

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

COMMUNITY HOMESTEAD

NEWSLETTER: SPRING/SUMMER 2025

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

Lots of Orchard Changes ~Oscar Rauch-Borgerding

I'll say that the orchard is looking really good because of the amount of work we put in.

The new thing in the orchard is the strawberries. They are grown in two greenhouses. Brendan got them and he and the crew put them up in the spring and summer. They were not easy. Ella and I were trying to figure out how it goes together. I would hand stuff to Ella, and if she needed a tool I would go get it from the woodshop. Another thing that's new is raspberries. The old ones are still existing but Brendan recently took out some very old ones which were done, and now we have new plantings down by Altair. We have two kinds, the red and the gold raspberries.

Friday mornings its Ana, Bubba and I, and Chelsea and her kids. I've been getting the punnets ready for the strawberries. Sometimes I just go up there when no-ones in the house and join Alex and Brendan rather than doing something else. I did some weed-whacking on a Saturday for three hours, and I am very proud of that. Isaac had done some on Friday and I finished it. I like that job and it's fun to do. Bubba is really good at picking the flowers for tea, the chamomile for example, and he is a good weeder. He's also good at getting the runners from the strawberries. We clip them off otherwise they'll put their energy into those instead of the strawberries. Ana is really good with giving

directions. Ella is in the orchard too and she helps with raspberries and strawberry picking and asks me to bring them to the cooler. There's a fridge in the orchard and we put them there for a moment but at the end of the session I bring them to the garden cooler for farmers market and CSA, depending on what day it is.



The Herb Crew: Austin, Christina, Janette and Ethan

We have herbs that we use for the tea mixes and for the jars of herb mixes. Alex heads that up and lots of people, really anybody on the orchard crew, can do it. We split into groups and she asks us what we'd like to do, so you can have your pick at what you want to do. Sometimes there's weeding, or trimming, or herbs to pick. I don't mind

which one I do. I like it all.

Theres also new irrigation we put in. I watered a row of plants. I did not have to do that much this summer because it's been so wet. We have had school groups helping us. One day lots of other people came up to help weed at the orchard in a big push. We have been controlling the diseases well, and also in the greenhouses where the strawberries are. We just got apples from the orchard, the early ones, and I think we are expecting more as the fall comes.

The fruit goes online for the CSA or at the farmers' market and the rest goes to the houses or for jam that we use here and we also sell for the CSA and for farmers markets and craft fairs.

What I have learned at Community Homestead

~Chris Mann

I've been living at Community Homestead for 8 months, and I've learned a lot. I'd spent the previous several seasons growing vegetables elsewhere, and I was initially drawn by Community's success as a long-standing communal farm. I came curious about what was working, and how my life would be shaped over my time here.

The biggest lesson - learnt instantly and then perpetually, is that integrating our social world along lines of disability is essential to living well together. Community Homestead requires diligence in holding clear boundaries; in keeping conflict proportional; in respecting each others' rights; and in being attentive to each others' needs. It is a diligence that I wish had been present in all my communities prior. Further, everyone at Community Homestead stays brought-together by the work of looking after each other.

It may sound obvious that the uniting goal of any community would be caring for each other, but when we in the wider world choose to segregate out people with disabilities, we lose access to a chance to tend to each other, and thus we lose the practices that bring us together. At Community Homestead it is strikingly clear that disability gives access to the practices and sense of belonging necessary for all people to live well together.

The hardest lesson, which I haven't learned fully yet, is that growing vegetables does not make me special. I was trained to garden in a lineage of small-scale, independent, veggie growers. The systems centered on arduous hand work and efficacious multi-stepped tasks, while the culture idealized an image of a farmer who could do it all himself. This left me feeling proud - that I could do high-skill high-intensity work all on my own.

At Community though, literally everyone gardens. And this eases the arduity. To ease the complexity, we break each task down to its component steps, and everyone picks the step that best fits them. This means my gardening has changed from performing individualistic agrarian feats to finding camaraderie on a very big team.

The switch remains a struggle, and my ego bristles at times, but ultimately I've been able to relax into an enjoyment of gardening to which everyone around me has already keyed in. I've begun to wonder where else I create extra work (and ego trips) for myself by opting for a non-inclusive approach.



Nadine & the packing shed

Making Pies ~Janette Schauls

Pies are good. We did not make any today but we make them on Thursday. They for farmers market in Osceola. Stillwater too. Us... we make pies. Us, me, Shannon, Christine. Alex stirs. Hannah make the crust. Hillary help us. Put them on trays.

Tins. Stirring. Scooping.

Make Raspberry Apple. We make Rhubarb Strawberry. Christine put them in the cooler. Bake them on Friday.

We got a lot of fruit. We got more coming. I like Raspberry Apple. Buy them.



Alex & Janette making pies

Jacks retirement ~Hillary Schauls

Jack is the pastor. His retirement was on Kelly's birthday at the church. We had cake and lunch at the church. There was coffee and lemonade. Christine made quiche for that too. Hannah goes to that church on Sundays. Jack plays guitar. He played at the pig roast last year. He plays music at the farmers' market sometimes. He helps the farmers market in Osceola. He helps a lot of people. His wife is Cheryl and she helps out at the church. Our choir sings at the Methodist Church in Osceola Wisconsin sometimes. We sing at the Christmas concerts there.

Learning to Milk ~Hannah Gregor

I have learned that there are a whole bunch of steps involved in milking. The beginning of the process, you unhook the milker, take apart the swing pipe, apply the iodine, and once that is on, wait a few seconds and then wipe the udder off. Then you wait another little bit and then you hook them up to the milker.

There's things to be aware of, some of which is about behavior around animals. You can't just go in and expect them to do what you want all the time, especially if they are together. Sometimes they get a little testy being around



Hannah with the cows

another one, and that's okay because they are just trying to figure out who is in charge and who needs to follow the lead. Some of it is about safety: that is a big priority. You should not be in the barn if you are not safe. Safety is the number one rule in the barn and that's for the human and the animal. Without that measure, the person checking in on you does not feel safe, and neither does the animal. All the time I am working with them and getting to go out and do fencing and helping Eric and Shannon out, I feel I am safe and looking out for them too.

I started milking when we switched to a little dairy herd about 2 years ago. I have a lot of anxiety and I really love animals. That anxiety has always held me back but being with animals helps me out because they are not going to judge me or tell me off in a human way! I have been doing barn stuff since I first got here but what really fascinated me was to get used to these big animals and be able to move with them and be less timid of them in the process. I have learned to move with them, in the way they move so they can get used to me. I wanted to be not so afraid anymore.

Its going well. There are challenges and not every day is perfect. Sometimes I have to ask for help for things but I can almost do it by myself from start to finish. I am pretty proud of myself for this. My whole family says they are proud of me for this. I have a favorite cow which is Gloria. She's more mellow than Barbara Ann, not fight or flight, and does not make me flinch! She's producing a lot of milk for the community which is impressive and we can sustain our community with that milk and do a bunch of things for our community. I like knowing where that milk comes from and being part of that cycle. I like taking care of them.

Summer Processing ~Desi Peterson

Pickling is complex but also very fun! There's a lot of ingredients and the steps are; washing the cucumbers, taking the head and tail of the cucumbers, cut them in a certain way; circles, spears or whole, and packing them into the jars. A fun part is when you smell the pickling spice and the vinegar. It makes me sneeze.

Sometimes I clean the cucumbers, sort them into the right sizes so we don't get the blimps. I also cut them into circles or spears. I help with washing the salt out of the cucumbers when we are making bread and butter pickles or relish. I write down the code for jars so we know which days the pickles were made and I stick the labels on the jars so they are straight and there's enough space between the lid and the label.

We make pickled beets, cucumber pickles, making lots of jam like plum, grape, strawberry, rhubarb, rhubarb strawberry, rhubarb raspberry, We blanch corn, cauliflower, broccoli which is basically taking summer stuff and storing it for winter just for the community.

If there's just Christine and me its relaxed and talking but most of the times there's a lot going on and I get on with my task and instructions. It gets busy in the kitchen with Janette and Oscar and Alex and sometimes Nastia. It's a bit more chaotic for me but I am also working on being tolerant of this kind of atmosphere and getting along without nit-picking over someone else's job. I think I am getting better at that but I still need to work on it. I do like processing. It means I can help handle the foodstuff we make and store.



Desi in the kitchen



Update on the Apartments ~Nastia Baerg

They put siding on most of it, the windows in, the doors in, and now we are waiting for the rest of the siding and doing the cement for the porch.

Then, inside is a layout of what it looks like: 2" by 6" I think. It's obvious where the bedroom, where the bathroom is, where the bootroom is but there is not sheetrock, just the wood.



I go over there maybe three times a week and take my wagon over and clean up by putting wood in for the pizza oven. I think the workers are adding more each time so I need to keep up. I sometimes talk to the builders there and show people around there. If they have any questions I try my best to answer them.

It's getting cuter! I like it and I could spy on the cows and can take lots of pictures of the sunset. There's a good place to watch the thunderstorms. I like the blue on the window frames and I don't think I dislike anything there. One of the windows I will have to wash once a week. It will splash and look dirty. I think the best view is in the bootroom.



The bootroom has a closet and a big window and you could fit chairs and table for eating, and hang jackets from a pegboard on the wall. The view is cows in the field and towards the garden and sometimes people driving past.

I like to see people walking past and saying hi and it's also peace and quiet. I have to get used to that but I think I will like it a lot. I just have to remember to use my phone to text out and see what people are doing so I can keep doing things like riding bikes, hiking, eating lunch or dinner or take a walk with people.



Steve Fons 1/20/1953 - 8/24/2025

Today, we said goodbye to our friend Steve Fons, who shared his eccentric, kind, helpful, determinedly 'ornery self with all of us in community for the last 15 years. Always woven into our memories.

More in the next newsletter.





Alex and Sherry at Rhubarb Fest

Coming and Going ~Christine Elmquist

Kicking off summer the school groups arrive; Youth Initiative High School, Minnesota Waldorf Schools 3rd and 7th grade, Avalon School, and Chicago Waldorf School. Then come the summer volunteers, high school students, Tami and Clemens from Hibernia Waldorf School, college students Ada, from Viroqua, Chloe from, well, here, because her heart has never left and is only sometimes in Duluth.

Goodbye and heartfelt thanks to Carla from Berlin and Ella from Hamburg who spent a year with us. Thank you Carla for your quirky humor, curiosity, and dedication, and Ella for your friendship, stepping beyond your 18 yr old self to big responsibilities, and strong relationships with all the children and the zero turn mower. How nice (and lucky) that you both enjoyed the construction teams!

Thanks to Lynne, Lois and Kim who come join Mary to make quilts, card wool, oil the outdoor chairs, and much more, and to Sherry, Cheryl and Mindy who man the ticket table and the cashbox at various events. Also appreciation to Bob Zalaznik aka "Bob the builder" who dedicated a week of his time to work on Evening Star's deck and chat with Oscar and Scott! That was wonderful.

Normally, at this time, we look forward to more international students looking for a gap year experience, bringing their friendship, culture, and enthusiasm to share. However, the US is not advertising itself as a welcoming or exciting option right now and so we have just one young volunteer bravely coming in September, Elena from Germany. Have to say, *we* are as welcoming and appreciative as ever and look forward to these young folk doing their community service in the world!

Restoring the Homestead ~ Shannon Kulig & Eric Witt

Travis calls this a "rustoration", and I think of this as a facelift, literally. Two years of heavy snow took off the shed attached to a 100 year old building, which we had used as a dairy workshop, and pasturising shed but had previously been the barn, and a home for a short time. We know it was once more than it appears now. We excavated an original underground wall that leads out from the original building but we did not get to the end of it

It has been a fun project: to take something that was an eyesore that met us every morning, as soon as we stepped outside the farmhouse door, and make it nice again.



School Groups ~ Ella Karakus

We had the pleasure of welcoming groups of students to Community Homestead. Their presence brought fresh energy into our daily routines. Together we worked in the garden, the farm, shared meals, and carried out jobs and chores together!

The students enjoyed working with all the people here, and it was wonderful to see them connect and interact with so many members of our community. Their curiosity but also their openness made it easy to share our way of living with them, and we also enjoyed learning about their own experiences.

By the end of their stay, it felt like we had formed real friendships with them!

We are grateful for their kindness, their willingness to jump in, and the joy they brought into our days. We hope they carry a piece of Community Homestead with them and remember the time we spent together as lovely as we will.

Summer Events



Hillary: *This was Mother's Day. We did pie and ice cream and crafts. Remember I served out with Batyah? And Janette was there too helping. It was Farm Crawl where different places close to us, Just Ducky, Foxtail and other places give tours. It was kinda cool!*



Joel: *This is Country Banquet back in June. It's where you eat fancy food prepared by chefs from the Culinary School at St Paul College. I went to it. My brother Jim and sister Mary and other family members came. It was a fund raiser for the new buildings.*



Kelly: *This photo is Pig Roast. We had a folk dance with Emmalyne and her husband playing and we showed people around. Hayrides, Cowpie Raffle. There was a petting zoo, a craft fair, making flowers crowns. We had lots of people come.*

Curing Garlic: a Moment of Summer ~ Ana Keeler

I always associate garlic harvesting with the very peak of the growing season. That day was a couple weeks ago.

After garlic gets harvested, it has to cure so that it can be stored in people's pantry, so that it will keep for months. To cure, it gets hung in bundles somewhere that it will stay dry and where the wind will blow through it. At Community Homestead, garlic gets hung at the overhang, the center of the garden where we meet to discuss what we'll be doing every day.

Terra and I spent an afternoon tying garlic into bunches and hanging it from the rafters. She cut the twine to the proper length and I tied the knots. I spent a lot of time thinking about



Hillary and Ana in the packing shed

what the best knot to tie garlic is. Then, I went home and had dinner. That evening, my friend came by and we went back to the heap of garlic to tie and hang more. We talked at length, again, about what the best knot to tie garlic is.

So many people were working in the garden that evening! Chloe and Ella were harvesting field tomatoes, and Chloe came by and offered some cherry tomatoes to eat. Will and Chris came by on their way to weeding the herb garden and said hi. Kelly walked by, bringing our house's compost to the pile. Alex came by and checked on some herbs drying in the dehydrator. It was an idyllic summer evening. Eventually Nadine and Adrian came by and told us to stop, because we could be at it all night.

Over the next week, I didn't touch the garlic, but Ella and Hillary worked on tying the rest of it and sorting the seconds garlic from the firsts. The next week, Terra and I got to hang the rest of it. It was a hot day, and I got really sweaty and yes, I thought a lot about the best way to tie garlic. In seasons past, working on garlic's been something I do with one or two other people, but it was so pleasant that so many people got to be involved and that it was such a social experience!

Thank you for your donations JANUARY 2025- mid August 2025

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Steve & Kelly Hansen: Dedicated to the wonderful families & day program folks at CH
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Nastia, Clemens & Tami at Solstice/St Johns

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All the good times :)
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The Tall Tree Eclectic Collective
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Rhubarb Fest: Hillary, Elvis, Hannah, Nastia, Ella, Chelsea, Oaken, Rainy

Coming Events:

September Fest: Saturday, September 20th 4 - 7.30pm

Right here at Community Homestead
519 280th St Osceola WI 54020

An evening of pizza oven, apple and grape pressing and a harvest of community and fall!

Happy 30th Birthday to Community Homestead - maybe we make a cake?!

Spirit of the St Coix Craft Fair: September 27-28
10-5, 10-4

Lake Front Park, Hudson, WI 54016

Red Wing Fall Arts Festival: October 11-12
10-5, 10-4

Downtown, Red Wing, MN 55066

Community Homestead Holiday Craft Fair:
Saturday, November 15th 10am - 4pm

Right here at Community Homestead
519 280th St Osceola WI 54020

St. Croix Valley Trees:
November 23, 24, 29, 30, December 1, 7, 8
9am - 4pm

458 Rice Lake Road
Somerset, WI 54025

Community Homestead Holiday Craft Fair:
Saturday, December 13th 10am - 4pm

Right here at Community Homestead
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