

Special Thanks to **Our Sunday Visitor**

Sayanora Laura!

By Colleen Fitts and Joe Tracy-Prieboy, Caretakers

The Bethlehem Farm community, near and far, said goodbye to Laura Zerhusen this August after five years. Known to some as Lala, to others as Svetlana Cherbusen, and to the Greenbrier Roller Derby Vixens as Duelala, Laura joined our community in 2009 after graduating from Loyola University Chicago. She had planned to enter medical school, but the mission of Bethlehem Farm fit her so well that after two weeks with us that May, she discerned a change of plans and passed up a spot in medical school. Since that day, she has taken on quite a few of the roles available at Bethlehem Farm, starting as House Manager and at various times serving as animal tender, worksite leader, hiring coordinator, tractor driver, newsletter editor, winter benefit organizer, store manager, volunteer coordinator, and finally project coordinator. All the while, she was our unofficial puzzle-solver, trip organizer, #1 babysitter, and general fun-loving community member. She also served the local community as a Girl Scout troop leader and skated with the area roller derby team.



We'll miss you, Lala!

In addition to her invaluable leadership, efficiency, and talents as a Caretaker, Laura helped make the Caretaker community strong. She lent a listening ear to many, kept things light with her silly wit, and gave a great example of honest communication in difficult situations. Laura noticed

things, thought ahead, and took care of so many things behind the scenes that we are still discovering all that she did. She was a favorite with volunteers and Summer Servants, well-known to returning chaperones, and loved by local community members. Laura was a model for the Farm community of someone who always balanced hard work and fun, personal time and community time, details and the big picture, honesty and compassion.

Though we are sad to see her go, we are very excited to see Laura off to her next adventure. She has moved to Saint Louis, MO to pursue her passion for taking care of children and new mothers, and to continue her education in midwifery. St. Louis as her choice of new location may or may not have been influenced by a certain tall, pale, and hairy former Caretaker, Matt Hubbard. We are deeply grateful to Laura for the five years that she gave fully of herself to this mission. We miss her every day, but Miriam and Isaiah especially know that the children (and adults) of St. Louis are blessed to have Laura in their lives.

Connecting With Our Roots at Naz Farm

By Lauren Schoendorf, Caretaker

The relationship between Bethlehem and Nazareth Farms is unlike anything I have experienced, and within these two organizations there are many people to celebrate what human community truly is. As a college week volunteer a few years back, I first heard of Naz Farm while listening to Bethlehem Farm's history. As I continued to come home to Bethlehem Farm, I quickly realized how important of a place Naz Farm is for the existence of Bethlehem Farm. When I moved into the Bethlehem Farm community in the beginning of this past September and began taking on a new role as a Caretaker, Nazareth Farm became this mysterious place somewhere up north. I had heard so much about it, now lived in community with a handful of people who originally met each other there but had never seen the place for myself.

I was given the perfect opportunity to travel to Nazareth Farm during their 35th Anniversary celebration. As a new member of the Bethlehem Farm caretaker community, I was nervous about walking into the Nazareth Farm community since I was not quite settled into my new life in West Virginia. As soon as I arrived to Nazareth Farm with Julie Tracy-Prieboy and Miriam Fitts around 9pm on Friday night I was given a plate of food and openly introduced to (Continued on page 3)

SAVE THE DATE!

December 13, 2014

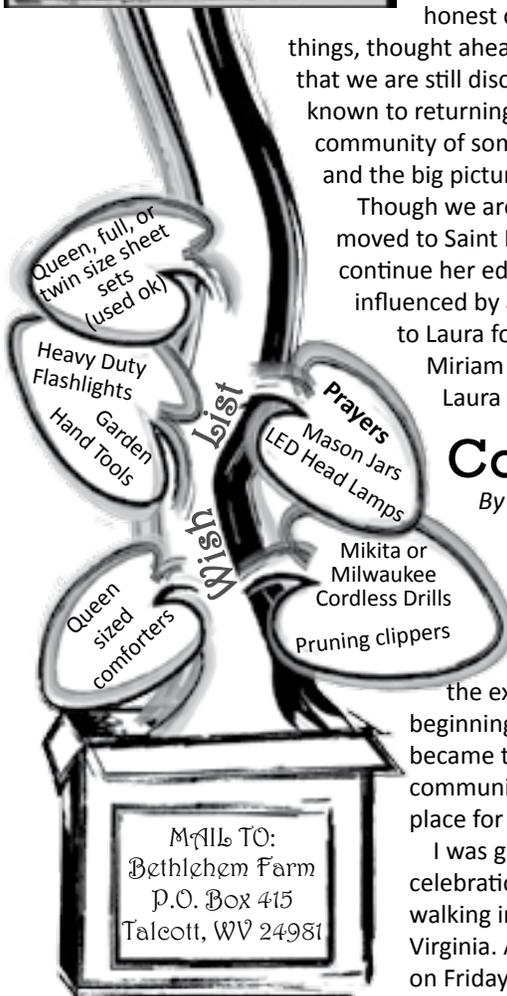
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Discerning Vocation

By Marissa Minnick, Caretaker

At the beginning of every group week and when we are describing the farm to anyone who comes to visit, we often bring up an integral part of Bethlehem Farm's Mission Statement: Transforming Lives. Not only do we strive to transform the lives of people in the Appalachian region, but we also transform the lives of our volunteers, Summer Servants, and Caretakers. Often, our vocations are fulfilled and shaped at the farm, including how we plan to live our future lives whilst following the four Gospel cornerstones of Prayer, Simplicity, Community, and Service.

What is Vocation, and why does it matter to people in a faith community? A theologian by the name of Frederick Buechner once said that Vocation can be found in the place where "our greatest passion meets the world's greatest needs." Even though there are many needs throughout the world- including a need for peace, forgiveness, and greater stewardship of the earth- our vocation is a gift from God that allows us to more narrowly focus our work for the greater good, whether it be in joining a religious order, working on a farm in West Virginia, getting married, or working as a doctor or lawyer, among other life paths. In all our vocational paths, God calls us to act as Christ to others, to see God in all things, and to serve those with whom we work. Whether someone is a Caretaker at Bethlehem Farm or an Accountant for a large company, it is possible to do each job with humility, intention, and love. In a faith community, if we strive to discern our vocation, it is possible to bring Christ's love to all aspects of our life.

As members of the Bethlehem Farm Caretaker community, we are often asked by volunteers, friends, and family members alike, "Why do you choose to live on a farm in West Virginia?" While living in community is not the typical life path for most Americans, for many Caretakers it

seems natural and is a vital part of living out our Vocation. Living in community gives us the chance to hear different perspectives, to share our lives with a group of people from diverse backgrounds, and strengthen who we are as people of faith on a journey following Christ. The challenges of living in community can strengthen our understanding of vocation. For example, Caretaker Colleen wrote in a previous issue of "Field of Treasure" that her and her husband Eric's vocations have been, "marked by openness to the will of God... and listening to trusted friends," leading them to marriage and founding Bethlehem Farm.

Not only do Caretakers experience the transformative quality of Bethlehem Farm in regards to vocation, but our Summer Servants are heavily impacted as well. As Summer Servant Tim Shovlin said, "Bethlehem Farm has given me the perfect image and example of Men and Women for others. As a young adult, having people like Joe, Brent, and Eric to look up to guided me to following a vocation of serving others. I want to be the example to others as they were to me." Former Volunteer and Summer Servant Anna Robertson is a musician and has written a few songs about her time living in West Virginia and the farm, including her song "The One."* In the song, Anna describes how the farm helped her to "sense the very closeness of our web of life/The eternal give-and-take/And the choice of to participate or extricate our thread/ Is not our choice to make." Being on the farm helped her realize there is a Web of Life that we are all a part of.

While most Summer Servants do not decide to become Caretakers after their time of service on the farm, many of them continue to bring the spirit of the Four Cornerstones wherever they decide to live. Summer Servant Michael Newman said that "Starting [work as a Summer Servant for] a month at the farm literally a day after graduation was probably the best decision ever. I was moving so fast, that finals and graduation happened without any time for me to process what was actually going on. (Continued on page 3)

How has Bethlehem Farm Influenced Your Vocation?

Kara Feeley, Summer Servant

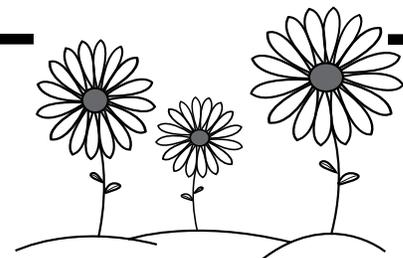
Bethlehem Farm helped me discern my vocation by reminding me how much I love to help others, and how no matter what you do, whether you're on work sites or on home crew, there is always a way to help someone and contribute to your community. After leading home crew and playing with Isaiah and Miriam everyday, it also helped me discern even more that I really feel called to be a mother.



Kara Feeley works on painting a homeowner's house

Derek Middleton, Summer Servant

The farm opened my eyes to new possibilities involving my vocation. I went from not questioning the idea of being a nurse all my life to changing my major to crop science at Purdue.



Repairing Homes, Renewing Communities 2014

By Joe Tracy-Prieboy, Caretaker

The majority of projects that Bethlehem Farm completed this past spring, summer, and fall were either working on siding or roofing with families in our community. We completed a big project putting foam board, siding, and more on Tommy and Heather's house, in addition to roofing work we did with them. Six weeks of volunteers worked on their house. Then we did a similar project with Garlan and Linda, neighbors just down the



Linda and Garlan's house with new siding.

road from the Steers. We helped Margaret maintain the siding she has by repainting her house with her.

We repaired or entirely redid roofs with Laura, Betty, Michael, Albert and Anna, Mary and Charles, and Dreama, but we did a lot of other things at some of those sites, as well.

We put up gutters with Albert and Anna. At Betty's we replaced siding and added gutters. With Mary and Charles we painted the house, repaired parts of the porch, and also added gutters. With Wendy we tore out a rotten porch, built a new one, and redid the fascia on all of her house.

There were a few other projects we did this season, as well. We added gutters at our long-time friend Sandy's house. We built a new second story deck with JC and Melanie, and we built a wheelchair ramp with Richard and Genevieve. All in all, we have completed 16 major home repair projects with families in the community, many of them spanning multiple group weeks. As ever, the families we worked with have been gracious, welcoming, and enjoyable to work with.

I mentioned in the last newsletter in the spring we battled mud and cold. This summer, we faced heat. We seemed to battle every bee, wasp, yellow jacket, and a kind of mutant red bee creature in the tri-county area. I often am asked where we find such good volunteers, and the only answer I really have is that God sends us people who have a heart for service.

Naz Farm... (Continued from page 1)

handfuls of people. This was the best welcome I could have received and swept any apprehension I had for the weekend into the dust pan. I loved sleeping in the infamous Dorm and having the opportunity to adventure around the grounds. As the weekend unfolded I couldn't help but feel very similar feelings of contentment and togetherness that had undoubtedly impacted my discernment process of joining the Bethlehem Farm community. Simple tasks were completed and the sign of peace was more than an exchanged hug but a validation of the other. The weekend at Nazareth Farm was a wonderful celebration and overall testament of how so many people from various walks of life can come together with the four cornerstones as the foundation of their relationships, memories, and lives shared together.

Only a week or so afterwards Nazareth Farm staff came to visit Bethlehem Farm. The energy Nazareth Farm staff possesses is incredible and it was awesome being able to further create friendships and work alongside them. There



Eric and Miriam with Naz Farm friends!

was a moment during the second dinner we shared together as one Farm community when I found myself looking around and feeling overwhelmingly grateful. Witnessing and participating in conversations people were having with one another made me realize, in that

moment, the opportunity I have living at Bethlehem Farm to be the person God had intended me to be. I had never eaten dinner with so many people who chose a life of service to one another and the community! I felt so alive at this moment!

Through my rambles and various attempts to turn my thoughts into concrete sentences my hope is you were able to grasp the incredible and authentic community that is Nazareth and Bethlehem Farms. I am ecstatic to be part of this greater Farm community and am grateful for the opportunity to do so.

Vocation... (Continued from page 2)

However, being at the farm, away from everything (along with not spending hours a day in front of a screen), and living with the coolest, funniest, most caring people I know really provided the exact environment I needed to figure out some answers to question: 'what the heck is this adulthood thing, and how do I fit into it?'"

For many, the farm provides the peaceful and calm space to discern their vocation while at the same time serving others in the Appalachian community and being stewards to the

earth.

Overall, Bethlehem Farm's mission to transform lives is one that seems to touch all people who experience the farm, whether it be volunteers, Summer Servants, Caretakers, or Homeowners and Community Friends. There are several ways to discern vocation, but for many, Bethlehem Farm serves as one of the turning points in their lives.

*You can check out more of Anna's music at <https://annarobertson.bandcamp.com/releases>

This article was made possible by a grant from the Our Sunday Visitor Institute

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:

- Kim Bremer
- Colleen Fitts
- Eric Fitts
- Marissa Minnick
- Tim Peregoy
- Lauren Schoendorf
- Joe Tracy-Prieboy
- Julie Tracy-Prieboy

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- Jana Strom

AND WELCOME OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!

- Paul Daugherty
- Fr. Arthur Bufogle

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By our friends at PostNet in Lewisburg, WV.

Welcome Our Newest Caretaker, Lauren!

I proudly grew up in Delafield, Wisconsin and ventured to Omaha, Nebraska to attend Creighton University in 2009. In December of 2013 I graduated with a B.A. in Justice & Society. With my academic studies rooted in social justice and my various experiences both at Camp Minikani and working in Omaha, I quickly realized my passions, intentions, skill set and beliefs are best shared with a community of people who revolve their daily routine around intentionally serving others.



We're All Moved In!

By Eric Fitts, Director

In the Summer e-news, I had the pleasure of announcing that we have moved into the Caretaker Residence! Especially considering those who do not receive our emails, I feel it is worth saying again: As of April 29th, all of the Caretakers had moved in and by the end of May the Summer Servants were able to move into the Summer Servant Tree House. Please consider helping us pay back our lenders by donating now!

We have been enjoying the lower stress of having a dedicated space for our Caretaker Community. Not only were we able to accommodate more Summer Servants, but also the Summer Servants enjoyed having more living space and not being crammed into tiny rooms. Volunteers also enjoyed more privacy in double and quad rooms, now that they have moved up onto the 1st and 2nd floors, rather than half the group sleeping in a 20-bunk dorm in the dank basement. The sustainable features have kept the house cool in the summer and we are looking forward to seeing how the solar floor heat and super insulation keep comfort up and costs down in the winter.

Over the spring and summer, we completed the Eljen system (sustainable septic), installed the last seven doors, hooked up the phone, completed final grade and grass seeding, and completed the deck roof.

The final major piece of the project was the greenhouse on the southern face of the building, which was installed in mid-August. We are excited for more winter growing space, extra heat for the house in the winter, the ability to start tender seedlings early in the spring, and a sunny spot to synthesize some Vitamin D when we're snowed in up here. The last major project is laying the rock veneer on the greenhouse wall.

There are still plenty of odds and ends to complete on the house and we are over \$75,000 in debt at the conclusion of this project (not too bad after building a house that sleeps 20), so please consider a gift to support Bethlehem Farm (click here). You are welcome to designate your gift toward the Caretaker Residence, the service-retreat program, our Repairing Homes, Renewing Communities program, or wherever most needed. Thanks again to everyone who helped in this monumental project for the future of Bethlehem Farm. As we prepare to celebrate 10 years of service in 2015, this building holds the promise for the next 10 and beyond.

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Welcome the Newest Board Members!



Paul Daugherty



Fr. Arthur Bufogle

Check us out online!
www.bethlehemfarm.net

Questions and comments regarding this publication and/or article submissions can be sent to the editor, Marissa, at caretakers@bethlehemfarm.net