



# Farm Notes

## CSA Newsletter

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# Circles, Songs, Social Settings

by Hana Newcomb

In one September week, the farms hosted three very different gatherings—inbetween the regular weekly potlucks and Wednesday workshops. In addition to the daily work of growing vegetables, we fit in a lot of social time around here. October is always jammed with parties and events; as the workdays get shorter, the night life ramps up.

On a recent Monday, we hosted a memorial service for our late co-worker, Dick Clement. He started work here when he was 80 and beginning his fourth career. Amazingly fit and eternally cheerful, he was delighted to pound posts for cherry tomatoes and wait on customers at the stand. About 25 family members

and friends from the last few decades came for a brief and homegrown service behind the stand. We spread his ashes and ate cherry tomatoes in his memory.

The next afternoon a group of beginning and aspiring farmers came for a Future Harvest tour. They walked all through the gardens and fields of the Vienna farm and then settled down for a chat about the ins and outs of running a successful CSA program. We sat in the same spot on the same benches and stools as we used the day before for Dick's service. The CSA vegetables – and customers wandering through – were a perfect backdrop.

And then after some of us took Saturday morning off to observe Rosh Hashanah, there was yet another gathering, this time out on

the Wheatland farm. Orfeia (their website describes “a women’s vocal ensemble dedicated to preserving and sharing traditional music from Bulgaria and Eastern Europe”) led a workshop along with their powerful leader Tatiana. In the magical stand garden, we were a group of farmers and friends singing at the top of our lungs as we learned two new songs with unfamiliar and beautiful harmonies and rhythms.

In a moment that connected all the dots, as we went around the circle introducing ourselves, the lady sitting next to me had a moment of revelation. Her face lit up as she realized where she was (her sister and her niece are Orfeia singers) and she said, “I just figured out where I am! I am at my favorite farm!” She is a longtime shopper at the Takoma Park Farmers Market and she told me that she generally goes straight to our stand and loads up. And here she was, singing with her farmers.

And that was just one week. Coming soon will be a whole different round of social events – some that only happen once in a lifetime (an engagement party) and some that come around every month or every fall. We will be ready for the quiet and calm of winter, when it comes.



photo courtesy of rae basile

# Upcoming Event Calendar (Farmers Only - Sorry!)

by Oscar & Friends



photo courtesy of jack

## Farm Games (October 1st)

You've got muscles after months of toil. Time to put them to the test during the revived Farm Games. I'm pretty sure the crew at Moutoux have been secretly practicing; they've got a sweet Farm Gym over there. Maybe one of them will oust Lani as the Champion Hay Bale Tosser.

## Sweet Potato Sweet Shapes Competition (October 3rd)

Calling all sweet potato diggers! Have you unearthed a treasure? Are you marveling at the sweet potato's likeness to another object? Are you wishing you had googly eyes in your pocket? Are you talking to your sweet potato? Obviously you've decided you aren't going to eat it. Then perhaps you've found the sweet potato to enter into the FIRST ANNUAL Sweet Potato Sweet Shapes competition. Winner takes home all potatoes.

## Venison and Vegetable Dinner (October 19)

Somewhat self-explanatory: a dinner...featuring venison and vegetables. If you aren't the person hunting the deer, your role is to bring a dish to add to the EPIC potluck spread. Be prepared for some FOMO because you truly cannot sample every single offering.

## Museum of Farm Art (Early November)

A homegrown classic. Folk art. High art. Low art. All art.

**Potluck** (Thursday in Wheatland or Friday in Vienna ... for the rest of your LIFE)

The Greenhouse Lounge, same view, different days. Above: an evening party celebrating the engagement of Ciara & Tony. Below: opening reception for the 2022 Museum of Farm Art. Events such as these are farm-based and by invitation only, not for the general public.



photo courtesy of isabel hulkower



photo courtesy of oscar he

Outside, listening  
 Something in the wind says "Grow"  
 Smiling, we hear it  
 -Brandon Walker



photo courtesy of hana newcomb



photo courtesy of isabel hulkoewer



photo courtesy of isabel hulkoewer

The Thursday potluck (top pictures) includes other Wheatland farmers, expanding the number of cooks and dishes. The Museum of Farm Art in 2022 (bottom pictures) featured many artists of varying ages, working in different media. The evening included a presentation by each artist, followed by a question and answer with the audience. The reception spread was a work of art in itself.

# Greetings from...Olivia Murphy

by Olivia Murphy

Greetings from a little farther south in the Chesapeake Bay watershed! From 2019 to 2021 I was a seasonal worker at PVF, mostly in Vienna but I had a wonderful fun stint in Wheatland too. Commute life resulted in me moving to Upper Marlboro, Maryland and saying goodbye to PVF, but now I farm organic vegetables, in many of the same ways, on a beautiful 285 acres called Claggett Farm. We grow three season vegetables for a 275 member Community Supported Agriculture, have food bank partnerships to donate 30% of our fresh produce, and raise grass-finished cows and sheep to sell meat in our farm store. The scale of food production, style of growing, and varieties of veg are similar to PVF in lots of ways, but one major difference is that this farm is also an educational space used by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to speak about the role of regenerative farming in climate mitigation and reduced watershed pollution. This is one major difference in my new farm life- I talk to student and adult volunteers a LOT about how this style of growing (heavy cover cropping and crop rotation for increased natural fertility, and somewhat reduced tillage, not to mention a thousand other things) helps us keep our topsoil, one of our greatest natural resources. Earlier this year Hana wrote about how PVF came to be named for the Potomac River, and I so appreciated her making that connection to the local river. I may be on the eastern side of DC now, and just north of the Patuxent River, but the waterways aboveground, belowground, and over our heads through the atmosphere connect us all. And in my mind I still very often feel connected to the purpose, spirit, and energy of growing that I was adopted into and learned to love at PVF. Maybe I shouldn't say mind, maybe it's really in my body that I feel that, because I am often doing the same



actions, enduring the same conditions, and pushing to meet similar goals. I remember PVF fondly while I'm stacking straw bales to mulch, hoeing the longest row of hakurei turnips in the world, or picking thousands of pounds of tomatoes with the sun merrily beating me into the ground. Is it a tear in my eye or does the sweat runneth over? All the time I feel myself as a grower... growing! I'm elbowing my way into the mysterious world of tractor driving and ground prep, advocating for growing carrots and broccoli that got chopped off the seeding list here for being too much of a pain, and most terrifying of all, one coworker and I are keeping our year round jobs by starting up a brand-new winter CSA this year. Many kales are seeded and await their future in our hopefully-competent hands. All of that to say, my day to day for the past two years since leaving PVF has been the same, and different! And I am so thankful for that because this work keeps my heart singing.



photos courtesy of olivia murphy