

COMMUNITY HOMESTEAD

NEWSLETTER: WINTER 2016



501 280th Street, Osceola, WI 54020 (715) 294-3038 www.communityhomestead.org

Mission: “to establish and maintain a community so that people with developmental and other disabilities can reach their fullest human potential”

Wisconsin Winter is not designed for the faint-hearted! Fortunately, we are in the company of people who can be talked into sled rides, and snow fights, who jump into plays and folk dancing, and who don't just live in community but create it. The weeks are filled with Special Olympics tournaments, yoga sessions, chime and choir practices, new craft ideas and try-outs as well as work in the woods and work on our buildings (finishing that bathroom, adding to the mootel) Thank you to all who make this place, and this winter, so enjoyable for everyone.

photo: detail of “Swallows” by Janette, Alex, Chelsea, and Jon.

Painting crew -Chelsea Wagner

It strikes me that often people think of Community Homestead through an idyllic lens, as this utopian blend of culture, agriculture, art and community. Absolutely all of those things happen here, and isn't that wonderful! Those who can take off their glasses and can still see find that with agriculture comes dirt and manure, and with community comes the inevitable messiness of humans. Usually when I say we have a painting crew, most people can't take off their glasses.

Surely our crew of seven paints on easels in the flower garden? Well, in fact, we paint at our kitchen table (seven of us!) atop an old paint splattered sheet. And wear berets? Um, no. Carhart stocking caps and old frilly-flowery aprons which read, “Mom's Garden.” Well you must paint eccentric pieces of outsider art and serene scenes of pastoral life. Hmm. There is a shred of truth there, seeing as most of the crew hasn't had much time in front of the canvas. Particularly my preschooler and toddler. However we are rather interested in



selling these pieces, so nothing too edgy! And most of our subject comes from out our back door, though it hails from a warmer, more colorful season.

But don't I sound the cynic! Let us invoke Jackson Pollock. Most people know him, yes? The guy who painted gigantic drip-drop squiggle-line paintings that seemingly anyone could do, but in reality were full of fractal geometry and fluid dynamics? Well, we too find slivers of beauty emerging amongst the chaos, though perhaps with less perfect physics. This is no painting class where we stand around the still life and paint it from different angles, with NPR classical playing in the background. I find myself saying,

“Brush in the water! Brush in the water! OK, well... let's see what we can do with this...” quite a lot over the course of two hours. Chaos. At least two painty-spills a session. But somewhere in the middle of all that, Janette says, “Too dark!” which she says about absolutely every background she ever paints. But this time she quietly adds, “Needs more sun.” And she is spot on.

The Christmas Play -Christine Elmquist

A big part of our Christmas is the nativity play. Based upon AJ Harwood's translation of the mediaeval Oberufer plays, it is snipped, re shuffled and sorted to accommodate the particular group of actors that perform it on Christmas Eve.

By Thanksgiving, the pressure from ambitious actors is intense. The question at the dinner table is who will be Mary? Who are the shepherds? Who will be a king this year? On wintry paths and crowded bootrooms you can hear play lines contrived into conversations. For a week, we did not manage to ring the dinner bell without either Oscar or Hillary declaring, "Come gather round my merry choir" Not to be outdone, a voice from a latecomer still in the bathroom would echo back, "like chestnuts roasting round the fire!"

This was a little mystifying to our seven Americorps members, new this year and wondering quite what was looming around the corner of December. A Community Homesteader that can hum a recognizable tune is ahead of the curve around here so clearly our two Americorps singers, Renata and Shannon, able to fill a room with rounded tones and effortless melody, were immediately cast as Gabriel and a shepherd and set about learning songs they had never heard before, taught by people who knew the songs well but could neither reliably sing them nor read the music. Enter Linda Iwazsko. And youtube. The rest of the cast, boosted up by other Americorps members who could also find and hold a tune it turns out, threw themselves into rehearsals. Little teams formed. Innkeepers met in the hallway. Shepherds rehearsed downstairs, the main cast herded into the kitchen to learn and practice the carols that stitch the whole story together. We never sounded as good as we did when we bounced, "lo how a rose" off four good walls, a ceiling and a large sink unit.

Our singers meanwhile had been joined by Jon Iwazsko and Americorps member Jacob Zuklic on guitar. And suddenly our songs had a depth and life to them. Betsy, Campbell, new to the community, was our stoic and peaceful Mary. Accompanied by an attentive Asger/Joseph, and guided by concerned angel, Chloe, Betsy glided about with a beautiful expression. A harried innkeeper family (Flynn Wagners) who turned her away, did not wipe the expression from her face. Mean innkeepers Kelly and Alex, could not deter her, as they shook their fists and spat threats and, as she eventually settled on a hay bale offered by Bruce and Tony, she seemed to totally embrace her lot! Our shepherds, Richard, Ari, Shannon and Nina, cavorted and threw each other



about, forgetting lines, making up new rhymes, and stealing each other's cues in rehearsals. Nina knew the play so well that she provided both the questions and the answers in early rehearsals to the befuddled amusement of her fellows. However, come Christmas Eve, even this bunch had sorted themselves and their lines out. Kings, accompanied a little confusingly by a voluble servant, certainly played their parts. Having had this role now for a few years, Joel concentrated on putting real expression into his lines. Haley came in right on cue and Hillary, as a new king, managed both to remember her lines and also her greater challenge, not to get yell with infuriation, "shut up, Janette, that's MY line", to her servant who joyously echoed and often pre-empted



Photos: top right, Shannon, Ari, Richard, Nina
bottom left Asger, Betsy, Renata, Chloe
bottom right: Haley, Janette, Joel, Hillary



bottom right: Haley, Janette, Joel, Hillary



her master's lines. In the event, Hillary was just royal, even when the servant proved incorrigible!

Behind the scenes, Mary organized the costumes and Asher and

Kurt manned the lights. Star singers, traditionally one part, were a team of four this year. Eric, naturally shy, found himself heading up this brigade of narrators. Starting as four fidgeting, shuffling guys, mumbling lines quickly with their backs to the audience, they transformed themselves into a choreographed group. If not exactly the Four Tops, they swished hats, knelt, bowed, raised arms, and clacked those star scissors open and shut with coordinated aplomb! And six year old Sam once again stole the show. When he wished up all a loud, "Christmas Cheer", it sounded as if he had waited twelve whole months just for the honor of this moment.



Trip to the Science Museum

-Sandy Volberding

We went to a movie way up here. I seen it going round and round and you could follow the trees and the river up there! I saw trees and animals up in the trees. They were beautiful up there; birds, big birds, snakes and frogs, different from ours. I went with Tony. He's very friendly. A friendly person!

(Thanks to the Minnesota Science Museum which makes it possible for us to go through their reduced ticket program)

The Bakery in Winter-Shannon Kulig

Spending a Midwestern winter in a bakery feels a bit like an oasis. When everyone else is bundling and wrapping themselves in layer after layer, I am digging for shorts and tank tops. However, by definition an oasis is a space teeming with productivity and life. Community's bakery is a constant buzz.

Today, as a group, we decided that the theme of the winter session has been learning new things or learning to do old things better. In the hustle and bustle of summertime farmer's markets and CSA baking the bakery crew fell into a routine. Our routine worked, we made it through the summer, but we also became entrenched in our individual "duties" and jobs. The slightly slower winter pace seemed to lend itself to shaking and spicing things up a bit. Hillary has begun to learn how to loaf bread, practicing kneading dough into a small ball and rolling it with enough pressure to make a nice cylindrical loaf. Alex is perfecting his patience while stirring half batches, washing dishes, selecting and reading labels, and checking the loaves after baking. Scott's focus and dedication never wavers when he stirs and kneads, weighs loaves, and makes rolls for Orion house's lunch. Kelly, a new addition to our winter bread crew, helps us catch up when we start to fall behind and works with Hillary to sort out bakery items that are to be delivered to each house.

The bakery, *oasis*, continues to produce for community through the winter, and its crews never cease to better their skills. We hope that our individual and team developments will help carry us through our hundred degree days to create a flourishing oasis of deliciousness year round.



Photos:

Top left: lighting Asher and Kurt

Bottom left, Star Singers-Sam, Eric, Oscar and Mark

Bottom right: bakers-Kelly Shannon, Scott and Alex

A second Americorps Year- Tony Bodelson

Looking back on my decision to originally come to Community Homestead, I saw this as a fun place to spend a quick year after graduation and learn some things before going onto graduate school. I've been here for almost eight months now, and it has definitely not been that superficial quick year I was expecting. It quickly became an engaging and exciting experience that changes every day that I can feel myself growing from. I quickly knew that I was going to enjoy my time in Community, but didn't realize how much.

After spending time here, and really getting to know the people and things we do, I really got to take on some responsibility which is what I was craving at that point. I got to lead crews in the bakery, and now that winter is here many craft crews are now somewhat my own. I even got to take on an activity session playing games and working with copper rods doing rhythmic movement practices to let out extra energy and center ourselves after a long day. Once I really got to take ownership of the crews we work in, and the products we were turning out, I really felt invested and a part of this community, which is when I decided to take a second year at Community Homestead.

Taking on responsibility, and getting invested in what we did and the people here, I realized that I'm not ready to leave this June. I feel like I've learned so much, and done a lot in the eight months I've been here, but I know there is so much more for me to learn, and so much more to be a part of, especially knowing that I have a stronger idea of what I'm getting into this time. Some may say I'm crazy for staying a second year, having already experienced all the hard work, chaos and sometimes long days that go into being here. All I have to say to that is, you're probably right, and it's going to be awesome!

Here is Tony at the Christmas Party!



Goodbye and Hello! -Christine Elmquist

Goodbye to Americorps members, Nick Turner who moved back to the St Louis area and to Stephen Crimarco who joined the Peace Corps in Jamaica. Their legacy lives on through cheer leading the dishwash team at Community Lunch ("Iiiiits the Re-d Team!) and kombucha making (respectively!) Goodbye also to our young German, Joshua Brunner, and to Julie, Miles and Jackson Moshier who moved on to their their next step in Knapp WI. We miss you guys but are happy to welcome Americorps members; Jacob Zuklic from Illinois who joins Orion, and Jordan Panarella from Montana who joins Altair. Good to see you both here and know that you are not shocked by our Siberian winter! Thanks to working guests, Amanda Brown, Charlotte Howland and Bailey Bodelson, who came to visit their family and were roped into the action!

Trip to Chicago -Joel Nester

Scott's niece, Lillie Cummings, is a professional actress and she was in a production of Oklahoma in the Chicago area so Tony, Scott, and I spent a good part of the weekend in Chicago and went to Millenium Park. We had pizza at a restaurant where Parker (previous Americorps) was a waiter which was a surprise for him. Then we went to the play which was in an old time theater. We had a good time. She played the part of Ado Annie and, at the end, we visited with Lillie for about 15 minutes or so. It was a good weekend.



Winter Seed Saving –Nadine Holder

Seeds are everywhere, on my shoulders, in my hair and down the back of my neck. That's what happens when the top of the seed blower pops off with a large batch of carrot seeds pluming out the top; when the top is on, this seed cleaner works great. We bought it last year from craigslist after seeing one like it at Turtle Tree Seeds in Copake, NY. The blower is attached to a clear plastic tube with notched trays at the top. The blower is adjustable so you can set it to just the right amount of air so that the light chaff flies to the top and gets stuck in the notched trays while the heavy seeds stay down. So far we have cleaned three pounds of lettuce seeds, five pounds of spinach and six pounds of carrot seeds minus the 10 ounces that planted in my hair and sweater.

In addition to lettuce, carrots and spinach, we have also been working on black beans, green beans and edamame beans as well as peas. After harvesting the bean and pea plants in the fall, roots and all, we lay the plants on tarps to let them thoroughly dry before stuffing into totes to store until we finish all the fall work and it becomes too cold to be outside. First we have to pick all the pods off the vine, which Sandy, Nina, Jackson and Terra have plowed through with diligence. Then we put them through a mini thresher that we bought from the U of M this past year. Kurt is particularly good at making sure the pods are pushed through without fingers attached, which I am not as good at. After the thresher, the pods are separated from the beans and peas

by running them through an antique Clipper seed cleaner. The cleaner originally was run with a manual crank attached to screens and a fan. Luckily for Shannon, who has done her fair share of bean cleaning, an electric motor is attached. When in action, the screens rotate back and forth separating the pods from the beans and all the other light chaff is blown out by the fan. The best part about the cleaner is the sound; just like a train a comin' down the track. After the seeds pass through the clipper, there is one final stage of hand sorting, which can be both tedious and rewarding at exactly the same time. Luckily both Oscar and Hillary have tackled the task with efficiency. After the beans and peas, we will clean a few tons of rye and oat seeds used for cover crops in the garden and on the crop fields.



It is hard to imagine the green vines, the leaves and the pods that will shoot out of these seeds. But we know it will happen. This great faith allows us to map out garden plots and determine which compost piles will be spread, and what crops will be planted even while the snow is falling. As the days are growing longer minute by minute, the seeds may be hard and dry in our hands, but in our heads they have mass and color and they are very much alive. And when the time is right, the vegetables will be carefully picked, washed and packed in a box to be delivered to a back porch near you. From seed to table, it's about as great and simple as it gets.

Support us and Join the CSA!

<https://csa.farmigo.com/join/communityhomestead/2016>

So what do those seeds grow into?

Crispy lettuce, silky green beans, sweet carrots! In three months the garden shed will be alive with laughter and bustle. And it will be wheelbarrows and crates we will be tripping over rather than ice and snowdrifts.



We grow enough vegetables for 240 customers through our CSA. Our vegetables are Certified Organic and everything we sell, we grow right here. There is a place for everyone in the process, planting, tending, harvesting, and delivering. A fantastic team spirit thrives in the garden. We are so looking forward to the growing season!

Available this year 20 weeks of delivery and three sizes available

Garden (vegetable) box singles \$300, couples \$455 Family \$590 (July couple's box pictured left)

Homesteader boxes (a vegetable box plus bread, pickles cookies and jam) singles-\$380, Couples \$555 and Family \$790

We also have bakery shares so you can get cookies and bread weekly!

Sustaining your health sustains both the land and all the people here! let's put fresh, organic goodies in your fridge!

Ceramics – Alex Felt

When I knew I was going to spend my next year as an AmeriCorps member at Community Homestead, the thought crossed my mind on bringing pottery to the mix but I stopped myself. I was scheming on what I could add to a place I had never even visited; this was not a quality I was trying to cultivate. Several weeks after my arrival, however, I brought up the idea and was met with support and interest from another AmeriCorps member, Shannon. Having another person to bounce ideas off of and know that there would be support gave me the heart to bring the idea to the table.

Fast forward through sketching, price projections, and brain-storming how community members could be involved and considering who would be interested... When presented with this information, the community gave it the okay! Now my job was to find a kiln, wheel, clay and raw materials for glaze mixing, and to run through the trial and error of our first projects. (Many thanks to Jane Swenson for giving us her lovely kiln.) Before I knew it, it was Winter!

The garden-centric focus of the summer has waned and the crafts have waxed on. It seems that just as I was able to get things in order was it time to begin our pottery activities. Our first focus had been on holiday ornaments, to practice slab rolling and handling clay gently and how to cut, clean, and stamp clay. This process allows us to work quickly and gives us a lot of practice with glazing when we have many small pieces to work with. If you made it to our last craft fair in the community center, you might have seen some of our very first pieces.

January gave way to the start of working with molds to create forms. Small candy bowls with wavy rims as well as sturdy large bowls are a big focus for our crews right now.

It's been exciting to offer something new to the table. It seems as though the inaugural pottery crew (Hillary, Nina, Steve, Oscar, Steven, Betsy, Shannon and myself) are enthusiastic about the process, and are proud about what we make. Moving forward, I am constantly playing around with clay and prototyping what's next (Candle holders and cooking spoon rests?! Making glaze out of our wood ash!?). We are excited to find out!

Movement –Hillary Schauls

Tai Chi is movement. Roger and Cheryl are teachers. Thursday afternoon we do Tai Chi. You start with a bow and gently pull down your hands to your hips. You lean backwards, put three fingers on your palm and push. Movements have names like Tiger time or Bird's tail. Tai Chi is quiet because we need to focus. Emily did yoga last year. Now it is Alex who is an Americorps person. Yoga starts at 4pm on Friday afternoon. We do poses like Down Dog and Up Dog; one leg goes up in the air and you take a breath in half an hour. Exercise helps us get healthy. Alex is a good teacher.

photo: Steve, Hillary, Alex, Nina and Shannon



Working in the Woodshop –Alex Hanson

I work in the woodshop now. I work with Haley. I sand cutting boards every Thursday. Haley sands cutting boards too. They have stripes, different wood. They are square. We make mirror picture, other things too. The woodshop's big. So cool. I like it.

and Mary Peters Help Asger Elmquist. I sand. Making box together. Terra too. Bring firewood. Make bookshelf. I help.

Many thanks for your Donations: Sept 2, 2015-29, Feb 15, 2015

Margy & Gary Balwierz
Laura & Bill Briggs
Peg Brossart
Louis & Katherine Chiappetta,
Wendy Chretien,
Winston Chuck,
Susan & Michael Clabby
Jeff Comins, and Laurie Schmidt
Carol Haughton,
Patricia Henry
Melody & Shawn Horn,
Mary Clare Huberty and Sherry Hansen
Jewish Family & Children's Services
Donna and Paul Karis

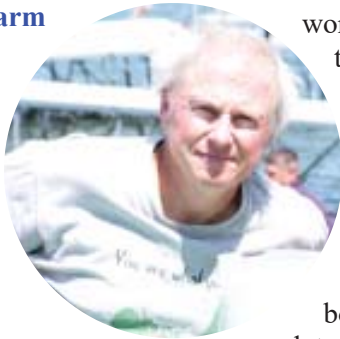
Gretchen La Budde in honor of Maureen McElrath
Rita Lawson
Ellen and Jim Nester
Joel Nester,
Bette & James Overmier,
Kathleen Papatola,
Gina Portman Amis
Topsy Preus
Margie and Jerry Stein
Jane Swenson
Thomas Williams

The Benevity Community Impact Fund
Circle of Life Foundation
Thrivent Financial for Lutherans

Interview with Joel Nester-Eric Witt

How long have you been helping on the farm at Community Homestead?

Fifteen years. Feels more like twenty if you ask Adrian. I was raised on a farm about a hundred miles west of the cities. This was when small family farms were doing real well. It was a dairy farm. We also had some chickens and pigs. I did a variety of stuff. I drove tractor and fed the animals.



Here I sweep up mangers and spread out food. Get calf milk from the cooler and warm it up. I run the corn silo and roller mill to make feed for the cows. I feed grain and run the bunk conveyor for the outside animals. In the summer I let the cows out to pasture and lock them in. Eric and Ryan will bring them water.

I recall from our trip to the World Dairy Expo a couple of years ago that you seemed to know more about some of the farm equipment than the sales people did. Is this something you're passionate about?

I'm very interested in machinery, how things work and what they do.

What do you think of the creations that roll out of Adrian's shop in winter?

Very nice. It's nice that he's inventive and makes things

from scratch. Sometimes I see what he's working on and wonder how it's going work. Like right now he's turning a haybine into a compost turner.

How is the winter?

In the winter it is hard to keep the water cups and water pipes thawed out. We have a lot of pipes that are wrapped with a special wire to keep them from freezing. But it's the water bowls themselves that freeze so we have a heavy duty hair dryer to thaw them out. The round bales we use for feed and bedding freeze and it's hard to get the frozen layer off the outside. We have to go up in the hay and silage silos a lot to fix the unloaders. We winterize the barn. We close the doors and seal the gaps with spray foam. Put enough layers of hay and straw bales on the loft floor to ensure adequate insulation.

Is there anything about winter that you like more than summer?

Well, your boots don't get as muddy. And you don't have to spend as much time moving the cows in and out of the barn.

So are you looking forward to spring?

Yeah. There's more of a guarantee that we get the cows outside everyday which takes more time but is important. And there's less concern about the calf milk getting cold and the waterers freezing.

photo: above-Joel

below: Nina and Jordan post sledding

Winter-Haley Diener

"Other seasons come abruptly but ask so little when they do. Winter is the only one that has to be relearned." – Verlyn Klinkenborg (The Rural Life)

One of my earliest memories at Community Homestead, back in the sun-drenched days of June, was a young community member casually speaking of "cold days" with a breezy air of casual indifference. Winter is a part of life in Wisconsin, the frosty alternate to the Midwest's other "season" – construction season, of course. There are snow days, sure, but it's the "cold days" you need to watch out for. Sub-zero temperatures and double digit winds can easily equal trouble for anybody who spends more than a few moments outside. What had I gotten myself in for, a Pennsylvania transplant used to a mild winter, one contained to a quarter of the year? Someone enthralled by glittering snowfall, yet confounded by the art of winter layering?

Winter is insistent here. Winter is not a thing like that mild



creature from back home; it cannot be denied or viewed from an armchair. Instead, it a season to be relearned, one that settles itself down for a long stay and expects you to join in. It is when a food run means a half mile walk in a blizzard to collect your own milk, eggs, and a dozen homemade bagels, all-the-while casually drinking a cup of tea; when a "stay-at-home-vacation" means snowmobile sledding, snowball pelting, and snow wrestling; when an above freezing day is downright balmy and a blue-skied, sun-filled day is a special occasion; when you stop keeping track of the number of layers you have on (and plan extra time into your day for gearing up and gearing down); when a hike has none of the green, sun dappled abundance of its leafy summer counterpart but has instead an air of vitality and a laying bare of the bones of the land. But most of all? Winter is when you are lost for words yet filled with gratitude for the beauty of your frozen, tranquil surroundings – for the perseverance of the earth and your place upon it through winter's chill.

Why are we fund raising?

We farm 400 acres. These acres are planted in various grains, and grasses which we make into hay, silage and feed for our cows, chickens and summer pigs. The rest we plant in pastures and everyday our cows spend the day rambling across each one in turn, munching on sweet salads. 400 acres is just enough to support our herd. The cows in turn provide the fertilizer for our fields and our 17 acre garden and our 240 CSA garden members. And the income from the milk and vegetables we sell supports the community of 40 people with diverse abilities and needs and subsidizes the running of our day program for 10 more. And boy, do we all eat well too!

We own 240 acres. That leaves 160 acres that we rent from neighbors. We have rented all our acreage for a while now, some for 20 years, enriching the soil and certifying it as organic. If it is sold to someone else our farm no longer works. Sooooo....

Coming Soon



April 26th Give Big St Croix Valley

This is the third year of this fundraiser for over thirty non profits in our area. We are happy to be one of them!

Prizes, and incentives are offered to the non profits and we spend the day running about getting more and more excited trying to raise money for the farmland. Give Big puts \$1000 on the table. The non profit that has the most individual donors can pick it up. For the past two years, that \$1000 has been ours and this year we'd like to see it in our land fund once more! Here's where you come in.

On April 26th, please donate online. The minimum donation is \$10. You might think \$10 or \$20 makes no difference but in this case, OH YES IT DOES! It counts "one more" toward that free \$1000! Please ask your friend, aunt, sister, colleague to donate. It will also be doubled by a matching grant. A \$10 donation never packed a better wallop!

Saturday March 19 10-4pm Spring Craft and Food fair!

at the Community Center
519 280th St, Osceola, WI 54020

Come see what we have been up to this winter! Beautiful cards, beeswax candles, woven rugs, paintings, painted coat pegs racks, little felted booties, ceramic bowls, tangy sweet jams, maple syrup, pickles and yes, bread and cookies ofcourse.



*photo: above-our pasture
center -making hay
Hillary in the barn at
Advent
below-the Country
Banquet*

Save the Date:
**Sunday, June
26, 2016**

The Country Banquet

The freshest, most delicious, most beautiful, dinner date available. Come join us, Nathan Sartain, and the St Paul chefs on Sunday June 26

