



NEWSLETTER

Community Life and Meaningful Work for People with Disabilities

Fall 2014, Vol. 6, No. 1

High Spirit Community Farm

fulfills an essential need for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities by providing meaningful work, a dignified home and a rich social and cultural life. To that end High Spirit:

- Provides and supports life-sharing homes where our community members live as a family.
- Directs a land-based program, offering on the job training in agricultural work and sustainable practices.
- Expects our members to be responsible, participatory, considerate citizens of the High Spirit community and the larger world.
- Trains young volunteers to provide care to disabled peers and inspires them to be leaders as respectful, inclusive and conscientious adults.
- Serves as a catalyst for investment in this model of care, community and service.

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 Lesley Eshelman
Head Householders and Farmers

Family and Friends Work Day at High Spirit

On Saturday, October 4, High Spirit families and friends came to High Spirit for a day of chores and community. The cold and rainy day didn't slow down this fearless bunch! Projects included planting apple trees, removing invasive vines, lots of weeding in the garden, and raking leaves. At lunchtime we came in out of the rain to enjoy some of the bounty of High Spirit—home-made squash soup, salad, bread and apple crisp for dessert.

The highlight of the day was the building of our new goat shed. Peter Von Mertens, step-father of Will, along with two of Will's uncles, Carl Von Mertens and Joel Angiolillo, went out to High Spirit a day in advance



Framing, roofing, siding, windows, done!



Uncle Ted Maynard and Bar take a break from work, for some hot tea and hugs.

to start the building project. The rest of the group arrived Saturday morning to find the shed already framed, and ready for roofing and siding. Another crew restored old windows with new glazing and paint. The new goat shed is beautiful and ready for goats.



Welcome Head Householders and Farmers Derek and Lesley Eshelman!

Derek and Lesley joined High Spirit last winter. They bring rich experience both in farming and in direct care for people with extra needs. Derek and Lesley recently finished a two-year course in organic farming at Blue Hill Farm in Monterey and at North Plain



Derek and Lesley Eshelman

Farm in Great Barrington. Before becoming farmers, Lesley worked as the Program Director of a social services outreach group, and Derek designed curricula and taught high school English.

Under the leadership of Lesley and Derek, our program is growing in leaps and bounds. A larger flock of chickens now ranges into the garden and naturally fertilizes the area. The food processing work has also expanded: this fall the crew has canned tomatoes and made a good supply of applesauce. A bicycle-run mill operates in the kitchen, providing grain both for our use and for the animals. Our farm to table venture is flourishing!

Cows, Cows, Holy Cow!

Derek and Lesley are not only our Head Householders, but also cattle breeders who are beginning herds of both British Whites and Devon cows. Our

resident farm crew will assist in the daily moving of the cows from pasture to pasture, as well as checking and filling their supply of water and hay.



Devon and British White cows are both old breeds of cattle that are valued for their docility, hardiness, and tender beef.

Thank you Neighbors!

Rick and Candace Beinecke, our Great Barrington neighbors, have generously offered the use of a 17-acre field for our small herd of cows. A High Spirit volunteer fencing crew installed a perimeter fence this month. We are delighted and grateful!



Welcome 2014–2015 Coworkers!

We are glad to have Eike Dederke, Jaci Bornefeld and Tali Jetter with us this year. They arrived from Germany on September 1, and are already contributing much joy, enthusiasm and thoughtful kindness to the work. We are so happy to have you here with us!

Welcoming Rory

Rory Adams has recently joined High Spirit, after graduating from Camphill Special School Beaver Farm, in Pennsylvania. In 2001 Rory's family moved from England to Massachusetts to find appropriate schooling for him. Rory's parents, Mark and Heather Adams, had heard of High Spirit through friends with an adult child with special needs, but Rory was too young for our adult programming. He enrolled instead at Camphill where he thrived, especially loving farm work. Rory has now brought that interest and energy to us.

Heather Adams wrote about her son's recent transition to High Spirit:

Rory lay face down on the floor with June – the puppy – curled up on his back during his first visit to High Spirit in March. As Lesley recounted this moment, Mark and I knew Rory was at home. Since joining the High Spirit community in July, Rory has flourished. Rory, who has a diagnosis of autism and epilepsy, has made many a transition in his short life and most of them have proven difficult at best. This time it was different, and Rory has quickly found his place in his new home. His sense of humor has come to the fore, and we get an update on his latest joke from the team on our visits! Rory's love of the outdoors, animals, and engaging in meaningful work such as digging in the vegetable garden or helping Eike prepare dinner, have all played a significant role in Rory's successful transition from Beaver Farm to High Spirit. Thank you Lesley and Derek!

One of Rory's challenges is difficulty in expressing his emotions. He has learned a way to do so through his beloved *Postman Pat* from his childhood in England, and through Disney movies. He can point to scenes to help him express complex feelings. A frequent refrain is: "bear chase Mummy..." from *Old Yeller*, which means he is not happy with something I have asked him to do. If

he observes someone is a bit grumpy he will talk about the Indian chief in *Peter Pan*. We have learned not to resist the Disney message, but to embrace it. This is Rory's world and we are glad to understand his thoughts.

Rory's love of animals provides a window into his kind, caring and loving soul. When accompanying his father, Mark, on



Rory Adams with his mother, Heather

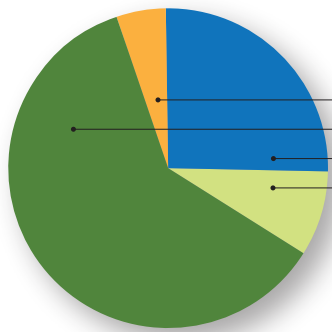
fishing trips, Rory makes it clear that the fish have to be put back in the water. Defying his diagnosis of autism, Rory is extremely empathetic to all around him, and will be concerned and offer comfort if he detects that someone is sad or unhappy. In August, Rory accompanied last year's crew of departing volunteer coworkers to the airport, and they were so grateful for his offers of support. As they tearfully said their farewells, Rory asked, "You okay?"

High Spirit nurtures, and Rory is thriving – thank you!



Heather, Mark and Rory Adams planting an apple tree on the recent workday

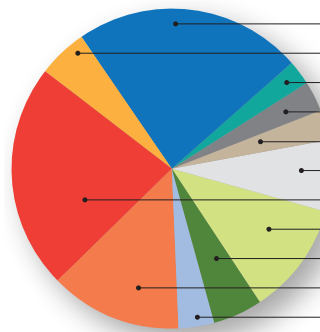
Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2013–2014 Financial Activity



Support and Revenue

US Government	5.0%
Commonwealth of MA	61.0%
Individual Contributions	25.6%
Foundations	8.4%

We are pleased with the balance of our revenue sources, which have proven very consistent over the years. Individual Contributions and Foundation support allow us to improve and expand our facilities and program.



Expense

Salaries and Stipends	23.0%
Respite	5.0%
Education and Training	2.5%
Insurance	3.3%
Maintenance	3.0%
Capital Improvements	7.2%
Residential Life (Housing and Food)	22.8%
Capital Fund	11.2%
Administration	5.2%
Program (including Transportation)	13.3%
Development	3.5%

We are committed to providing our salaried teachers and farmers with competitive incomes. We work hard to keep our administrative processes efficient so that more resources can be allocated to enriching both work opportunities and life sharing.

High Spirit Donors

Thank you to all of you who gave and supported High Spirit between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014.

Angel \$15,000 and up

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Bob and Ginny Swain

Benefactor \$5,000–\$9,999

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Note: please contact the office with any omissions or errors. Thank you.

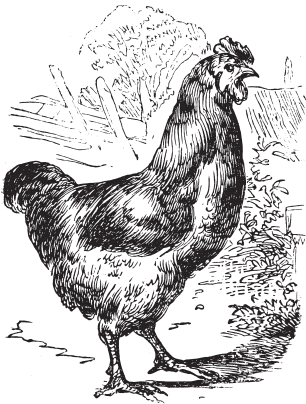
Thank you friends and coworkers of Dr. Dea Angiolillo, who honored her at the time of her retirement with gifts to High Spirit.

Contact us at the Farm...

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Did You Know...

Massachusetts outlines “Blueprint for Success” and calls for work opportunities for people with developmental disabilities.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is responding to federal policy changes and directives to increase integrated employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities. The plan, called the “Blueprint for Success,” recognizes the importance of having a job, and the multiple benefits both for individuals and for our society when people with intellectual disabilities work. The Commonwealth’s immediate plan is to close all sheltered workshops* by June 30, 2015. However, alternatives for the 2,608 individuals currently working in those workshops are limited.

At High Spirit, meaningful work is a cornerstone of our mission. Since our founding, we have offered the kind of work in which people with significant needs can find success. Farming is a particularly suitable arena, as it offers numerous high-quality, but routine, jobs appropriate for a range of skills. We have found that the clear correlation between the work of gardening and the food on one’s table is very gratifying. Farm animals, with their needs for

food, water and care, and their way of letting us know what they need, are both demanding and wonderfully rewarding.

High Spirit is well positioned as a leader in the response to the Blueprint for Success, offering a model that demonstrates how people with significant disabilities, who might not be able to find success working in traditional community based jobs, can find success in farm work.

To read more about the Commonwealth’s plan, go to the Department of Health and Human Services website, <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/>, and search for “Blueprint for Success.”

** Sheltered workshops are segregated settings where people with intellectual disabilities work for below minimum wage. The state will move away from this type of setting in favor of community-based work, where an individual is provided support and training through a state approved agency, and is also routinely in contact with other co-workers who do not have disabilities.*

Two New Girls!

Everyone is excited to be welcoming two goats—gestating does—who will arrive in late November and give birth in late March. Lesley and Derek have chosen cashmere goats, which offer us not only meat, but also some cashmere that will be spun into yarn for our weaving projects. The crew will be learning the goat-keeping skills required, from feeding, watering, and cleaning the shed, to raising goat kids, and combing to gather the cashmere fiber. Much to be done!



One of our beautiful girls

Recommended Reading

Far from the Tree: Parents, Children and the Search for Identity
by Andrew Solomon

Solomon’s startling proposition is that diversity is what unites us all. He writes about families coping with deafness, dwarfism, Down syndrome, autism, schizophrenia, multiple severe disabilities, with children who are prodigies, who are conceived in rape, who become criminals, who are transgender. While each of these characteristics is potentially isolating, the experience of difference within families is universal, as are the triumphs of love Solomon documents in every chapter.

—Scribner

The Fabric of Autism, Weaving the Threads into a Cogent Theory
by Judith Bluestone

Judith Bluestone combines her personal autistic experience with academic research and over 40 years of clinical practice to craft a unique and compelling view of the phenomenon called autism. Bluestone’s book is both a significant clinical work and a moving memoir that illuminates the humanity beneath the bewildering facade of autism. Infused with rare and hard won insights into the etiology of autistic behaviors, this book weaves the various threads of autism into a sensible theory while simultaneously offering practical tools for strengthening the interactive systems of the body-brain-mind-spirit.

—Goodreads, Inc.



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