrated as part of the great "I AM."

At the end of one of our intense 5 hour Freedom Farm sessions with YMPJ, after youth and staff had returned muddy farm boots, gathered cilantro, broccoli and flowers, and were packed in the van, fourteen-year old Tracy wanted to rush back with me to the field to find an onion. I wish you could've seen the enthusiasm as she found a red onion to pull up and take home to the Bronx. What a package - pull on that shooting green chive-like top -- and there's the prize. I love those direct exchanges; crunchy round gift - straight from God - to Tracy. All the grunt work of shoveling manure, cleaning up messes, and fumbling to teach Peace to teenagers, are worth moments like this.

When summer ends, I'm tired and relieved, but a little sad more youth can't stay longer at Freedom Farm to enjoy the abundance of Fall. However, there are always plenty of folks with whom to share the farm food. Our local Cornell Cooperative Extension's Gleaning program coordinator, Stiles Najac, comes, sometimes with a few volunteers, to help us harvest food to donate. This year she brought a group of men from a local half-way house that helps folks recover from addiction and related hardships. They loved it here and came back several times to help out. Even though a tomato blight hit much of the Northeast Coast, we were blessed with enough tomatoes to share with folks who are hungry in our area. There's nothing like vine-ripened organic tomatoes - fresh and in sauces and soups. Maybe this year St. Margaret's soup kitchen in Middletown, NY will rival Le Restaurante Gourmet.

At the end of October, Verdad y Vida, a Bronx-based church retreating at Camp Deerpark, visited Freedom Farm and helped harvest. A highlight of their visit for me was when two participants husked some corn in the field and their eyes widened as they discovered that it was "their corn," blue Azteca corn from Mexico. This was late corn I was ready to use for decoration, but they roasted it up marvelously over the fire that night at camp, just like back home.

We're always touched by and so thankful to everyone who helps out with this Freedom Farm project. Volunteers and interns who pull up weeds, harvest, help with the children and youth. And to all of you, our extended community, who pray for us, send us gifts and donations, and are part of our web of support. You are a life-line to us. Farming lends itself to many many hands. It is abundant in its work and in its fruits. Dad emailed me a prayer from Bread for the World (a church-based hunger organization) that fits Freedom Farm Community. I consider the tilling and weeding mentioned in the prayer to be both literal and spiritual. We till in nourishing compost to promote plant growth, and we nourish ourselves with prayer and listening to one another. We pull up tough weeds that threaten our crops, and we root out weeds of violence and selfishness that separate us. I'll close with this simple prayer.

All hands together to change the world
All hands together to till the land
All hands together to pull up weeds
All hands together to share the joy.
Amen.

Love,
Ann





Support Freedom Farm Community

Each year continues to be a blessing for us and those we serve because of your love, prayers, and wonderful support. Unfortunately, the economy has put an early freeze on many wallets this year. Financial support of our operations comes directly from donors like yourself. If you are able, please send a tax-deductible donation to:

Freedom Farm Community
2407 Mount Hope Road
Middletown, NY 10940

If you would like to visit us, please write to the above address or call us at (845) 386-8117. You can also email or look us up on the web at:

www.freedomfarmcommunity.org

email: info@freedomfarmcommunity.org

Thank you and God bless.

Freedom Farm Community