



488 MOORE HILL ROAD
ATHOL, MA 01331



The Farm School is a non-profit educational farm situated on 300 acres in north-central Massachusetts that offers three programs: the Program for Visiting Schools, a three day program for school groups and their teachers throughout the school year and a summer camp; the Chicken Coop School, a full-time middle school for local children; and the Practical Farm Training Program, a year-long immersion program in farming for adults. The work and care of the farm in the dairy, fields, gardens and forests is the mainstay of the programs. Please visit us online at www.farmshool.org or give Director Patrick Connors a call at 978.249.9944 to find out how to get involved! The Farm School does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, sex, sexual orientation, or national or ethnic origin in any of its school administered policies or programs. Tax-deductible contributions are vital to maintaining The Farm School's programs and can be made online or by sending your gift to the address below.

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NEWSLETTER 2010

We've made so much progress in the past year!

Down at Maggie's Farm, the soil is richer and the weed pressure dampened due to another year of careful crop rotation and cover cropping (and hard work!), the new, spacious tractor shed is up and sheltering our humble fleet, another major section of the enormous barn roof has been re-shingled, the web site for the adult program has been given new life (check it out by going to www.farmschool.org and following the link for educating adults) and there is a new door and stairway off the back of the Chicken Coop, along with newly configured built-in furniture inside.

At Sentinel Elm Farm, where the school groups visit, the smaller dairy herd (6 cows and their calves) better fits the land base, with the cows now grazing right through the summer and into the fall, thanks to the greenhouse and hoop house we have had dirt time with kids every month of the year, and a new food center consisting of a simple prep kitchen in line with a walk-in cooler and freezer is up and running, allowing us to process and save more food for all the programs, a critical link in our long-term Strategy to Take Care of Each Other.



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All of these decisions and acts indicate true progress and serve to root The Farm School even more deeply on the land and in its purpose. But the real news is what remains the same: we get up every morning and spend the day farming in a pattern that has existed on our ridge for centuries now—chores, work, meals and play. The real news is that over the course of this past year, 2,000 people came to move in this steady, daily rhythm with us. At the Practical Farm Training Program they came for a year, At the Program for Visiting Schools they spent 3 days or a week on the land. And at the Chicken Coop, local middle school kids rode their bikes or got dropped off at the farm every school day from September to June. The real news is that over the course of each day, individual moments of personal meaning were embedded in the hearts and minds of every one of our students and staff. The real way we can measure our progress over the past year is in the daily accretion of the small, personal moments that hook the farm in memories, moments like these...

Everything on the farm is in rhythm, starting with the moment my alarm beeps, then my rubber boots on wet grass and the herd of cows following me over mud to the white barn, then rubbing dirt off of the cow's udder and placing my hands on the warm teats to strip out the milk before putting the milking claw on the cow and listening to the pulsation of the milking machine moving back and forth in its own, steady rhythm. JOHANNA DOUGLAS
I open the gate, dewy grass coating my boots. The chicken's beak pecks

around my ankles, giving me a morning hello. I smile down as I pour chicken feed over the grass and they bustle around happily eating their breakfast. SUZANNE STEELE
This morning on chores a group of us walked down the lane to feed the pigs. After dumping in the slop, milk, and grain into the troughs we stood mesmerized, watching the piglets chew yesterday's meal. Seeing the pure delight they got from that food was one of the best ways to start my morning. ELLA MACVEAGH
I get ready, standing strong, legs apart and bent. I feel my shoulder blades move towards one another as I heave the heavy maul above my head. I bring my whole body

hour later, 153 pounds of bulging July green beans have been plucked from their vines with something between fervor and dexterity. ELLIE FLAMMIA
MOLLY ST. CLAIR
In between work, there is time to recharge. It's hot, the day becomes slow, and as one working organism everyone breathes deep and rests. MOLLY MORNINGSTAR
I love every word that Atticus says, every idea that is sewn into the gargantuan spider web of a story, and even the occasional subtle hints of romance that are shown between Dill and Scout. ADDIE RAMSDELL
Two people take trays of plants and drop them on the marked lines at the appropriate distance, more or less. Following closely behind them are the planters, who are often on their knees, trowels in hands, digging a hole and gently covering the plant. When a plant 'dropper' runs out of plants in the tray, they quickly go to get another tray and

When I went to the garden to pick up fruits and vegetables, it was something I have never done. After we had what we needed from the garden, we had to wet the fruits and vegetables. They felt very smooth and soft. LUIS INOA
Farmer's hands are tough, weathered, cracked, dry, calloused. They are used to working with splinters and small cuts. They are a tool unto themselves—the things that grasp that shovel, pull that rope, yank that weed. In a lovely paradox, not so uncommon on the farm, these same hands must be capable of incredibly precise and delicate acts: when the bees arrive, our hands, while still looking and seeming rough, handle the queen bee as if she is a crown jewel. CHARLOTTE SULLIVAN
We all fill our plates and head outside to eat at the picnic tables, everyone from the ridge top pausing their day to eat and have conversations with each other. In the yellow cream of our own cows and the purple-stained fingertips of black-raspberry season, our meals are daily reminders of the beauty of our work. These extended

mealtimes are and rotting greens, but underneath I saw rich brown soil. I dug deeper and unearthed more of the beautiful stuff. I realized that it seemed to be moving, and I looked closer I saw it was crawling with life. Ordinarily I would have jumped away, but I knew that this is what makes it happen. This was perfect. JANICE LI
Walking the calves out of their dark pen in the barn gave you a sense of purpose, that they needed your help to walk into the eternal bliss of fresh grass. JULIA CASTNER
The fleeces from our sheep that we had sheared, washed, dyed, and carded, are spread out on the kitchen tables, puffy clouds of teal, orange, white, gray, black, and yellow brightening the room. We sit crowded around for warmth, sipping steaming hot tea, busily making felted wool hats of our own design. MAYA SHAKED
When they worked I could see their muscles tighten and shoulders push against the yoke. After the work was done I bent down in between them to unwrap the chain from the pine log they had been pulling and

one of the steers bent down and licked my forehead. MEAGAN WRIGHT
The log was so wide it seemed that the sawmill blade would never come out the other end. The sawdust poured out the far side adding to the last few months' collection, board after board added to the drying rack. JOSH PINCUS
A chain harrow blocks the entrance to the field. Ben races to a nearby pickup, backs it toward the harrow, heaves a chain around the rusted ball hitch, tugs the barbed metal forward and the sheep move as one into new pasture. PATCH CONNORS
The way the Winter begins, cold, and exciting, the way leaf piles are so crunchy, the way the heat is when you are sitting on the roof, the trees above you, flip flops everywhere. The nasty blind chicken, watching the horses through the window by the futon. Being barefoot, the dusty barn, the torn-apart couch. Waiting for your par-ents to arrive, waiting on the porch. Football, and

trucks. This is the farm. ADDIE RAMSDELL
We had just finished the long chore of fencing a new paddock for our beef cows. They had new grass, fresh water and a secure perimeter. All was well. As I was leaving the farm, I spied two young calves duck under the new fence and in slow cautious steps, like hoodlums on their first trouble-making expedition, venture into the great unknown. JENN BOTTO
We uncover the five-gallon bucket of sauerkraut prepared two weeks early and dip our forks in. The taste of the crunchy, tangy cabbage confirmed what the pungent smell and rapidly rising bubbles in the brine suggested: the fermentation process was successful! MEREDITH RUHL
Laying down on the damp grass, sketching the landscape and soaking up the sun. I draw the finishing touches on my picture as

the bells begin to ring: time for chores. MAYA SHAKED
I tried not to spill water down my leg as I carried a bucket across the farm. We opened the door and the chickens all waddled to our feet. We emptied the water bucket, and reached into the hens' nest to collect eggs. We collected about 60 eggs. NOAH GROSSMAN
Golden light poured in through the panels of wood composing the barn. The workhorses stood below, clomping their strong hooves. A stray chicken was clucking around. Bales of hay were piled behind me, reaching up to the highest arches of the barn. I was surrounded by countless objects—various tools, devices, components—that had been used by the hands of past and present farmers. The space hummed with the work, the dedication,

his mama, he stood on his brand new, shaky legs, hungrily suckling colostrum from her teats. JAMIE POTTERN
I love everything about farming. I love waking up at dawn and heading outside first thing to groom the horses, feed and water the cows, take out the compost. I love closing the chickens in at dusk, walking down the lane to their coop, the last one out on the land, the chickens clucking quietly on their roosts. I love long days haying and weeding and harvesting in the

sunshine and the way my muscles feel after I've worked them good and hard. I love the deep sleep that the work of farming brings me. I can't imagine doing anything else. LAURA SACKTON

daybreak

morning

midday

afternoon

evening