

Field for Treasure

The Bethlehem Farm Newsletter

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

SPRING 2008

Egg-citing News from the Farm!

In March, we will welcome some new members to our farm community: thirty-five Golden Buff laying hens. Our new hens will be supplying us with farm-fresh eggs year-round. Why keep our own hens for eggs? Why not buy eggs at the store? Free-range, farm-fresh eggs and store-bought, factory-farmed eggs are two very different things. While store-bought eggs are con-



venient, eggs fresh from our own farm are just plain better. They're bigger, they taste better, and they are much more nutritious. An egg contains almost all the nutrients a person needs, lacking only Vitamin C. And, an egg from a free-range, well-fed

hen will almost always contain more nutrients and have less saturated fat than a store-bought, factory-farmed egg. Plus, local eggs do not travel far, so they are fresher and consume much less fossil fuel to get from the hen to your breakfast table.

We view eating as a moral act and do not wish to support or condone factory farms. As Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, stated when he was asked about the rights of animals in a 2002 interview, "Animals, too, are God's creatures . . . Certainly, a sort of industrial use of creatures so that hens live so packed together that they become just caricatures of birds, this degrading of living creatures to a commodity seems to me in fact to contradict the relationship of mutuality that comes across in the Bible." Seeing as though we are attempting to live according to the Gos-

pel Cornerstones, it only makes sense that we should seek to eat according to them as well.

On a group week, we use about 22 dozen eggs for our home-cooked, made-from-scratch meals. By raising



our own chickens for eggs rather than driving 20 miles to get them from town, we are saving time, money, and fossil fuel to get the eggs we need. As an extra bonus, raising our own eggs means that you'll be enjoying the freshest, best-tasting eggs possible when you eat breakfast here at Bethlehem Farm.

So, if you don't happen
(Continued on page 2)

The Bethlehem Farm Sustainability Plan

We see the conversion from coal to alternative energy sources (primarily wind, solar, and micro-hydro) as a priority at Bethlehem Farm. Making use of renewable resources is an imperative component of our commitment to sustaining the magnificent creation our God has blessed us with. 90% of the electricity in West Virginia (and 50% nationally) comes from coal. 43% of that coal is mined through the destructive practice of mountaintop removal and valley fill. Mountaintop removal destroys a living forest, which has provided resources to generations of West Virginians, and turns entire mountains into barren wastelands which look more like the landscape of the moon than the diverse Appalachian forest West Virginia is known for. The destruction is so great (470 mountains destroyed thus far) that it can be seen from satellite images on Mapquest or GoogleEarth. (Continued on page 2)

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BETHLEHEM FARM WISH LIST:

- Prayers
- Stamps
- Garden Tools (trowels, hoes, etc. used is fine)
- Maglite heavy-duty flashlights
- Extra-long, full-size fitted sheets
- Woodshop tools
- Cordless phone with caller ID
- #2 Phillips screw bits
- Solar Well Pump
- Funds for worksite materials

For the complete wish list, see our website at www.bethlehemfarm.net/wishlist.html

Bethlehem Farm and SARA: A Match Made in Almost Heaven (West Virginia)

Unlike the rest of the caretakers, I leave the Farm every day for the job that I do. Monday to Friday, 9-5, I work as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer at Southeastern Appalachian Rural Alliance (SARA), which is a local nonprofit that addresses housing needs for low-income families in the area.

My supervisor is none other than former BF Caretaker extraordinaire Eddie Pluchar and together we run SARA's Fix-It! home repair program. Our clients are low income families that are in need of various (often major) repairs to their homes. Our projects are largely funded by various grants that we have been awarded, and the work is done by licensed contractors and Bethlehem Farm volunteers.

The Farm provides the labor (for free, as always), and SARA uses its grants to pay for the materials for the project. As J.R.R. Tolkien says in *The Fellowship of the Ring* about the relationship between hobbits and men, "Nowhere else in the world was this peculiar (but excellent) arrangement to be found."

What is peculiar about Bethlehem Farm's relationship with SARA is precisely the fact that it works so perfectly. I'm sure most of us have, at one time or another, sat through a "collaborative meeting" that seemed entirely pointless; I certainly have. So it is refreshing to see how well two programs can work together.

The beauty of the relationship is that the programs compliment each other very nicely. One of Fix-It's grants requires that each dollar provided be matched by another source of money. In the case of the Farm, the value of the volunteers' labor constitutes the match money. Farm volunteers enable Fix-It! to make the best use of its money, thus helping more people than we would be able to



St. Iggy's Alumni working hard on a SARA site

without the Farm. The relationship works well for the Farm because our project coordinator doesn't have to plan the SARA work sites, leaving her free to work on other projects on the Farm's waiting list. Furthermore, sometimes Fix-It! is not able to do a particular project because the family does not meet certain requirements of the program; so Fix-It refers the family to the Farm. Other times, a job is more involved than the Farm can really handle; so they refer that family to Fix-It. It really is a match made in "Almost Heaven".....West Virginia.

THANK YOU!!!

To All who helped to make Second Annual Bethlehem Farm Benefit and Evening of Celebration a GREAT SUCCESS! 140 people attended the benefit which was graciously hosted by St. Ignatius College Prep. A wonderful time was had by all, and Bethlehem Farm raised almost \$10,000! A special thanks goes out to everyone who donated items for our silent auction and to those who shared their wonderful experiences of the Farm during the program.

Sustainability *(Continued from page 1)*

Thus, two primary goals in our Sustainability Plan are to 1) reduce the Farm's energy consumption and 2) meet the remaining demand with renewable energy.

Due to the great investment required, we will most likely fund the actual installation of our alternative energy system with grant money or by doing the project in phases. We are developing what will most likely be a wind/solar hybrid system which will come online in phases allowing us to meet more and more of our energy needs as the project progresses. Of course, the beautiful thing about an alternative energy project is that it will pay for itself over time, while benefiting the Earth all the while.

We have been working consistently to reduce our energy consumption, and in the next few weeks we will begin the second phase of our alternative energy plan. Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor in honor of a loved one, we purchased and will soon install an anemometer. This device will enable us to record wind data on our property to determine if wind is a viable option for energy production at the Farm.

Chickens *(Continued from page 1)*

to live on a farm, but want to enjoy real farm-fresh eggs, what can you do? Find your local farmers' market, and it's very likely you'll find several farmers who are happy to sell you their farm-fresh eggs. Farmers' markets are growing every year, so you'll have little trouble finding one (to find a local farmers' market on-line, go to , www.localharvest.org, or www.eatwellguice.com) And, while you're at the farmers' market for your eggs, check out their fresh fruit, veggies, and other local farm-raised food. You'll eat better food, you'll be much healthier, and you'll also be supporting your local farmers.

Project Updates

Johnny's: On November 16, Johnny's home was officially completed (even though he had eagerly moved in sometime in October). We all drank a Dr. Pepper in celebration of Johnny's new home and all those who contributed to this labor of love.

Having a warm home this winter has meant that Johnny is more comfortable- his knees and hips are significantly impacted by cold- and that he will be able to continue his livelihood of car detailing in the other half of his garage. Johnny's home is a testament

to the huge impact that a small group of people can have on a person's life. All you interior decorators will be thrilled to learn that his place is painted sky blue, and his bathroom features a camouflaged toilet seat cover. Johnny is also quite a cook and now that he has a stove/oven, his delicious fried garlic venison steaks have become a favorite of several caretakers.



Brian Boyle's: Brian's house is on its way up. The work of our October and January volunteers has given new shape to this home-to-be: Brian's future candle-making workshop now has trusses and a covering over it, and all the walls are up and sheathed. We are hopeful that Spring will bring some more lumber and the completion of the rest of Brian's roof.



Wellspring/Hope Haven Homeless Shelter: Our community partners at Wellspring and SARA, along with Brian, Joe, and many of our volunteers have teamed up to prepare the living space of Hope Haven, the much-needed homeless shelter in Quinwood. We are all excited to announce that the shelter is now open.



Thompson's: Joe and Ed at our partner agency SARA, connected us with Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, who are both on medications that prevent them from being in the sun. This January our volunteers from UMSL and John Carroll University were able to build a good-looking roof over their porch.

We are glad that the Thompsons will be able to safely enjoy the outdoors from their porch from now on.

Creighton University's Hinton Tutoring Project: Last summer, we launched an exciting pilot program in which a professor and education students from Creighton University worked one-on-one with Hinton-area children to improve their reading, writing, and math skills. That unique project has grown this year into a service-immersion course for Creighton students from a variety of disciplines. We look forward to welcoming them for two weeks this May.

Recipes From Home



FLOUR TORTILLAS

Many people love tortillas but have never considered making them at home. Perhaps with this simple recipe from our Bethlehem Farm cookbook you will give them a try.

Combine in mixing bowl:

2 cups unsifted flour

1 teaspoon salt

Cut in with pastry blender

1/4 cup lard or shortening

When particles are fine, add gradually:

1/2 cup lukewarm water

Toss with fork to make a stiff dough. Form into a ball and knead thoroughly on lightly floured board until smooth and flecked with air bubbles.

Divide dough into 8 balls for large size. Roll as thin as possible on a lightly floured board or between sheets of waxed paper. (Don't worry if they don't end up as circles.)

Drop onto a very hot ungreased griddle. Bake until freckled on one side. (Takes only about 20 seconds.) Lift edge, turn, and bake on second side.

To serve at once, fold each limp tortilla around small lumps of margarine. Or cool tortillas, wrap airtight, and refrigerate or freeze.

To serve later, place in tightly covered baking dish and warm in oven, or fry briefly in hot shallow oil.

Options: Replace 1/2 cup flour with cornmeal or whole wheat flour. Replace 1 cup flour with 1/2 cup whole wheat and 1/2 cup buckwheat; then, add 1 tablespoon warm water.

Recipes From Home: The Bethlehem Farm Cookbook is available for purchase from the Bethlehem Farm Store for \$15. Send us an email or give us a call to order your copy.

BETHLEHEM FARM

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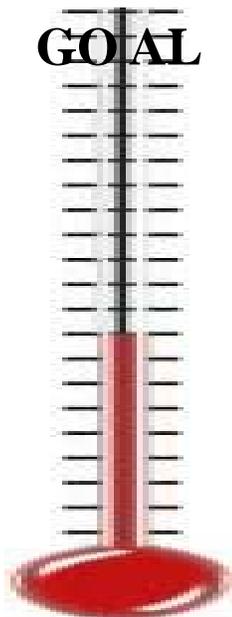
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GOAL \$79,000



As of

March 1, 2008

\$33,500

\$0

**FUNDS RAISED SINCE
OCTOBER 2007**

**We're on the Web!
Bethlehemfarm.net**



*This newsletter is printed on
100% post-consumer recycled
paper.*

Bethlehem Farm Mission Statement

Bethlehem Farm is
a Catholic community in Appalachia
that transforms lives
through service with the local community and
the teaching of sustainable practices.

We invite volunteers to join us
in living the Gospel cornerstones of
community, prayer, service and simplicity.

Fundraising Update

Dear Friends and Partners of Bethlehem Farm,

On behalf of the Caretaker community and the Bethlehem Farm Board, I would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to this great work we are engaging in together. Your contributions allow us to donate our labor to local families in need through our community building projects, such as the home repair program, while still meeting our operating budget and building greater capacity for the future.

After only three years of operation, how are we doing? Last year, we had total expenses of \$96,700 and total income of \$104,300 (with \$54,000 in donations and \$39,000 in service retreat participation fees composing the majority). Our net income of \$7,600 was wisely invested and will allow us to plan ahead as we continue to expand our impact in the community. It is amazing to think of how much we have accomplished with less than \$100,000! Just a few examples include:

- Employing six Caretakers who invested over 12,000 hours of labor valued at \$180,000
- Hosting 240 volunteers who contributed over 6,500 hours of labor valued at \$65,000
- Working with 25 families on home repair projects increasing home values over \$25,000

The year ahead has much in store for us with your continued support. Since we have grown from one Caretaker to six and from 240 to 340 volunteers over the past year, our budget must also keep pace. Our goal for this year is to raise an ambitious \$79,000 in donations to help support a \$160,000 budget. The good news is that we have already raised \$33,500 to date, so we only have \$45,500 to go. Reaching our goal will allow us to:

- Invest more in improving local housing conditions
- Begin renovating the kitchen from which we serve meals for service retreats and community night dinners
- Hire one or two more Caretakers to increase our mission efforts

Please consider including us in your regular charitable giving. With all of the volunteer labor and in-kind donations that we contribute to our corner of West Virginia, you can be assured that your donation will triple or quadruple in its actual impact. If you are interested in giving towards specific projects, then feel free to contact us for more information.

Peace and All Good,

Eric Fitts

Director