

From: Bethlehem Farm <caretakers@bethlehemfarm.net>

Subject: News from the Farm: February Food Justice Retreat; Adult and Family Weeks; New Building Update; Hellos and Goodbyes

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COMING UP SOON: [Register now](#) for our food justice retreat (February 17-19)!

SO SAY WE ALL, JOE

by Colleen

One of the hardest things about being a caretaker at Bethlehem Farm is seeing other caretakers move on, even when you are happy for them. This November, we said goodbye to Joe Prieboy after 4 years and 3 months of service at the Farm. Joe joined us in August 2007 as an Americorps VISTA for SARA, the nonprofit arm of our local housing authority. Joe coordinated SARA's low-income home repair program while also leading worksites during Farm group weeks and spitting wood in his free time. In the summer of 2009, Joe completed his VISTA term and transitioned to the role of Project Coordinator at Bethlehem Farm.



Joe at his shaggiest

For most people who meet him, Joe is a memorable person. Whether it's because of his trademark long hair and beard, his straightforward manner, or his insatiable appetite for scrambled eggs, most volunteers and community friends associate Joe with their memories of the Farm. When he shared the news that he was moving on, the most frequent comment he received was, "It won't be the same without you." Our dog Roxy would also agree, as she mopes around wondering where her Joe has gone.

Joe was a solid community member on whom we could always rely for honesty, realism, hard work, and fun. He is prayerful and committed to practicing contemplative silence. He is playful and loves a good



CALL FOR SUMMER SERVANTS

Here at the Farm, we love to have helping hands during the warmer months! If you are at least 18 years of age, consider joining our community as a summer servant for anywhere from 2 weeks to 3 months. You can read one summer servant's thoughts on her experience in the article below.

We are currently accepting applications for April through October 2012. The priority deadline for applications is **February 15th**. Contact Laura with any questions: hiringcoordinator@bethlehemfarm.net

competitive board game or sci-fi viewing. He is a good teacher, from how to use a hammer to how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours. He understands that community life requires sacrifice, so he regularly went the extra mile, did the extra sink of dishes, or worked a few extra hours just to be of service-without expecting any special recognition. Prior to his departure, Joe spent many a weekend splitting firewood so that the caretakers will not have to worry about firewood for the next two winters. He also worked very long days (often until dark) during his last months in order to fulfill many of our home repair promises to local community members.

Even though we will miss him greatly, we are excited to send Joe off to his next step, which is his marriage to Julie Tracy in May. Julie was one of the first two caretakers (with Russ) when Bethlehem Farm opened its doors in 2005, and she has served on our board ever since. Joe and Julie have known each other for many years, as they met at Nazareth Farm when he came to visit me (Colleen) while Julie and I worked there. We know that Joe and Julie will continue to grow together in their lives of service wherever they are, and we are very excited to celebrate with them in May.



Joe and Julie

Thanks, Joe. May you live long and prosper.

CLOTHESLINES: A REFLECTION

by Jenna Cucco, summer servant 2011

I came to Bethlehem Farm looking for a way to reconnect with and deepen my prayer life; what I found was clotheslines. They have a myriad of clotheslines around the property. There are nearly a dozen inside spanning the railing of the second floor, and there are several more scattered outside in case you prefer a summer breeze scent in your laundry. My favorite, however, was any clothesline with a pulley. The repetition, the feeling of the line moving slowly between my hands, and the silence of the activity was meditative for me, almost prayerful. In being present to the work, I discovered an opportunity to be intentional and mindful of the moment in a way that reveals a deeper meaning in our actions. And for me, this was a very meaningful discovery. This is because I know I find it challenging to carve out time to slow down; even when my body is still, my mind continues to move. Therefore, I've struggled with traditional prayer styles in the past. But in the silent repetition of moving the rope through the pulley, my body fell into a rhythm that cleared my mind. My thoughts didn't stop, but in the calm of the motion I was able to let go of them and turn my attention toward the simplicity of the moment and the immediacy of God in all things. For someone who struggles to quiet down, the discipline and practice of work led to a deeper interior silence which I sincerely appreciated in my routine.



In that moment, I recognized the connection between prayer and work and so recognized the depth of the Farm's mission. Prayer is work. It isn't instantaneous; it is something that requires discipline, practice, and commitment in order to cultivate. And this makes me hopeful, because it means I can always learn to improve in prayer. But the Farm taught me that work can be prayer as well. When I'm working in the garden, swinging a hammer, or kneading bread, I'm shaping something into being with my hands. I'm creating something. In doing so, I'm participating in the divine energy that created all things. There is something sacred about the cultivation of life, which points to the connection of all living things. It is here, I believe, that the Farm lays its deepest roots. Simplicity, Prayer, Community, Service: they are about the ways in which we work to make every life reflect the dignity and beauty inherent in all life. It's as big as creation, and as simple as clotheslines.

A NEW FACE AROUND THE FARM

At the end of December, we welcomed Tom Bishop as the latest addition to the caretaker community. Tom grew up in Massachusetts and has spent the last 30 years in North Carolina. With 40 years of experience in the hospitality business, he is transitioning into the role of Project Coordinator at the Farm as well as taking charge of facilities and auto maintenance. In his free time, Tom enjoys hiking and playing guitar. Welcome home, Tom!



RETREAT: "Eating Simply, So That Others May Simply Eat"

[Join us](#) here in the beautiful mountains of West Virginia for discussion, prayer, reflection, hands-on activities, and good food! We invite you to take a closer look at what we eat and its impact on neighbors around the globe. Come pray, reflect, and share; learn about global food systems and techniques for gardening and eating locally. No matter what your level of knowledge on the subject is, we hope to share and learn together. The retreat fee is \$100 per person, or \$150 for two people registering together. The priority registration deadline is **February 1st**. Contact Moira at retreats@bethlehemfarm.net for more information or questions.

LIVE OUT THE CORNERSTONES ON VACATION

Join us this summer for one of our adult or family weeks! The priority registration date is **February 1, 2012**. Registration information is available [here](#). If you have any questions, feel free to contact Laura, our volunteer coordinator, at volunteer@bethlehemfarm.net



Dates for 2012:**Adult Week: July 29 - August 4****Family Week: August 5 - 11****All Comers: August 29 - September 3****LET US BUILD A HOUSE WHERE LOVE CAN DWELL**

by Eric



At our benefit celebration in Chicago last month, I spoke about the importance of Building a House where Love can Dwell - how the spaces we create are indicative of our priorities. Seven years into the great enterprise that is Bethlehem Farm, the Caretakers and Board of Directors have been considering what we need to do to sustain our mission not just for another seven years, but for another seven times seven years.

The biggest needs we found as we looked at Bethlehem Farm were the need for additional space and the need for better support of the Caretaker Community. At present, the Caretakers reside on the second floor of a log home retreat facility that they share with up to 45 other people during service-retreat weeks throughout the year. With few opportunities for privacy and personal time, the rate of "burn-out" in this environment can be high. On some weeks there have been people sleeping on the floor, people sleeping in hammocks, and just too many people in one space, so we have determined that it is time to build. Our goal is to build a Caretaker Residence that offers a more suitable and sustainable living space for the Caretakers, while also allowing more space in the retreat house for participants. We invite you to join us to "Build a House where Love can Dwell".

We have arrived at a schematic design for the new building with great help from our green architect, Chip Williamson. An animated rendition of the exterior is available [here](#). We are still early in the process, but his best guess so far of the cost for a building with enough room for 10 adults and their families is in the neighborhood of \$500,000. With the help of the Chicago Benefit, grants, and individual donors, we have raised \$38,000 since November 1st - so we are off to a good start and have a good ways to go.

Please consider including us in your giving this year and contributing toward a project which will change the face of Bethlehem Farm. Checks can be sent to Bethlehem Farm, PO BOX 415, TALCOTT, WV 24981 or [click here](#) to give online.

Good news! Robert and Pauline Hanich have helped us kick off the fundraising for the Caretaker Residence with a gift of \$12,000! In late May 2008, Robert called about his son Cliff coming here to volunteer for a week and at the last minute we were able to get Cliff and Pauline on a group week in June 2008 with Loyola Academy, St. John's Lutheran and Merion Mercy Academy. Cliff and Pauline had a great time and the week left its mark on them. Pauline credits Colleen as the one who really impressed her with her ability to manage a work crew to accomplish any goal. Our deep gratitude goes out to the Hanichs for giving us this big initial push

as we begin fundraising for the Caretaker Residence!

BENEFIT 2011 UPDATE

by Laura

Every year, the Benefit is a huge undertaking. Preparations begin as early as February, and starting in August, someone is thinking about the Benefit most of the time - securing the space, soliciting donations, taking care of the food...the list could go on and on. Every year, though, we take a step back after the event and realize how many people came together to pull this off. For this, we are grateful. A resounding thank-you to all the volunteers and donors who helped make the Chicago Benefit a success this year!

This year, we saw a sneak peek of the new building plans as rendered by our architect Chip Williamson, shared in appetizers and desserts by DiLeo's catering, measured our wingspans to buy raffle tickets, and enjoyed looking at and bidding on silent auction items. New items this year included a trip to Myrtle Beach, oil paintings of Farm scenes by Mariana, a very soft alpaca wall hanging, and a year of milk from Organic Valley. The 2011 Benefit grossed over **\$22,500**, our most successful event ever! This is especially important for us as we begin our caretaker residence building project. We look forward to seeing everyone again in 2012!



NewBuilding presentation



If you have questions about this newsletter, or would like to submit an article for a future publication, please contact Mariana at caretakers@bethlehemfarm.net.

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