

COMMUNITY HOMESTEAD NEWSLETTER: FALL 2013

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

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

As animals creep into hibernation, the last plants give up their leaves and retreat back to the soil, so we retreat to into our houses and the community center. Oh, the wonderful lure of the woodstove! We are as busy as ever, especially in November and December, for that is craft fair time. No matter how prepared we thought we were, we clearly aren't, and we scamper along running out of time until January when we start collecting it again and prepare for next year (with resolves to have all our ducks in a row in 2014!) This is the time for wreath making (buy one-it is a fund raiser for the land!) fabric painting, candle dipping, woodworking, and creating all sorts of beautiful things. Coming up, there is Advent, and time set aside to walk the Advent spiral, a spiral of pine greens where each one walks their own candle into the center, lights it and places it somewhere on the journey to create a beautiful living wreath together. We also have a nativity play to arrange and rehearse, parties and concerts to go to, songs to sing in choir, and Advent gatherings to enjoy. . We have a deep appreciation for this life, for the opportunity to work hard, for the many friends, family and neighbors who support this community and are woven into its lively fabric.

Dairy Days Expo by Joel Nester

Eric, Travis and Steve Fons and me left on Friday October 4 and stopped by at Mauston which is a restaurant, gas station place and had supper there. We got to Joseph and Marianne's in the evening. We slept at their apartment. It's simple, basic, fine. I slept on a futon couch and someone slept on an air mattress.

Saturday morning, we went to the farmer's market around the capitol and had hot pastries for breakfast. The farmer's market is considered one of the best in America. We also saw they were setting up for Taste of Madison.

We also went to the World Dairy Expo at the site of the old Dade County Coliseum. They had a couple of permanent buildings and a lot of tents. The big arena was for showing of and judging cattle. The other exhibits held like milking parlors and equipment for dealing with the dairy industry like breeding, forage machinery and various types of food supplements. We saw a couple of robotic systems that took the machines on and off and ones that mixed u the feed and distributed it to the cows. They had various seminars and we went to one about the conversion of a calf to a heifer

Travis holds up the world at the Dairy Expo



and the best way to do that. We were also looking for a way to transport water from the barn to the pasture but we could not find anything suitable.

Eric suggested we have lunch at a German place but it was closed so we went to a Sport's Bar. Then we went back to the expo for more exhibits. About 4 or 5 o'clock we left Madison for home

Music is a very loved and appreciated aspect of life for many people in the community, including myself. Throughout the year we have attended many concert, most of the Franconia concert series, Osceola's music at the park, St. Croix Falls' music at the overlook, and musical events in the cities as well. At one of the swing, bluegrass, folk, jazz, world music, rock or rockabilly events we've attended, it would be impossible for someone to miss the joy exuding from various individuals in our group.



One would undoubtedly see and hear Bruce and Sandra, singing richly along, bursting with infectious laughter from time to time, Mary, Hillary, Nina and Andrew, busting expressive and innovative moves on the dance floor, and other enthusiastic exclamations.

On Saturday evenings it would not be rare to hear music coming from the Community Center as people gather to enjoy a movie, often times, a musical. When the opportunity arises to see a play, ballet, or musical live, almost everyone is enthusiastic about going. We have enjoyed the Nutcracker, the Music Man, and an interactive Sound of Music screening to name a few. I would say that we enjoy watching the performing arts whenever possible.

Watching musical performances, however, is just the beginning. There is a large group involved in the Voices of the Valley choir with Linda Iwazsko. They have had the opportunity to perform the national anthem for several sporting events and we are looking forward to their Christmas concert.

Now that the winter months are arriving, we will have more time indoors to work on our chimes choir's arrangements of, On Top of Old Smokey, Edelweiss, and Silent Night. Chimes choir is composed of Caleb (upon his return to the States) Hillary, Janet, Kelly, Nina, Oscar, Sandra, Bruce, Mary, and me. We performed at the Country Banquet this past summer and we look forward to our next performance. It is amazing to see such a talented crew who is often willing to challenge themselves and their abilities to play together as a group. We struggled with rhythm and playing simple

one lined songs in the beginning. We have moved on to having an entire bass section with some members productively playing two chimes at once.

Another opportunity for people to explore their musical talent is through guitar lessons. I am very excited to start them up again with Oscar, who is already a very talented guitar player, Hillary and Scott, who mostly improve with every practice. It is not easy to learn a new instrument but with determination and enthusiasm it is possible.

It has been a real pleasure to play music with interested parties here. Sing-alongs are one of my favorite past times, almost as much fun as whipping around the dance floor at one of our folk dances. It is vitalizing to dance, sing and make music. I would suggest to anyone who loves a good time, keep an eye peeled for the next Community Homestead event!



Voices of the Valley Choir by Sandra Volberding

We do singing. We sang the National Anthem at the Ball Game. We had a concert. We are doing a Christmas Concert. I like it, it's fun. We meet every week with Linda. It is just a group of us from Community Homestead but we are going to get some new people and we are all going to be singing!

Primitive Skills Retreat by Steve Fons and Andrew Lloyd

Amidst the late August heat, Steve Fons and I ventured into the woodlands of Birchwood, Wisconsin to attend a primitive skills workshop at the Blue Hills Tipi Retreat. It was more than a retreat from the bustling action experienced at the homestead during the growing season; it felt like our weekend was a retreat from modernity.

Our weekend curriculum included: Grass mat making, wild edible plant collection, charcoal bowl-making, lodge building, cordage making, snare and trap setting, rawhide knife sheath making, primitive fire building and more. Steve explained that “we learned skills, but a *different* set of skills.” The technologies and techniques we learned about were simple, but required a lot of mental and physical energy. It was important to experience the human energy required to accomplish what our modern culture often relies on machines and new technologies to do. When we learned methods of handcrafting that were used thousands of years ago, our teacher told us that our “hands would remember” these traditional and time tested techniques. Our hands remembered how to make grass mats, but it was nice to have a sleeping bag waiting for us when our day ended.

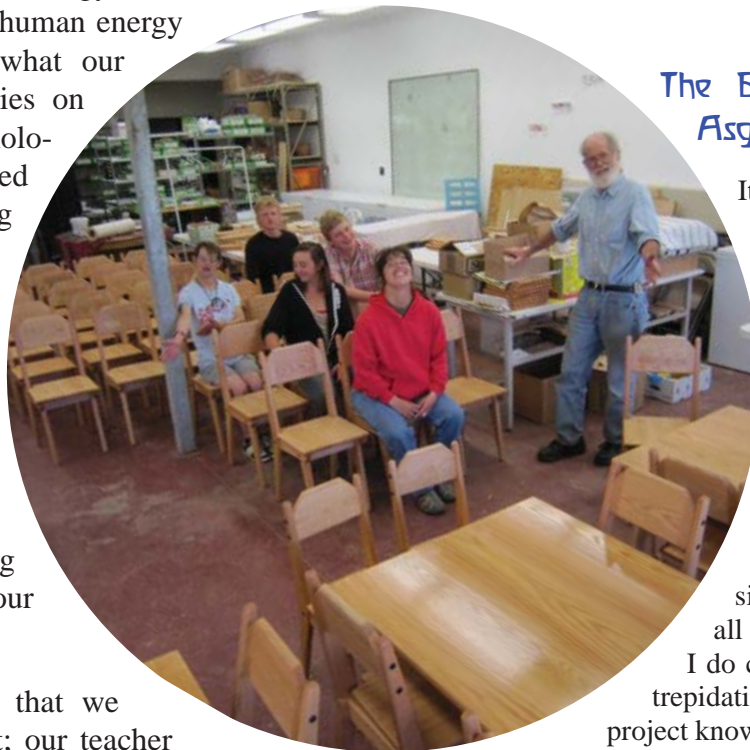
Techniques were not all that we learned during our retreat; our teacher also demonstrated a respect and understanding of the environment that can be developed through direct reliance on one’s immediate surroundings for food and shelter. Our tipi lodging and the lifestyle of our teacher, Amy Schmidt, revealed to us the merit of traditional skills like foraging, gathering and handcrafting for one’s livelihood and survival.

Besides time spent in our workshops, Steve and I went canoeing and fishing, where we saw loons and a family of beavers on the lake. Staying in the tipi was a new experience for both Steve and I, and Steve

especially enjoyed “being able to have a fire inside, and even though it meant one of us always needed to be tending it at night, it kept the mosquitoes away.” We explored the forest, tasted wild rice with venison, cracked walnuts by a fire, and learned to ‘walk with purpose’ through any given landscape.

Steve and I are so grateful for the opportunity to learn traditional skills at the Blue Hills Tipi Retreat and can’t wait to share what we learned with the community. Through our weekend retreat, we garnered a new appreciation for the privileges we have at Community Homestead, and we look forward to attending more workshops in the future.

Photo: showing off the furniture; Terra, Asger, Emily, Mary, Caleb and Andreas



The Big Furniture Order by Asger Elmquist

It was a particular pleasure to see the light in the eyes of the teachers at the Great River School in St. Paul when in the last week of August we delivered School Furniture just in time for the beginning of the new school year. Our Wood Workshop had received an order earlier in the year for 54 chairs of two different sizes, and three large tables – all to be made of Solid Red Oak.

I do confess that it was with some trepidation that we committed to this project knowing that in the summer month most of our efforts in Community Homestead need to be directed towards the Farm and our large CSA Market Garden.

Terra Corpuz, Mary Peters and I worked making all the parts for the furniture in the Woodshop, and as parts were completed we moved them to the Basement of our Community Center where at one time we had some 675 pieces of wood, all needing to have final sanding and finishing oil applied, and to be assembled. This is where the additional capable hands and good humor of Andreas Horstenkamp, Caleb and Emily really pulled this project together. The joy and magic of teamwork won out over trepidation! And what a sight to see all those finished chairs lined up!

The New Dairy Farm Team by Eric Witt

This has been a season of change and transition for the dairy at Community Homestead. In June, Freido and his family moved to Switzerland. Freido had held the dairy here for over twenty years. His passion for dairy work and the animals under his care were evident to anyone who met him. Naturally, there was some concern about the future of the dairy as Freido's imminent departure loomed. But, as often happens in community, things just sort of worked out. Existing members stepped up, former members made timely returns and help arrived from eager, hard working summer volunteers. What has emerged is a three person team committed to seeing this dairy grow and prosper. After a brief absence, Ryan returned to community at a time when his talents and experience were needed most. Richard has lent his vision and ambition to the task of steering the dairy into the future. And, in a second AmeriCorps year, I've been given the opportunity to apply much of what I learned working under Freido last year.

Of course many people contribute to the day to day operation of the dairy farm. Joel, Hillary, Dustin, Steve F., Stephan, Travis, Steven, Kelly, Jay and Mark all perform essential barn crew work during the week. Joel deserves special mention. He has been a constant throughout all of the changes. In fact, he is the most experienced member of the barn team. He does too many things to list them all, but one very important aspect of Joel's work is the care and feeding of our calves. He is truly responsible for our next generation of dairy cows. We've added two new milkers, Elizabeth and Andrew, to the existing crew of: Richard, Ryan, Emily, Julie and I. They have picked things up very quickly and are a great asset. And, when the wheels fall off (quite literally) or a silo un-loader goes boom, Adrian is always in the wings ready to work some shop magic and get things going again.

Our herd is changing too. Due to feed concerns and a general focus on improving herd health we have been selectively reducing the numbers of animals on the farm. We've sold many of our calves and tried to keep the animals with the best lineage to raise as replacement heifers. We currently have eight first calf heifers in the barn and are expecting almost ten more by January. This means the majority of our milking cows will be young cows in their first lactation. To make



The Mootel going up

room we've shipped some of the older, less healthy or low producing cows. While milk production will suffer in the short term, we hope that this investment in the future will ensure that the community has a healthy, happy dairy herd for years to come.

As anyone who's visited the farm recently has surely noticed, there has been a lot of pounding, cutting, nailing and sweating going on as several major projects are underway. We repaired the north wall of the hay loft. It was somewhat perilous work at times, but we all survived. Now we are putting new metal siding on the entire barn. And, perhaps most conspicuous of all, a large new building has sprung up between the barn and Adrian's shop, the "Moo Tel". Less conspicuous is another major project that Richard has spearheaded. He has painstakingly compiled all of the written records for the dairy herd and brought us into the digital age by transferring them to a computer based herd management program. So, if you come by and see the barn crew huddled around someone's smart phone, pointing at cows and nodding, now you know why.

While this spring was a time of uncertainty and adjustment for our dairy, the fall finds us looking back, feeling proud of what has been accomplished and facing the future with optimism and high spirits.



Before and after fixing and siding the north end of the barn

The Mootel by Richard Elmquist

This has been a discussion for a while. In fact, Fredo talked about it. The barn gets really crowded. Right now, for example, we have only one dry cow pen and we have one heifer who is going to have her first calf, a cow who going to calve shortly and two steers in that space. We also have ten calves in a nearby pen and while they are all pretty cozy we need more space for them, and also for Joel to organize them stress free! This, in turn would give more space for the dry cows in the barn. Everybody move over!

The Mootel is a metal hoop house like a greenhouse. We modified the design to build it on top of concrete highway dividers to provide a solid wall for the pens. It is 70 feet long, 30 feet wide and 18 feet tall. It is a very nice spacious area where the calves, maybe the steers and some drying cows can spread out. We bought the Jersey barriers (the concrete dividers) from a local contracting company. Each weighs 4500 pounds. We rented a 4 yard payloader to unload them and then the following week we had a group of 5 Grinnell College students on their fall break put the hoops together and start to build the wood frame for the top of the barriers. This added a boost to our crew of Mark, Steve Fons, and Travis, all enthusiastic construction people. Janette was always there to supervise, dividing her time between this, the irrigation pond, and the barn siding. That's a lot to keep your eye on.

We had a work day one Saturday when a group from Franconia, our St Paul garden hosts, Will and Jill Hommeyer, and the extended Elmquist family came to join the community in raising the hoops and the longitudinal pipes that firm up the structure. This involved a wagon for scaffold, ladders, the skid loader and a lot of good humor. Last Friday, late in the afternoon, it was all hands again and everyone converged on the Mootel to put on the main covering. We need to finish up the sides, finish making and hanging doors, install some pens, get some water and lights out there, and maybe, just after Thanksgiving, if the weather cooperates, it will be MOO ve in day!

The Irrigation pond by Nadine Holder

It is a cold and windy fall afternoon. A number of folks from the community are gathering around our newly dug, very big hole. At fifteen feet deep, eighty five feet wide and two hundred feet long, we can see that this new garden pond is much, much bigger than our old garden pond. With the threat of rain and snow in the forecast we know we must get the liner rolled out and secured around the edges. If it does rain before we manage to line the pond, all our hard work of smoothing and raking the sides would get washed down the steep incline. In order to dig our new pond, we hired a bulldozer and trachoe. After they spent two days digging, pushing and piling dirt, it took the garden crew another two days to rake out and smooth down the walls and pond bottom.

We line up on the edge of the pond, each with a handful of plastic, and walk. After tugging and shouting 'TUG' and hooking up a tractor for some extra help, we get it spread from the top of one end of the pond to the top of the other. We are lucky that we manage to position the plastic right, changing it around would be near impossible. As trenches are being dug in order to secure the sides, the rain starts to let loose and we know how lucky our timing is.



Photo: everyone puts the pond liner in

Our irrigation use has been increasing every year. As our garden gets bigger and the summers get hotter and drier, we rely heavily on the water from our pond. This past season, the rain was turned off from the beginning of July to the end of August. At this time, the cycle of the garden is in full swing. The summer crops such as, squash, cucumbers and corn are ready to set their fruit and the fall crops such as lettuce and broccoli

are being transplanted from their germination trays to the ground. Both the summer crops and the transplants need an adequate amount of water in order to succeed. To make up for the decline in rainwater, we had our irrigation pumping water for about twelve hours a day, every day for about two solid months.



Richard interviewing for cow records!



The Land and the Cows Adrian Werthmann

A thirteen hundred pound cow eats about one hundred pounds of feed a day. We milk thirty five cows and have about forty replacement animals. In a good year, we graze the cows on pasture for about six months, May to October. Then we switch over to stored feed that we harvested throughout the summer. Stored feed includes: haylage, corn silage, hay in small squares, round bales and grain. We need



The Land and Fundraising by Christine Elmquist

So how are we doing? In brief, we have the fantastic support of the Otto Bremer Foundation. They offered us two matching grants of \$50,000 and we met the first one shortly after the Valentine's Dance. Since then, we have been working toward the next one and have, to date, \$20,987 of it! With The Pig Roast, and the Country Banquet behind us, we have to figure out the big steps for 2014 to reach this match by June.

And in the meantime the land is our partner in sustaining the community. The 80 acres that we are purchasing right now, includes pastures, crop fields and woods that spill down a sloping hillside. The cows roam over the pastures, and the tractor winds its way, planting, cultivating, and harvesting. These 80 acres encompass what we call Easter Hill. This is where the community takes a walk on Easter Sunday to watch the sunrise. Wisconsin being Wisconsin, we have trekked up that hill through a foot of snow, six inches of sloppy mud, skated along on the ice, and skipped along in a warm breeze. This land, as the Waldorf second and third graders who camp here and the high school students who visit can also tell you, breathes back joy and pleasure, and a deep appreciation for the earth.



roughly five hundred tons of feed for the winter months. We certify almost four hundred acres of pasture, crop land and garden. Two hundred and twenty acres is owned by Community Homestead, the rest is rented up and down the river valley. The breakdown is roughly one hundred and fifty acres of hay or haylage, sixty acres of corn, seventy acres of oats, ninety one acres of pasture and seventeen acres of garden

For the past two to three years, due to drought, instead of three to four cuttings of hay, we only harvested two cuttings. By the middle to end of July, the pastures ran out of grass. So we had to start feeding out winter feed very early in the fall.

The new land we purchased is directly across the road from the farm buildings. In times of drought, we have been able to run a temporary fence around the hay fields and alleviate the pastures. We are also able to plant crops like rye that can be grazed very early in the spring, usually when we are getting short on winter feed. So if you are driving on 280th St. and have to stop for cows crossing, just remember, it's all about the cows!



So here we go. Every dollar raised can be matched if we raise \$30,000 in the next six months. 100% of your donations goes directly to the purchase of the land securing the very foundation of this community's life.

Let's raise another \$30,000 and get that match of \$50,000 from The Otto Bremer Foundation!

Hallowe'en Party by Oscar Rauch Borg- erding

Dustin and I celebrated our birthdays and the community had a Hallowe'en party where everyone dressed in Hallowe'en costumes. I was the Grinch and Andrew had a bow and arrow, and Emily was Paul Bunyan and Jay was Babe the blue ox. There were gnomes, a bee, a police officer, and a woman, and a snowboarder. Mary was a witch, Julie was Pippi Longstocking, Elizabeth was an owl and Mark was a Samuri. Kelly was her usual Holstein cow. That was on October 31st. Dustin turned 29 and I turned 32.

We played some games. One was the donut game where you had to try to get your own donut by the string attached to it and that string was attached to the roof. And we had the mummy game, where you make a person into a mummy with toilet paper, and we carved pumpkins. And then we had cake for our birthdays. It was really a great day.



Goodbyes and Hello

Wow, was that just the summer that fled past? We are missing our lovely summer folks!

Theo Rehbach left at Michaelmas after arriving in May for three months –yes we can do math but we are super glad Theo can't! We miss his hard work and humor around the farm and his friendly, gentle, way with everyone in the community. Goodbye also to Marina Rogers who was so helpful to Brown House, to Georg Buttelmann who was a wonderful teenage brother in Morning Glory, and to Andreas Horstenkamp who added his easy going nature to Altair.

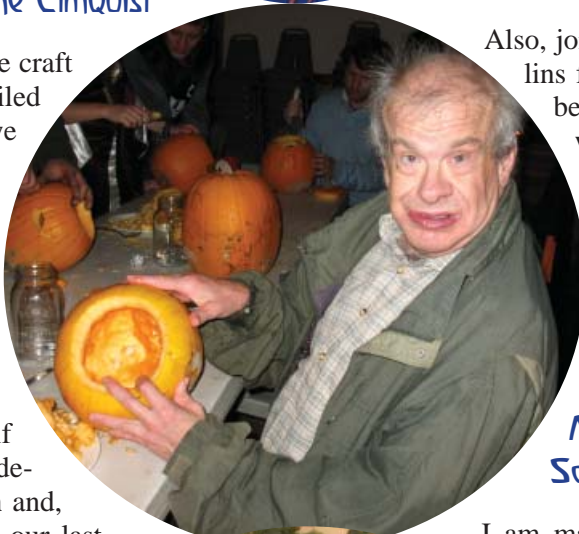
We also said goodbye to Molly Rubin who completed her Americorps year and went off to adventure in Europe, visiting many friends she had made while here, including Lisa and Fredo now in Switzerland. She left us great memories and a lasting friendship. Caleb Seiser also finished his Americorps year and went off to adventure in Vietnam for two months. We are looking forward to his return in December (with all his photos and stories!) when he joins us for another year.

Craft Fair Season by Christine Elmquist

So what else are we making for the craft sales? Screen print cards, stenciled card and the paper and fabric that we make them with. We are painting potholder squares, tablecloths, bags and aprons. The candle shop is wafting honey aromas upstairs to Morning Glory as they prepare for another candle dipping season. The rug weavers are collecting and dying t-shirts. The puzzle grup has adapted itself to make beautiful pegboards with designs of cows, kite-flying children and, of course, little gnomes. We sold our last Advent calendar and have started making a series of new ones.

We are also dreaming, and thinking and “toying” with new ideas and new opportunities to paint and create.

Photos: top to bottom; Sam the gnome, Kelly and Jason with their pumpkin, Monty, our neighbor, and our holiday wreath



Also, joining us in December are Lesley Collins from Australia, for one year. She will be living at Brown House. Jason Bord, who often joins us now, will be moving to Morning Glory for a year to add his energy and warmth to the community

Making wreaths, by Hillary Schauls

I am making wreaths with Christine, Oscar, Jackson, Bruce and Alex and Mary Peters.

We are making wreaths downstairs in the basement. We use wheat and baby's breath and millet and bittersweet and flowers in all sorts of colors. We use our feet to push down the wire which snaps down on the bouquets. I like it. I like making them. We sell a bunch of them, yesterday at the craft fair. Next we do the Christmas one, made of green wreathing, Christmas tree branches. We also put baby's breath, pine cones, berries in there. It's easy!

Bruce updates Chelsea about the garden by Bruce Basler and Chelsea Wagner

So Bruce, what have you been up to in the garden lately?

Lately? Washing containers in the greenhouse. Sweeping, brussel sprouts, bean shells.

And how about everyone else?

Busy! Work on beans, seeds, greenhouse working. Fields too, harvest carrots, do it for vegetable boxes. Winter boxes.

How does it feel out there these days?

Cold! Jacket, boots, gloves, hat. Glasses, you gotta wipe them off in the greenhouse.

What are you going to miss about the garden when it is all over?

I'm going to miss greenhouses. Freezing in the winter time!

What's next?

Garden still. Crafts too, making wreaths.

Anything else you want to say about the winter garden?

That was fun!

Thank you to all our garden members and the 52 winter share folks-we love sending out our lovely boxes!

Our first winter box below



Can you help us?

We can reuse your old T-shirts for our new rugs and your old Christmas cards for our lovely advent calendars. Email Christine.elmquist@communityhomestead.org

Screen print care designs



Coming Events

Come say hello and look at what we have been up to!

Dodge Nature pre-school Winter Bazaar.
Wed Dec 4 6-8.30pm, Thurs and Fri Dec 5-6 8.30-3.30pm 1715 Charlton St W St Paul, MN 5518

St. Bridget Parish Holiday Happenings Craft Sale Sat., December 7. 211 E Division St, River Falls, WI 54022

Madison Waldorf School Winter Festival
Saturday December 14th, 11-5pm
6510 Schroeder Road, Madison, WI, 53711

Community Homestead Holiday Fair Sat
December 15th 10-4pm – right here, 519 280th St
Osceola, WI 54020.

**Donations gratefully Received August 1 through
November 25, 2013**

The Schwab Charitable Fund in recognition of Ed Funk
Winston Chuck
Madelon Holder
Sonia and Eric Klingbeil
Donna Lambach
Susan Miles
Mary Jo Rasset
Tom Rumreich and Ruth Ronning
Anna Tomes

Vegetable Oil Donations from:
The Birchwood Café
Piccolo Restaurant
The Sandcastle,
Cheng Heng Restaurant
Wayne's Café
Lucky Panda
The Village Pizzeria
Thanks for keeping us running!