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Our Sunday Visitor

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December 17th, 2016

join us for our annual

Chicago Benefit

"Rain Down Your Mercy"

To purchase tickets, go to:
**[bethlehemfarm.net/
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More information to come!

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transform@bethlehemfarm.net

Cornerstones On Campus

by Sarah, Former Volunteer

My first and only experience at Bethlehem Farm was in May 2015 when I was finally able to attend the college trip with a group from my home parish. I had heard countless stories of how incredible the farm was so I couldn't wait to be a part of the hype. The farm certainly lived up to its reputation.

I couldn't believe how warm and welcoming the community was, how peaceful it was to sit on a hammock overlooking the rolling green mountains, and how amazing it felt to prepare and share fresh home-grown food with joyful people. I was touched by the community members who were so grateful for the work we were doing to repair their roof, build a wheelchair ramp, or simply share stories together. Even contracting a horrible stomach bug halfway through the week and spending a rather...memorable...night in the bathroom with some other unlucky souls couldn't dampen the positive effect that Bethlehem Farm had on me. There are so many memories I will forever cherish from my time there, but what sticks with me the most are the four cornerstones of the farm: community, simplicity, prayer, and service.

I couldn't just leave the cornerstones when it was time to go home because I realized what a crucial role each of these pillars of faith plays in building God's kingdom. So I began brainstorming ways I could bring a little bit of Bethlehem Farm back with me to Purdue University. I wanted to create a casual and welcoming community that could discuss and live out the cornerstones in order to really capture the mission of Bethlehem Farm and inspire others to live more selflessly, prayerfully, and simply. And so, with the help of a few of my friends, FOUR was born.

FOUR (Fellowship of University Residents) was a four week fellowship series open to anyone working, taking class, or living at/near Purdue for the summer. We met in various locations on campus to discuss a different cornerstone each week, reflect on related

Scripture passages, and participate in an activity to put these values into action.

Week 1 - Community: We started with a low-key evening so we could get to know one another better through a simple pitch-in dinner and some fun outdoor games.

Week 2 - Simplicity: We discussed what simplicity means and looks like in today's busy world, and then around 20 people stormed the church kitchen to make and share some recipes.



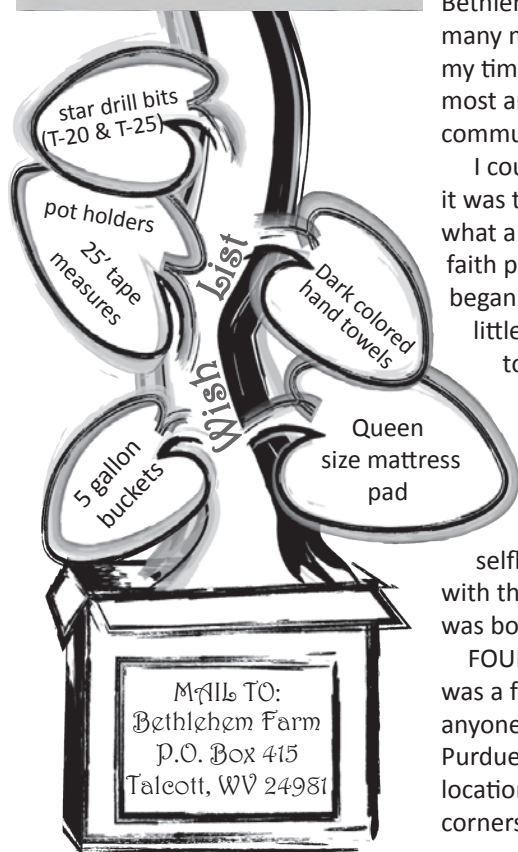
FOUR students on simplicity night

Week 3 - Prayer: We had a bonfire and outdoor worship session, chatted about why prayer is important and how powerful it can be, then swapped anonymous prayer intentions so we could lift each other up in prayer.

Week 4 - Service: We shared a meal at a resident parishioner's house, discussed our favorite ways to serve others, and finished the evening by working in a friend's community garden plot. Later that week, we also got together to cook and serve a meal at a local homeless shelter, using some of the fresh lettuce we had picked in the garden!

The program was a huge success! Some weeks of FOUR had a larger crowd than others, but I truly feel that everyone who attended was challenged and impacted by the four cornerstones in a positive way. I hope the program will inspire people to visit Bethlehem Farm and to start up similar programs in their own communities. I also pray that the fruits of these four important values will continue to multiply at Purdue and in the lives of everyone who has participated in FOUR and spent time at the farm.

This article is part of our
Our Sunday Visitor catechetical series



Words from a Homeowner

by Carly Ann, Caretaker & Cathy Adkins, homeowner

In 2015, one of our summer projects was to patch a leaky trailer roof for a woman in Talcott named Cathy Adkins. When those efforts proved unsuccessful, keeping Cathy dry, comfortable, and safe became our biggest project for this summer. Through the group season and into the Fall, Eric has been leading volunteers and nearly every caretaker in building a roof-over, two porches, and a new (now structurally sound) ceiling. I asked her to reflect on the last 4 months we've spent together for our newsletter. Her words have made us all smile and we're happy to share them with you:

Hi Bethlehem Farm People. My name is Cathy Adkins. You all should know my experience with the Farm has been awesome. First of all I want to thank all the students who came and worked on my home. I love you guys. Also the families, may God watch over you all and keep you safe. The work Bethlehem Farm people do is great! I love my



Cathy's new roof-over

porches, my roof-over; you guys went out of your way. All of you guys have worked hard and I thank each and every one of you. But most of all I have enjoyed meeting the people who live at the Farm. All of you guys have become like my family after you have been with me all summer. First of all, I met Richard. Well what can I say about him? Always got to joke with Richard. He is a nice caring guy just like a big old teddy bear and I really do appreciate you so much and we love you.

Eric: he is awesome. He is a great guy who goes way beyond himself to help. I have learned so much from him this summer just by watching and listening to him. I listen to him telling the girls how to do things and he makes sure it's done right. I love Eric's work, and he is one nice, great person. We love you Eric. He is an awesome man with a great family, 2 beautiful kids who I adore: Isaiah and Miriam, who I wish the best. And his wife Colleen who is great – I wish you both the best with your new baby.

Carly Ann: The first time I met her was with Eric. She is somewhat the quiet one but nice and always concerned and wanting to help. Her work is great. She always has a smile on her face. I love Carly Ann.

Carley: I just don't even know the words to say about her. I can talk to her about anything. She's like my rock. Her work is so great. She is so quiet and kind. I wish her the best in life.

Jarusha: She is the best. She totally understands me and what I have been through. I can talk to her about things and she understands. I love

her for that. I love her work and she is so great. She is a nice person on the inside and the outside.

Zach [Haselhorst]: you are a very special person in my life. I appreciate all that you have done.

I'm going to miss each and every one of you guys. You are like my family now. I don't know what I will do when Bethlehem Farm people no longer come around to work on my house! I appreciate everything you have done for me. I will never forget it. Also thank you Audrey, you are a great worker and a nice person too. Thanks everyone, and God Bless!



Adult Week volunteers with Cathy & Mark on her new porch

There Once was a Young Woman

by Lauren, Caretaker

There once was a young woman, exactly twenty three
Who was roving and discerning after receiving her college degree.
Said woman wanted to work with her hands, her heart and her brain
So she took a trip to Alderson, West Virginia by train.

Without this sounding like a cliché 'Review Of The Day',
this woman was grateful for moving to Bethlehem Farm which helped her find her way.

As she moves on to a new adventure in the city of Milwaukee
Her two years in West Virginia were a gift from the Divine and will be shared, this she can guarantee!

Parting Words

by Mary Catherine, Caretaker

I learned so much at the farm! I learned that I should never play Blokus or Saboteur, that Colleen is actually Super Woman, and that BattleStar Galactica is surprisingly applicable to the BFarm life. But one thing that really stuck out to me was the power of community. Everyone is a part of a community, and our daily choices impact our community; whether it our family, school, work, church, or neighborhood. At the farm, I saw the direct impact of my decisions. If I forgot animal chores, or didn't feel like doing donation entry that day, I was inconveniencing one of my friends. Because we all lived and worked together there was no escaping conflict, which meant that I was going to hear about my mistakes. I made so many of them but was met with forgiveness, compassion, and of course some occasional sass. It caused me to reflect on my daily unconscious decisions, like what I was going eat; is what I am eating in season where I live? If not, where is it coming from? What is the environmental impact it will have getting to me? How were the workers treated? I started to see the web of life connecting my small daily decisions to the global world. I have never been more aware of how interconnected our lives are to one another and the earth. The Farm put that in perspective for me and I am eternally grateful.

I am now in Seattle pursuing my Masters in Divinity with a certificate in spiritual direction! I am hoping to tie together community building, interfaith dialogue, food justice, living on the margins, faith in action, and spirituality in my life/career. If you are ever in Seattle or want to just catch up, let me know. Love, MC



Carley, MC, Lauren, Jarusha, Carly Ann, Miriam, Colleen, and Clare Fitts (in Utero) at a mid-summer grill out

"Say Hello to My Little Friend(s)"

by Richard, Caretaker

Bienvenidos to Tim, Audrey, and Shannon (Go Hawks)! Between August and October Bethlehem Farm has welcomed three new caretakers into our midst:

Shannon, being the youngest caretaker in both age and tenure, joins us from the suburbs of Baltimore, Maryland where she was born and raised. She first encountered BF in October 2015 on a group week, and she was here for two and a half weeks this summer as a summer servant. Shay-dawg loves books, cats, and making crab cakes. The Shansta intends to reap instant dividends from her BA in Liberal Arts from Villanova (Go Cats!) by taking on roles of home repair site leader, newsletter, storehouse manager, community outreach, and joining the grants and garden teams.

Audrey hails from the middle-of-the-boot, Louisiana. She just completed her Environmental Science degree from Louisiana Tech (Woof Woof!) this summer and is excited to join the Farm, mostly to geek out over sci-fi and fantasy with Richard and Colleen. Cajun Audrey (her preferred title) also loves books, bugs, and all their benefits; and she has many custom-made hats. Her roles will be home-repair site leader, animal husbandry, retreats & spirituality coordinator, and garden guru. Audrey's previous relationship with the Farm was non-existent as she found us through the Catholic Volunteer Network and first visited us for her interview week.

Tim Shov-el-in (as Isaiah calls him) joins us dethroning Richard as the second youngest male on the Farm. Tim is coming from Columbus, Ohio after recently finishing his MS in kinesiology and sports management from Ohio State. Before that he got his BA in sports management from Dayton (Fly High!). Prior to applying as a caretaker Tim was known all over West Virginia as the second most veteraned summer servant at Bethlehem Farm, second only to the beautiful Lauren "LaCool" LaCoy. Tim is passionate about sports, music, and facial hair. He will serve as the second youngest project coordinator in BF history, community facilitator, and on Richard and Colleen's facilities maintenance team.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR EXEPTIONAL DONORS

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BRAUN BUILDING CENTER
ANNE BARNES AND JOE
HOFMANN
BETH & JAMES STECHER

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.

CARETAKER COMMUNITY:

Colleen Fitts

Eric Fitts

Tim Peregoy

Katherine Peregoy

Richard Storey

Carly Ann Braun

Carley Knapp

Jarusha Lang

Tim Shovlin

Audrey Kolde

Shannon O'Toole

BOARD MEMBERS:

Scott McNelis

Kathryn Silberman

Caitlin Morneau

Jake Teitgen

Molly Linehan

Frederick Pratt

Paul Daugherty

Sharyl Pels

Jennie Motto Mesterharm

John Hannagan

Maira Reilly

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2020 Vision

by Eric, Director

The board recently adopted a Master Plan outlining a "Better Future" that we will focus our efforts on over the next three years:

"By 2020, Bethlehem Farm will strengthen our organizational sustainability, through stewardship across our core programs."

The five major components of this plan include:

1. Strengthening the service-retreat experience through programs such as "Empowering Student Leaders in Faith"
2. Enhancing home repair site leader training in skills and safety
3. Comprehensive safety review of gardens and grounds (replacement of garden tool shed)
4. Deepen our intentional Catholic community by understanding, supporting and developing long-term Caretakers
5. Conduct operations overview of entire organization (facilities, financials, communications, fundraising, including transition to new relational database software)

In the spring print newsletter, I detailed the "Empowering Student Leaders in Faith" effort and asked for your help. In this issue, I will address the second strategic objective: enhancing home repair site leader training in skills and safety.

Our Repairing Homes, Renewing Communities program is one of our best-known and well-loved programs. Low-income homeowners in our service area who cannot afford to pay a contractor for basic home repairs are offered zero-interest microloans and free labor, as they labor alongside us to improve their quality of life. Teens and young adults from around the country give of their time in service during their vacation, sharing work and conversation with people they normally would not have met. It is a beautiful experience to share with so many young people each year, but it is also very difficult to use unskilled volunteers to complete wicked projects where nary a square angle nor a level board can be found.

This is where a well-trained home repair site leader comes in. As a site leader understands safety and healthy risk-taking and gains skills in carpentry, they become ever more gifted in directing the delicate dance that is volunteer low-income home repair: safety, work quality and number of families served all increase. Aside from the standard shadowing and learning on the job, we have already sent each of our site leaders through a Carpentry Fundamentals course at our local community college (\$75/student). With the help of a generous donor, we have also joined ReFrame (reframeassociation.org), an association of organizations that provide low-income home repair through volunteer service. Membership already gives us access to their online library, which will help us develop our own home repair manuals. We would like to send 5 site leaders to the ReFrame conference, which costs about \$250/person for the 3 days. Please consider donating toward our training efforts:

\$20 covers a night of lodging at the conference

\$39 covers a hands-on repair workshop during the pre-conference

\$62 covers meals in transit and during the conference

\$109 covers the conference registration

Excess proceeds will be used for the area of greatest need

Thank you for your role in securing the future safety, quality and productivity of our home repair program!

Check us out online!
www.bethlehemfarm.net

Questions or Comments regarding this publication and/or article submissions can be sent to the editor, Shannon, at caretakers@bethlehemfarm.net. Photos welcome!