

Many Hands Organic Farm and Sustainability Center -- December 2021

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Friends & supporters of Many Hands Sustainability Center,



Working shareholders and staff weeding lettuce

There seems to be a perceptible transformation happening on the farm that really started with the beginning of Covid in 2020 and has morphed and upgraded to a new level in 2021. We have been “open” since the beginning of the pandemic, and continued to have our daily well-populated lunches around our kitchen table, along with lots of activity on the farm itself, of course. Finally, just recently Jack, Anthony, Clare and Julie all got Covid, and have thankfully passed through it with no negative side effects, but with tuned up immune systems, which, in my opinion, is how nature intends it. Perhaps the high focus on what we put in our mouths - including delicious farm food, along with supplements and herbs - helped us weather this arguably potentially dangerous virus. Apparently our numbers aren't up yet on the big sky whiteboard, thankfully, so there will be more time to live out our dreams through the pallet of the farm.



Krischaun spreads wood chips around a new fruit tree.



Luke and Cameron bunching carrots for the CSA

Education

2021 was a year of more official workshops with one per month for the first several including “Five Risky Decisions”, “Organic Tree Fruit Production”, “Organic Small Fruit Production”, “Mushroom Growing”, “Starting Seeds” and “Poultry Management with Movable Houses”. These hybrid workshops worked nicely and attracted a number of future working shareholders to the farm as a side benefit. <https://mhof.net/events-workshops/>

We launched our YouTube Channel https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6pICn6_vMeMc_r7VgHhBLA in 2021 that includes our longer workshops but also shorts on food preservation and some favorite recipes.

We also have a regular presence on Instagram with short videos of what is currently happening in the field. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CGDpM-1FhLKr/>



Clare explains grape pruning to attendees at our small fruit workshop.



Agnes from the Home City Housing Leadership Program shells sugar snap peas for next year's seed

And we keep our Facebook page regularly updated - <https://www.facebook.com/manyhandsorganicfarm/>
On the Many Hands Sustainability Center website pages we also include updates on our work and additional educational material.

It is always fun to host groups on the farm. They came from Olin College, the NOFA/Mass Springfield Gardeners, Mount Wachusett Community College, UMass/Amherst and Worcester Polytechnic Institute. For a handful of hours we integrate the students into the job at hand and share with each other about the value and details of running an organic farm.



Juan prepping vegetable beds

You can donate online at www.manyhandssustainabilitycenter.org or send us a check addressed to MHSC, 411 Sheldon Road, Barre, MA 01005. All donations to MHSC are tax deductible as we are a 501(c)3.

Our long relationship with Stetson School <https://www.sevenhills.org/programs/stetson-school-at-seven-hills> continues with 2 young men coming each Monday to share our work and our lunch. We build long and lasting relationships with the guys. This past spring we hired Krischaun for a short stint before he graduated.

2021 launched a new project – our Immigrant Farmer Fellowship, designed to hire an immigrant farmer to provide training on farm for a person interested in a career in agriculture. Though it didn't exactly turn out as expected due to issues with immigration and green cards, we hosted Heinrich from Uganda for several months in the early part of the year, and Juan from Colombia is still with us once per week. Both of these wonderful men have added tremendously to our perspective and our enjoyment.

Service

The Community Fridge Project <https://www.worcestercommunityfridges.com/> provides free food for the taking all around Worcester (and other locations). We were able to support 10 small vegetable shares for weekly delivery through the largesse of our CSA members.

Support for SNAP Customers was another new initiative through the MHSC in 2021. SNAP customers can purchase a CSA share with their benefits and also receive back Healthy Incentives Program money to buy even more fresh fruit and vegetables. This year we recruited heavily amongst SNAP customers. Other CSA members supported delivery fees for the shares that leave the farm. As folks who have always felt sensitive about affordability of the highest quality food for people of lesser means, it does our heart well to be able to provide this access for so many.

The Community Farm

More and more people seem to call MHOF home these days. Mostly arriving as regular working shareholders, these folks make it possible for us to accomplish the hours of work necessary to grow and provide food for our CSA members (175 in 2021) and meat customers. For us it is exciting to come to work each day because of the elation of sharing work and food with folks from all walks of life who truly enjoy hard work, fresh air, conviviality and of course excellent food.

Our weekly newsletter cataloguing what's up on the farm has met with interest and has helped connect all of you more comprehensively with the day to day of running a farm in our times. You can sign up here - <https://mhof.net/>

Who knows what kind of fun things we will cook up in 2022. 2021 has been a very creative and productive year for the Many Hands Sustainability Center.

"I have been so happy to discover Many Hands Organic Farm in Barre. You remain an inspiration to this community and we need more, not less, of you. You and Jack have made Many Hands into much more than a farm. It is really an educational pillar in the community." Christal

Julie, Jack, Clare, Anthony, Jennifer, Juan