

Come for Adult Week!

There are still spots up for grabs for our Adult Week (18 years and older)
July 29 - August 4

Come for Master's Week!

Plenty of spots remain for Master's Week (25 years and older). If you know anyone interested, send them our way. We love to make new friends and returning friends.
September 15 - 20

Save the Date!

This year's Benefit will be held on December 15th.

Exciting News From Wheaton Franciscan Sisters Ministry Fund

By Kathryn, Board Member

Exciting news arrived on the final day of February. The Wheaton (IL) Franciscan Sisters Ministry Fund voted to fully fund the Farm's 3-year grant request. This unprecedented level of Farm financial support is designated specifically (and only) for two projects: *Net Zero Sustainable Facilities Plan* and *Green Neighbors Project*.

How did this incredible turn of events happen? In short, Tom Ruggaber, cofounder/Board Member/Farm historian connected the Farm with Sister Glenna Czachor. Sister Glenna and the Wheaton Franciscan Sisters recently developed a private ministry fund with proceeds from the sale of their physical assets (hospitals, etc.). The Sisters' fund seeks to support efforts in four areas of concern, including care for creation. The shared values between the Sisters and the Farm were evident from the start! The guiding principle for the grant application process: "dream big." So, we did!

Net Zero Sustainable Facilities Plan

The grant provides funds to be disbursed as appropriate over the next two years for the Net Zero Sustainable Facilities Plan. "Net zero" refers to the ability to generate power adequate to run the Farm without relying on incremental power from "the grid." ("Net positive" refers to a system which adds more power to the grid than it uses.) The Net Zero Sustainable Facilities Plan begins with a campus master plan for Bethlehem Farm. Architect Chip Williamson of Chameleon Architecture will facilitate the master plan creation. Chip drew the plans for the Caretaker Residence and deeply understands the Farm. Thus, he is well-suited to share his expertise again as our campus evolves. The *Net Zero Plan* will allow the Farm to reach 100% solar power. In year one, we will complete the final phase of solar electric panel installation. By year two, we will invest in a battery back-up system for the solar panels. Even (grid-tied) solar panels do not work in a power outage. The Farm knows this fact all too well after living 11 consecutive days without power in 2012. Let's just say... these batteries are more expensive than the batteries in a TV remote control or even in a car.

Hence, we are grateful for this new option that insures continuous power during outages and is more sustainable than the current propane generator backup. The *Net Zero Plan* will also fund a complete transition of the Farm's hot water heating to renewable energy by installing solar hot water collectors for all of the Farm's domestic water... (continued on page 3)

Keepin' it Cool

By Colleen, Caretaker

Last summer, chaperone Bill Thompson brought a group of students from Walsh Jesuit High School for a service-retreat week at Bethlehem Farm. The group spent the week serving local community members in our area of rural West Virginia, both through home repair and building up the capacity of local farmers. The students were able to be a real help to several families while also getting to know the folks of Appalachian culture.

For example, one project the students worked on was an addition that more than doubled the size of Linda and Gerald's home. Each student also got to work at the farm one day, diving into the ministry of hospitality through taking care of the farmhouse and cooking dinner from scratch for the whole group, including making bread (see recipe!) for the next day's lunch. While working in this way around the farm, Bill noticed the odd... (continued on page 2)

- Socket
- Wrench Set
- AA & AAA batteries
- Paint brushes
- 18-volt drills
- Rubber Spatulas
- LED headlamps & flashlights
- Stainless steel cookie sheets

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Keeping it Cool...Cont'd

noises coming from one of our two refrigerators. Its compressor has been in a slow decline for years. He also noticed some odd smells coming from the other fridge, which has a virtually uncleanable evaporation tray and a door that slams you hard in the back when you try to get something out of the fridge. Bill mentioned these issues to me, and I said that we would love a new fridge but that a large, efficient commercial fridge wasn't in the budget at this time, so we planned to keep these until they died entirely. The wheels were turning, and Bill said, "I'll see what I can do." The rest of the week, the students worked hard to serve our rural neighbors and Bill worked extra hours around the farm, addressing some vehicle problems and being of service in many ways. All the while, he was brewing a plan for getting us a more useful refrigerator – necessary not only to store the food for the 30+ volunteers we have each week, but also to keep produce from our garden and local farmers fresh until we eat or preserve it. This February, I got in touch with Bill to see if he would be up for coming out to the farm for a weekend to help us upgrade our bathrooms with water

saving toilets. He and two of his sons generously gave their time all weekend to help us further live our value of simplicity and sustainability through water conservation. And in the meantime, his plan to get us a new fridge had come to fruition. Unbeknownst to us, Bill had rallied the Walsh Jesuit community to fundraise for a new commercial fridge for Bethlehem Farm's kitchen, to replace our declining ones. The shiny new fridge, complete with double doors and deep, large shelves, arrived just after Bill's weekend of service. After lugging it up the stairs and squeezing it through the doors, we eagerly unwrapped it and admired it. By the end of the week, we had it fully transitioned to the kitchen, and it has been happily humming ever since. We have now hosted several service-retreat weeks since it arrived, and have never been at a loss for fridge space. I will not miss the funny noises or smells from our old fridges, but maybe I'll miss using my skills at "fridge Tetris" when I had to rearrange the whole old fridge to fit something in. We are so grateful to Bill and the Walsh Jesuit community for helping us better enact our mission to the folks of West Virginia with students from around the country. We look forward to showing off the fridge to the next Walsh students that join us, and proudly telling them that their school made it happen.



A Blessing from the Carrs

By Audrey, Caretaker

The Carr family home is finished! After 13 months of work, the 2-bedroom addition with a living room and laundry room is complete. No longer do people have to sleep on couches, no longer is the dryer on the porch and the washer outside by the well, and no longer is privacy so hard to find. The day that the Carr family addition was finished was Holy Thursday, and this year at St. Patrick's the washing of feet highlighted the family. I cannot speak enough to the value of family I saw the Carrs carry out, a sincere desire to love their family unconditionally, unjudgmentally, and unshakingly. It was a blessing to witness them love so selflessly.

I would say that getting to know the homeowners is one of the most joyful things about being a worksite leader. The joys include arriving at a worksite and being invited in for a chat, being offered a cup of coffee, asking how their weekend was, being a confidant of their current and past struggles, and then always receiving their reminder to not work too hard. Getting to see their excitement about the prospects for our work and their pride in their home shining so bright by the end, was breathtaking. Bethlehem Farm has been able to have that experience with the Carrs for over a year, and what a wonderful blessing it has been. To all of the volunteers, site leaders, donors, and prayer supporters – THANK YOU! You have made a huge difference once again. Special thanks to those who supported the Sustainable Upgrade Fund, which allowed us to super-insulate the addition, install sustainably-harvested bamboo flooring, and use nontoxic wool carpet instead of standard formaldehyde-laden synthetic carpet. To Gerald and Linda, may you always have walls for the winds, a roof for the rain, coffee to warm you, music to dance to, laughter to cheer you, those you love near you, and all your heart might desire.

From a House to a Home – An Electric Story About a Roof

By Justin, Caretaker

February was here and the weather was frigid. Every now and again we had a warm day, but it didn't stick around. About this time, Will (our new Project Director), Eric, and I went on a site visit to meet with our friend Shelli. We walked into a trailer that was colder inside than it was outside, and it was already a multi-layer clothing day. As we talked to Shelli we found out that her trailer had electricity but it was not working correctly and this was the main reason she was not able to heat her house properly. Will, who has about ten years of electrical experience, said we would do what we can to fix the problem. I got to learn and do some of this fixing myself.

We came back the next day and the day after that and the day after that – more confused about the electrical issue. It was a hot mess; the issue was bouncing around from room to room every... (continued on page 3)



Shelli's new roof over during an April Group Week with St. John's & Xaverian Brothers

Funding From Wheaton Franciscan Sisters Ministry Fund...Cont'd

Also in year two, the grant provides half the funding needed to construct a 24 x 40-foot structure currently referred to as the San Damiano Center for Sustainability. This building will allow improved organization of our garden tools and materials. The completion of San Damiano will enable us to finally tear down the old garden tool shed, currently housed in a dilapidated old home that is collapsing in slow motion.

Finally, the Net Zero project includes funding for installation of a second rainwater containment (20,000 gallon capacity) adjacent to the Retreat House. It will collect water from the west half of the Retreat House, San Damiano Center and a future garage to use for laundry, toilets, food production and livestock.

Green Neighbors Project

The grant provides funds to be disbursed as annual payments for the next three years for the *Green Neighbors Project*. This Project increases our newly established Sustainable Upgrade Fund (announced in the Spring 2017 newsletter) which was created to offer a cost share for sustainable materials used on home repair sites. It allows low-income homeowners (and Creation!) to benefit from sustainable, though more expensive, materials that are non-toxic, super insulating, durable and/or sustainably-harvested.

The grant total will also provide yearly installments for a weatherization program which will include weatherization audits, labor, and materials. In addition, the Green Neighbors Project funding will provide funds to install solar panels with 5 low-income families or nonprofits per year. This initiative will start a fund that families pay back into for the program to continue.

We are very excited about this huge undertaking. Imagine the difference Bethlehem Farm, with this support from the Wheaton Franciscans, will make in the community. However, all grant funds are restricted to the above plans. We will still need your same generous support to cover the day-to-day costs of successfully carrying out the Farm's mission.

We are always in need of tools -
interested in donating some to us?

Check out our tool drive at
bethlehemfarm.net/tools



An Electric Story About a Roof...Cont'd

time we thought we had solved it. We had to call in the big guns, so our neighbor and master electrician Richard came out to have a look. "I haven't seen anything like this..." he said by the end of the day there.

When we were not heading to other site visits or working with a group we made an effort to figure out the problem. We had plenty of ideas but replacing the breaker box and fixing up the ground connection were the most logical option aside from rewiring the whole trailer. It worked and this allowed Shelli to finally have a safe and proper working electrical system and the corresponding electric heat to go with it.

If only it were so easy. Once the electric was working, we turned the water on and water came spewing out of the pipes—they were frozen from the lack of heat and lack of underpinning. We don't have enough plumbing expertise, so we hired a local plumber in February to replace the pipes and to restore Shelli's running water.

The next problem: the roof was leaking in several places and rotting out walls and floors, so Eric and I have been leading volunteers since the end of March in building a roof over her trailer. It's a beautiful blue color and the free-standing roof will keep Shelli dry for quite a long time. Each day on the site we share lunch with Shelli. Every meal consists of something new to talk about, a lot of laughter, a new tidbit about Shelli and her life before meeting Bethlehem Farm, and some powerful moments revolving around prayer.

I never thought that I would be so invested in someone I've never met before. I was afraid of what I was walking into, but now I relish the moment when volunteers get to meet Shelli. We still have a lot of work planned to make the house a home (complete the roof, install some insulated windows, and install the skirting), but this only gives us the drive to do better each and every day.

The NEW Lunch Bread

Yield: 1 large loaf

In a large bowl, mix 3-1/4 cups white flour and 1/2 TB salt.

In a small bowl, mix 1 TB yeast, 2 tsp sugar and 1/2 cup warm water and let sit for 15 minutes.

To the large bowl, add 3/4 cup warm water and mix with a spoon or your hands. Add the contents of the small bowl to the large bowl and mix thoroughly until it forms a ball.

Sprinkle flour on the counter, put dough on top of the sprinkled flour and knead the dough for 10 minutes. Add more flour as necessary if the dough is too sticky. It is ready when a finger-poke springs back.

Let the dough rise for 30-90 minutes in a greased bowl with a towel or lid over it. It is ready when it has doubled in size and finger pokes do not spring back.

Punch the dough down, put dough on the counter and shape it into one loaf.

Place the shaped dough into a greased loaf pan and let rise until it is just above the top of the pan, approximately 30 minutes. It will rise more in the oven. Bake at 400 degrees for 35 minutes, or until top is golden brown.

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.

OUR COMMUNITY:

- Will Fair
- Colleen Fitts
- Eric Fitts
- Audrey Kolde
- Justin Mullen
- Raine Nimmer
- Katherine Peregoy
- Tim Peregoy
- Joseph Reilly

BOARD MEMBERS:

- Paul Daugherty
- John Hannagan
- Molly Linehan
- Scott McNelis
- Kathryn Moran
- Caitlin Morneau
- Jennie Motto Mesterharm
- Kat O'Loughlin
- Sharyl Pels
- Moira Reilly
- Jake Teitgen

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By our friends at Canfield & Tack

Thank you, Sharyl

By Colleen, Caretaker

Sharyl Pels completes her term of service with the Board of Directors this Spring, after serving with Bethlehem Farm in many ways over the years. Sharyl first came to the Farm as a volunteer with Brebeuf High School in 2007. She returned with Indiana University and then came for several years to help during the times of year that helpers are hard to come by. Since their first week together in 2012, Sharyl has had the distinction of “most favored status” in Miriam’s eyes. She has also been a favorite with the Caretakers, and her connections with us have continued as Sharyl joined the Board of Directors and even watched the kids at our Caretaker retreat to enable Eric and Colleen to participate in the retreat. We enjoyed frequent visits from Sharyl, until she was recently placed in Alaska in her role as a Staff Attorney for the US Coast Guard. She continues to be a support to us, even from far away, and we look forward to the day that she is close by again. We love you, Sharyl!

Prayers Answered!

By Eric, Caretaker

We were recently joined by two new Caretakers, Raine Nimmer and Joseph Reilly. Raine is from Green Bay, WI, graduated from UW-Stout with a degree in Studio Art, and was most recently a cook at *Tavern in the Sky* in Green Bay. Raine found out about us through our listing in the Catholic Volunteer Network catalog. We are excited to have her join us as House Manager and Animal Care, among other roles. Joseph is from Noblesville, IN, and just graduated from Wabash College with degrees in Political Science and Philosophy. Joseph found out about us from his parish, Our Lady of Grace, and first came as a participant on a 2015 college week, then as a 2017 Summer Servant.



Planned Giving

By Eric, Caretaker

When our days have come to an end, how do we want to be remembered? What type of legacy do we want to leave? Many people, as they reflect on these questions, decide to include a few cherished organizations in their will, often leaving a larger gift in a bequest than they could ever afford to make during their lifetime. Of course, family comes first, often encompassing 80-90% of an estate, but would you consider including Bethlehem Farm in your will as well?

A donor needs to simply include the following language to establish a provision in her or his will to benefit the Bethlehem Farm:

"I give, devise and bequeath to Bethlehem Farm, Inc. (Tax ID #26-4449900), a non-profit, charitable organization in Summers County, West Virginia ...

- a. The sum of \$ _____; or,
- b. Percentage or all of my life insurance policy;
- c. _____ percent of my estate; or,
- d. All the rest, remainder and residue of my estate, including property over which I shall have power of appointment at my passing, after all debts, taxes, expenses and other bequests have been satisfied.

(optional) ... for the purpose of _____" *Pray about it!*

Check us out online!
www.bethlehemfarm.net

Questions or Comments regarding this publication, article submissions and photos can be sent to the editor, Katherine, at bethlehemfarm@gmail.com.