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**The Quarterly Newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont**

## The Slow Food Ark of Taste Docks at NOFA

*Photos & story by Mara Welton, Slow Food Vermont Board Chair*

What excites me most about Slow Food is that in a world that feels more and more serious and fraught, this international organization chooses to celebrate all good, clean and fair food cultures around tables with friends, food, beverages, stories and joy. That's not to say that the work of Slow Food is not serious, but that tackling the biggest issues in food is more enjoyable when it can be done around a table. It is exactly in this spirit that we created the meet-up that was held on the unseasonably warm first night of the annual NOFA-VT Winter Conference on February 18th. The gathering was the result of a delicious collaboration between NOFA-VT, Slow Food Vermont, Vermont Young Farmers' Coalition and Chef Doug Paine of Hotel Vermont. As a farmer myself, and the president of the Vermont chapter of Slow Food, sharing the stories of culturally significant products with like-minded food enthusiasts is my constant goal and passion; and if we

can do that with some rare Vermont foods prepared by a celebrated local chef for young, inspired farmers? All the better.

evening's food offerings, and showcased nicely a sampling of Slow Food's catalog of rare and endangered foods. Currently, the Ark has nearly 5000 items on it worldwide, and around 350 in America. This living catalog is a place to preserve and celebrate foods that are important to our culture and have a significant place on our plates. The Ark of Taste enables us to point out the existence of these products, educate about their risk of imminent extinction, and use that as a platform for action. Everyone is invited to help preserve them in whatever way they are able: grow them, consume and appreciate them, tell their story and support the producers. In other cases of wild species (like wild ramps or staghorn sumac), it might mean eating less of them or working to reproduce and preserve them in their specific habitat.

New England, and Vermont specifically, has many items already boarded on the Ark of Taste, with more nominated every year. It was exciting to work with Chef Doug Paine to locate some of these distinctive crops and actually bring them to the table - we were thrilled to find so many products available in February! We acquired the Gilfeather turnip, the newly



*Chef Doug Paine worked magic with the NOFA mobile oven.*



anointed and celebrated state vegetable from Wardsboro (donated to the gathering by Will & Judy Stevens of Golden Russet Farm), the absurdly delicious cider jelly made from concentrated apple cider (provided by Chris Chaisson of Eleven Acre Farm), the Randall Cattle – our state heritage livestock breed which hails

*(Ark of Taste, continued on page 3.)*



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# Spring Thoughts from Enid

A few days before our Winter Conference, I read an article in *Seven Days*, *Mail Model*, *Local Love Brigade sends postcards to victims of hate and violence* (February 8, Volume 22); an inspiring story about an effort led by a Brattleboro organizer to create Love Brigade-Vermont. The group's mission is to "band together when there is an incident of hate and respond with giant helpings of love." Since the inception of Love Brigade-Vermont, eight other chapters have been established in other states.

This spurred an idea, and I reached out to Bonnie Acker, the inspiration/organizer/activist artist who leads the community art project at our conference and proposed the idea to have our conference participants be a pop up Love Brigade for the weekend. Although we have a long tradition of the kids at the Children's Conference creating Valentines cards, first for elders participating in our Senior Farm Share Program, and now for kids on the pediatric oncology floor of the hospital, this is the first time adult participants made cards of love at the conference. Given that there are many adult populations who are currently threatened in Vermont – refugees, migrant farm workers – participants created love letters with messages like "We are happy you are here, together we are stronger," and "I'm new here too – let's make Vermont home," and "I am so happy that you are growing in Vermont."

But messages, in general, were a theme of the conference. On each day, we passed around a big basket of the thousands of messages that Bonnie

---

*This is just the  
beginning of the  
NOFA Love Brigade.*

---

created – with sentiments like "Let us Always Have Hope," "May All Be Fed," "Farmers Feed Us All," and "We All Belong." Ana Gabriela Mendez, a participant from Plainfield, said the messages are one of her

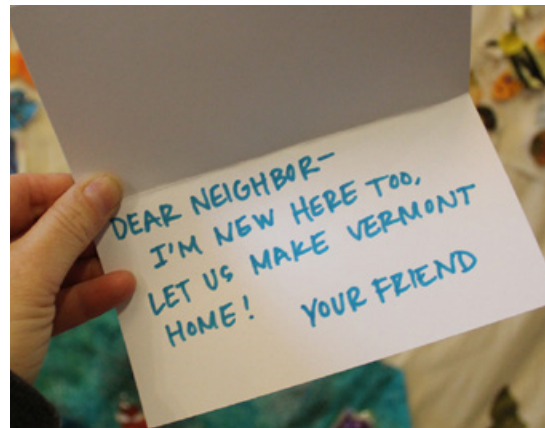
favorite parts of the conference, and she picks out special ones to put in her journal. Teachers picked out messages to share with the students in their classrooms – others tucked a special message into their name badge.

The Winter Conference Love Brigade was unfortunately prescient this year – we partnered with Vermont Migrant Justice to share the cards with migrant farm workers in Vermont. We had no way of knowing that agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement would be detaining immigrant community leaders in Burlington recently.

As always it was great to see so many of you at the Winter Conference. I know there are many people who cannot attend because of the annual dance flurry, school vacation, basketball games, ski races or farm chores, but there are many other opportunities to gather at an on-farm social or workshop coming up this summer and fall. Please attend, bring a friend, and share the NOFA love. I think this is just the beginning of the NOFA Love Brigade.

Until then,

*Enid Wonnacott*



*NOFA Vermont is an organization of farmers, gardeners, & consumers working to promote an economically viable and ecologically sound Vermont food system for the benefit of current and future generations.*

from Sunderland, VT, as well as Roy's Calais Flint Corn from North Calais, Vermont – championed by Tom Stearns of High Mowing Seeds. We even found the rarest of the American swine breeds, the Mulefoot Hog! Pizza dough was provided by amazing local grain stewards Randy George and Liza Cain from Red Hen Bakery, and baked in NOFA-VT's mobile oven.



Left: Slow food pizzas are prepped for the NOFA oven. Above: young farmers and foodies enjoy the "Ark of Taste" event.

We were particularly lucky to work with Chef Doug Paine, who is a true partner in the process of telling the story of these special crops through his skills in the kitchen. The pizza toppings he crafted made excellent use of the unique qualities of each Ark of Taste item, articulating what makes them worth sharing and worth preserving.

• **Gilfeather Turnip** when cooked, is a

smooth & creamy turnip - soufflés are one of their celebrated uses. Doug made a puree that became the sauce, topped with a blend of Jasper Hill cheeses, sliced charred turnips and tossed in warmed cider jelly.

• **Randall Cattle** is known as a particularly "beefy" flavored beef, and was prepared perfectly to showcase that quality. The cut was a standing rib roast marinated in Juniper steak sauce, slow roasted, then sliced and put over a chimichurri sauce on the pizza.

• **Mulefoot Hog** is an extremely rare hog of superior flavor and fat content. Doug used a shoulder and smoked it on maple, then braised with apple cider vinegar, shredded it, then tossed with bbq sauce.

• **Roy's Calais Flint Corn** was nixtamalized with wood ash, then

used whole-kernel with the pork and bbq sauce on the pizzas. The whole-kernel treatment allowed the full flavor of this special corn to come through.

In addition to these Ark of Taste products, we featured the incredible sprouted-grain porridge bread of Heike Meyer's Brot Bakery in Fairfax with Ploughgate Creamery butter, as well as Eden Specialty Ciders' Sparkling Rose. Brot Bakery, Juniper Bar & Restaurant and Eden Specialty Ciders are all recipients of the prestigious Slow Food Snail of Approval award of excellence. This award is bestowed on food establishments and artisans who are committed to good, clean and fair practices in every aspect of their business.

By evening's end, over 120 people tasted these storied items as well as made connections with other farmers. Many lingered outside on the terrace around the fire pit, continuing conversations and basking in the glow of a convivial evening, sharing bites and food stories, Slow Food style. ✨



Want to learn more about Ark of Taste or grow some of the crops in the extensive catalog? Check out <http://slowfoodvermont.org/ark-of-taste-plant-sale>

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Funding for this project was also provided by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, Vermont Specialty Crop Block Grant 02200-SCBGP-9-2, CSA Strategic Planning and Marketing; the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant no. 14-FMPX-VT-0169; and the USDA Risk Management Agency. The USDA is an equal opportunity provider.

## THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS!

# Looking back at Winter Conference 2017

By Enid Wonnacott, Executive Director of NOFA Vermont



The NOFA-VT Winter Conference was fabulous for so many reasons this year, but what stood out to me the most, was the positive energy that abounded amidst a winter that was not always positive. I think people needed to be together for a weekend of inspiration.

Our theme of Beyond Borders, Our Role in the Global Food Movement, was headlined by two renowned keynote speakers – Dr. Fernando Funes Monzote from Cuba and Dr. Vandana Shiva from India. Fernando told the story of the transformation of Cuban agriculture, and the development of his farm, Finca Marta, and left us with four tenets that drive his work: 1) It is more important to give inspiration than to receive, 2) Acknowledge that you don't know everything, 3) Don't avoid mistakes (that is where the real learning takes place), and 4) Empower people who work with you.

Dr. Shiva started her talk with the pronouncement that “fake news is that conventional farms feed the world.” She went on to describe her work of transforming how we measure productivity – that yield/acre only measures what has left the farm, and that we need to start measuring nutrition/acre or health/acre. She stated, “If food is nourishment, then that is what we need to be measuring,” and that we need to start looking at the organic farmer as your doctor. Both talks are available on our YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/user/TheNOFAVT](http://www.youtube.com/user/TheNOFAVT)).

Thank you to the workshop presenters and exhibitors, the organic farmers who provided food for our meals, our community art team, the musicians, and the NOFA staff and volunteers who made the conference run like clock work this year. And

a big shout out to all of our sponsors that helped to make our annual fundraiser such a success! Here are a few numbers that reflect some of the action:

<b>1,151</b>	The total number of individuals who participated in the conference
<b>\$1,536</b>	The amount raised by the 7 “May All be Fed” collages created by Bonnie Acker to support our Farming Beyond Borders program to facilitate farmer to farmer exchanges
<b>101</b>	The number of workshops over 3 days
<b>2</b>	NOFA by-laws amendments passed – one allowing for electronic voting by members and one allowing for a 3rd (3 year) term for the board of directors
<b>200</b>	The pounds of roasted roots cooked and served from NOFA-VT’s mobile oven
<b>103</b>	The number of cards of love created by conference participants
<b>107</b>	The number of volunteers that helped all weekend
<b>68</b>	The number of exhibitors participating in our exhibitors fair

We are already planning our 2018 Winter Conference and your feedback makes all of the difference in our planning. Please remember to fill out your evaluation form (either the paper one distributed at the Winter Conference) or the electronic link sent to you. Thanks! ✨



Saturday's keynote speaker, Dr. Fernando Funes Monzote from Cuba. Top left photo: Children's Conference participants work on a giant collage with artist Bonnie Acker.

# Photos from Winter Conference 2017

Clockwise, from right: 1) **John Hayden** of the The Farm Between in Cambridge, pours samples of syrups made with organic fruits. John Hayden was awarded the 2017 Jack Cook Award, an award NOFA-VT gives annually to a member who embodies the theme of the conference. Given John's work organizing and educating beyond borders as part of his Seeds of Self-Reliance project, and his current work with Pollinators beyond borders, we are pleased to honor and thank John! 2) **Betsy Bancroft** teaches a workshop: "Introduction to Phytonutrients." 3) Authors **Grace Gershuny and Eugenie Doyle** sign their books at the Exhibitors' Fair. 4) A conference participant tries the different flavors of organic kombucha on tap by sponsor **AquaVitea**. 5) One of seven raffle winners of Bonnie Acker's "**may all be fed**" collages proudly shows off her prize. (Photos by Kim Mercer, NOFA-VT Communications Coordinator.) **More photos online:** <http://nofavt.org/wc17pics>



# Organic Check-Off Program Proposed

By Maddie Monty, NOFA Vermont Policy Advisor

Remember “Pork. The Other White Meat” or “The Incredible Edible Egg” or “Beef: It’s What’s For Dinner”? These memorable but oddly ambiguous ad campaigns were funded by commodity research and promotion programs, or what are more commonly known as “check-off” programs. The goal of such programs is to increase demand for a specific commodity through producer-funded marketing. Generally, the way check-off programs work is that producers of specific commodities, like pork, or eggs, or peanuts, pay a set amount into a central coffer, either voluntarily or mandatorily. The producer group then uses those collective funds to promote its specific commodity and, hopefully, increase demand.

In January of 2017, the USDA released a proposal originally developed by the Organic Trade Association (OTA) for a multi-commodity organic check-off program. The proposed check-off program, called GRO Organic (Generic Research & Promotion Order for Organic), would be the first of its kind in that it would collect assessments not from producers of one specific commodity (e.g. cotton) but from farmers and processors across the \$43 billion organic industry, including those who import organic products into the U.S. from other countries.

Here’s how the proposed program would

work: Any certified organic producer or processor with gross sales of over \$250,000 in the prior year would be required to participate and pay one-tenth of one percent (0.001) of net organic sales into the program. Importers bringing in over \$250,000 worth of organic products would be required to pay the same percentage. Certified organic producers and processors grossing less than \$250,000 would not be required to participate, but could opt in voluntarily. The Governing Board would include 8 producers, 7 processors, 1 handler, and one non-voting member of the public. The funds would be allocated as follows: no less than 25% to research, 25% to information, 25% to promotion, and 25% discretionary, with no more than 15% used for administrative costs.

Supporters of the proposed organic check-off, including OTA, believe it will begin to close the substantial gap between the domestic supply of organic food and consistently increasing consumer demand. One way this could be accomplished, supporters say, is by funding research to help make organic farms more efficient, more productive, and more profitable. Another goal of the program is to educate consumers about what really goes into organic production, therefore continuing to increase awareness and demand for organic products.

While few in the organic community would disagree with these objectives, support for the proposed check-off program is far from universal. Many organic producer groups are concerned that small or mid-sized producers will be less able to serve on the Governing Board, given the challenges and costs of time away from the farm. Since producers grossing under \$250,000 are not required to pay in, there’s related concerns that their interests won’t be fully represented, which is problematic because about 60% of organic operations fall under that threshold. In terms of promotion, the fact that the program will be housed at USDA means marketing efforts are somewhat restricted and cannot disparage other types of agriculture in highlighting the benefits of organic. Furthermore, some are concerned that the program will increase imports rather than domestic supply, decreasing prices and putting U.S. producers at a competitive disadvantage.

USDA is accepting comments on both the referendum process for the check-off program and the program itself until April 19th. You can submit your own comments at [Regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) (search for “Organic Research, Promotion, and Information Order”) or email [maddie@nofavt.org](mailto:maddie@nofavt.org) to share your thoughts or questions. ✿

## Get Your Photo Featured on the Farm & Food Guide!

**Do you have an eye-catching photo that you think captures the organic agriculture scene in Vermont?** Want to see your photo show up all around the state? Then enter our contest to create the cover of the 2017 VT Organic Farm & Food Guide!

We print 4,000 copies of the VT Organic Farm & Food Guide every summer and distribute them throughout Vermont. We’re looking for photos that capture the abundance and beauty of Vermont’s organic agriculture; think fruits, veggies, animals, farms, farmers markets, seeds, soil, tractors, the list goes on and on!

Please submit your photos electronically to [vof@nofavt.org](mailto:vof@nofavt.org) and make sure to include your full name in your email. Photos must be at least 3000 pixels wide. You can submit as many photos as you like. **Deadline for entry is May 1, 2017.** The winner will be credited in the Farm & Food Guide and will be notified by email by June 1, 2017.



# Laughing Child Farm: Sweet System for Sweet Potatoes

By Maria Buteux Reade, *Someday Farm*

Walk into the new storage and packing barn at Laughing Child Farm on a frigid morning and you feel like you just hit the beach. Eyeglasses fog up immediately in the warm, moist air and January seems a distant memory. This bright, spacious facility wouldn't be a bad place to while away the winter months, washing ruddy sweet potatoes and packing them for shipping.

Tim and Brooke Hughes-Muse established Laughing Child Farm in 2012 and have evolved into Vermont's largest organic sweet potato growers. Located on a sun-drenched, sweeping curve along the Mettowee River in Pawlet, the farm grows nine acres of sweet potatoes which they sell direct to retail markets such as groceries, natural food stores, and coops, largely through Black River Produce.

"We grow three varieties and experiment with a new one each season," Tim said. "Our standards are Beauregard, which holds its texture when cooked so it's great for soups and stews; Carolina Ruby with a brilliant orange interior; and Covington which is incredibly silky when slow cooked

and makes for ideal mashed or pureed dishes. This year we trialed Murasaki, a Japanese variety with dark purple skin and white flesh."

Tim is often asked why he opted for a monoculture crop and eschewed diversification. "After ten years of managing a variety of veggie farms and livestock operations, Brooke and I decided to focus on one crop so we could develop

systems that balanced work and family," he explained. "We chose sweet potatoes because it's a distinct product, and the long shelf life allows us to ride out market trends. By selling direct to retail, we have a ready market and don't have to compete for dollars and customers."

Tim grew up on his grandfather's beef farm in Maryland. His first exposure to farm work was picking rocks, tossing hay, and driving tractors. Animal nutrition and soil fertility came later.

Living on the farm nurtured his passion for the environment and guided Tim to Green Mountain College where he studied environmental science.

While at Green Mountain, Tim met Brooke and they have been inseparable ever since. The couple married in college and maintain a true

working partnership. While Tim handles most of the field work, Brooke manages the packing house, marketing, and administrative details. Both spend the winter months washing and packing the cases of potatoes. Tim and Brooke have four daughters: Willow, Rowan, Cypress, and Magnolia.

I asked Tim to walk me through the year of a sweet potato farmer.



*"The long shelf life allows us to ride out market trends."*

*- Tim Hughes Muse*

"I prepare the fields in April and May, get the plastic down to maximize soil warmth, and install drip irrigation. We plant the slips in the first week of June. June and July I focus on weed control and maintaining soil moisture. Throughout the summer, I'm preparing other fields for cultivation the following year. Letting the fields lay fallow helps control wire worm issues. Come August, the plants have vined out, weeds are under control, and we're just waiting to harvest. That's when I can go camping with my family and enjoy the world around me. Once we finish the harvest in late September, I cover crop with oats and winter rye to build soil fertility. Brooke and I then spend the winter months indoors in our new barn, washing and packing."

The biggest challenge of having a single crop? "Labor is hard to come by because I only hire for four weeks, and harvesting is physically demanding."

A crew of seventeen part-timers harvest from late August through the third week of September. Tim borrows a tractor with an undercutter to loosen the soil and lift the potatoes a bit. The crew harvests the tubers into buckets and loads them into heavy wooden crates capable of holding half a ton.

*(continued on next page)*

# NOFA-VT Staffing Shuffle!

There will be some new faces at NOFA and some rearrangement of existing staff that we want to make sure all of our members know about:

Maddie Monty is changing her position from Office Manager and Policy Advisor to NOFA-VT Membership and Policy Coordinator starting in April. We are currently hiring a new Office Manager.

Rachel Fussell is changing her position in April from Education Coordinator to Certification Crop Specialist for the Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF), the certification program of NOFA-VT. We are currently hiring a new Education Coordinator.

Erin McGuire, current Vermont Organic Farmers Certification Assistant is sadly leaving her position, and we are rehiring a new Certification Assistant.



*NOFA Vermont staff at the 2017 Winter Conference*

VOF has also created a new position of Materials Review Specialist and Staff Inspector. All positions are available on our web-site: <http://nofavt.org/about-us/join-our-team>

The crates are transported to the new climate-controlled barn for the next step, curing. The potatoes cure for about a week at 90 degrees and 85-90% humidity. This curing stage thickens the skin, heals any blemishes or nicks from the harvest, and sweetens the interior flesh. This step can take a bit longer if the potatoes are harvested cold. The crates of cured potatoes are stacked four or five levels tall courtesy of a forklift and stored at a steady 55-60 degrees with 85% humidity. Under these stable conditions, the year's crop can remain in storage until the following summer.

The sweet potatoes are graded by size and quality. #1s are 'perfect,' commercial or jumbo are large and easy to peel but may have superficial blemishes; and fancy resemble a large fingerling potato and are sold in two pound mesh bags. "People buy sweets year-round so now that we have our new storage facility, our goal is to increase production to meet the demand," Tim said. "We grew nine acres in 2016 and will jump to 13 in 2017."

Laughing Child won a Working Lands Enterprise (WLEB) grant to cover the expenses for their storage barn which went up in the summer of 2015. The 32

x 38 red metal structure has a smooth concrete floor and tall bays which make it easier and safer to move the 1,000 pound crates around.

"We also participated in the Vermont Forest and Farm Viability program from 2013-2014, with Sam Smith as our advisor," Tim added. "That experience was super helpful and gave us invaluable guidance on business management, decision making tools, and record keeping. It encouraged us to do our homework, lock down our vision, and hone our process."

What does he love best about farming?  
"You have all these situations that need

constant attention, and you can either get overwhelmed by them or come up with solutions. For example, I was able to design and build my own washing system and make it fit our needs. Same thing with my cultivating tractor. I retrofitted my grandfather's 1950's Farmall so it worked with my crops. Focusing exclusively on sweet potatoes allows me to fine-tune my equipment and spaces to do what we need."

It all comes full circle – that tractor shaped him as a boy and now he as a farmer has shaped that tractor. Pretty sweet. ✨



# Spring Policy Update

By Maddie Monty, NOFA Vermont Policy Advisor

## Organic Farmers Association Launches

On Capitol Hill, the Organic Trade Association (OTA) represents the interests of the now \$43 billion organic industry. Organic Consumers Association (OCA) represents the interests of those who buy organic food and other products. The National Organic Coalition (NOC) represents a variety of organic stakeholders. Noticeably absent from the halls of Congress, however, is a voice speaking specifically and explicitly for the interests of our country's certified organic farmers. After years of planning, a new grassroots initiative has been launched to fill that void.

Sponsored by the Rodale Institute and guided by a steering committee made up of organic farmers and representatives from organic farm organizations, the Organic Farmers Association (OFA) is a new entity whose mission is to provide a strong and unified national voice for domestic certified organic producers.

The goal of the interim steering committee, on which I'll be serving until the election of OFA's first Governing Council in early 2018, is to lay the groundwork for a viable OFA and to ensure that OFA is truly led and controlled by farmers, for farmers. Formed in close partnership with a number of state and regional organic farming associations (including NOFA), it is also a key goal of OFA to strengthen the capacity of existing organizations already working with organic farmers on the ground and in the policy arena.

If you have questions or want to learn more about the Organic Farmers Association, visit [organicfarmersassociation.org](http://organicfarmersassociation.org) or email Maddie Monty at [maddie@nofavt.org](mailto:maddie@nofavt.org).

## Pollinator Protection Committee Makes Final Recommendations

In February, Vermont's 10-member Pollinator Protection Committee delivered

its final recommendations to the legislature and the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFM). The committee's recommendations will be reviewed as a whole by the legislature, as required by statute, and will inform VAAFM's rule making as the agency updates Vermont's pesticide regulations. During the committee's deliberations, NOFA-VT worked with a coalition of agricultural and environmental groups to collect and deliver over 1,000 signatures from members of the public supporting strong recommendations to improve protections for native and managed pollinators.

Highlights from the committee's recommendations include the following:

- VAAFM should classify all pesticides containing neonicotinoids (and other active ingredients considered highly toxic to bees) as restricted use products.
- VAAFM should develop best management practices (BMPs) for the planting of corn/soybean seeds treated with neonicotinoids, and planting should not be permitted unless a need is demonstrated.
- There should be a moratorium on the application of neonicotinoids to ornamental plants accessible to pollinators for 3 years or until research can demonstrate safe treatment rates.
- VAAFM, ANR, NRCS, and UVM Extension should promote the establishment and management of pollinator habitat in the buffer zones required on farms under Act 64.
- VAAFM and NRCS should provide financial and technical support for farmers who provide pollinator habitat on their farms.




- Increased data should be collected on pesticide use and impacts on pollinators.
- Applicators and beekeepers should receive increased education on pollinators.

To read the Pollinator Protection Committee's full report, visit [agriculture.vermont.gov](http://agriculture.vermont.gov), select "Food Safety & Consumer Protection" from the left side bar, and then click "Apiary."

## Spring NOSB Meeting and Comment Period

Twice annually, meetings of the National Organic Standards Board provide an opportunity for organic farmers and stakeholders to weigh in on organic production methods and inputs. This year, the NOSB's spring meeting will be held April 19-21 in Denver, Colorado. The meeting agenda is now available on the NOSB webpage, and written comments will be accepted through midnight on March 30 at [Regulations.gov](http://Regulations.gov). Before March 30, you can also sign up on the NOSB website to give oral comments via webinar on Thursday, April 13.

Let us know which materials, inputs, or methods you care about. Contact Nicole Dehne, VOF Certification Director at [nicole@nofavt.org](mailto:nicole@nofavt.org). 

# Chicken Craze Still Strong

by Jennifer Megyesi

The chicken craze continues to grow, leaps and bounds ahead of any other homestead livestock endeavor. Although prior to the 1920s, eggs and meat were produced on the family farm, entrepreneurs began selling meat during the summer as farm income. Mrs. Wilmer Steele of Delaware is credited as the pioneer in raising chickens for meat; in 1923 she sold 500 birds, and by 1926, she had a broiler house of 10,000 birds. Today, more than 9 billion broilers and 351.5 million layers are raised in the United States alone. Some families are concerned with the conditions these birds are often kept in, and they've begun raising them as part of their farmstead. Keeping chickens is easy to do, as long as you have a clear idea of what you want as your final product and don't act like a kid in a candy store, mixing breeds together that don't get along, or having a set up that doesn't keep your birds safe and healthy. Here are some tips to get started.

First, decide what you want to raise: meat or eggs. Several breeds are "dual purpose," and can provide both. Plymouth Rocks, Rhode Island Reds, Leghorns, Jersey Giants, Ameracaunas and Orpingtons are popular and easily found for sale in farm supply stores or on line. There are hundreds of other breeds, and the book has a table that can help determine which breed will work for you.

Most beginners start with day-old chicks whose sex has been determined. Straight-run, or unsexed chicks are less expensive, but be prepared to get at least 50% males, and have a plan ready for what you're going to do with them. Generally, one rooster for a flock of 12 hens is plenty—and by the way, your hens will lay eggs without a rooster, they just won't be



fertile. Avoid getting chickens from the "free chickens" section in the papers or on line. It's a good way to import disease, and if they're being given away, they're probably not laying eggs or any good on the grill.

Before you get your birds, you'll need a place to raise them that is predator-proof and provides necessary shelter, food and water. Day-old chicks need to be raised under a heat lamp until they've feathered out, and older birds need a coop that is airy, covered and has suitable nest boxes and roosts if they're layers or plenty of protected floor space if they're meat birds. Some flock owners have what are referred to as "chicken tractors" - movable coops surrounded with portable electric chicken fence that provide birds with fresh greens during the summer. In the winter, the layers are moved to more sheltered quarters that are protected from drafts and snow.

Chickens are a great family project. They're easily tamed, and children can tend to them without as much parental assistance that a cow or pig might need.

Make sure that your neighbors are welcoming of your new project, and be sure to check your town's ordinances before getting your birds. ✿

*Jennifer Megyesi is the owner of Fat Rooster Farm in Royalton, VT where she lives with her son, 4 cats, a dog, 45 sheep and lots of chickens, turkeys, guinea hens, ducks and peacocks. She is the author of "The Joy of Keeping Chickens: The Ultimate Guide to Raising Poultry for Fun or Profit", and "The Joy of Keeping a Root Cellar".*



# Garlicky Spinach-Stuffed Chicken Breasts

This recipe can be made year-round but it's especially good during the lean spring months when greenhouse spinach is available and harvested garlic is nearing the end of its usefulness!

## INGREDIENTS

1 Tbsp + 1 1/2 tsp olive oil; divided  
1 large shallot; finely chopped  
4 garlic cloves; minced  
2 tsp thyme  
1/4 tsp red pepper flakes  
5 oz baby spinach  
2 oz crumbled feta  
4 6-oz skinless, boneless chicken breasts  
Salt & freshly ground black pepper



## DIRECTIONS

Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add 1 tablespoon olive oil to pan. Add shallot and cook, stirring frequently, until shallot is mostly translucent (about 5 minutes). Add garlic and cook, stirring constantly, until aromatic (about 30 seconds). Remove pan from heat. Stir in thyme, red pepper flakes, spinach, and feta cheese. Allow to cool for 5-10 minutes. Cut a horizontal slit through the center of each chicken breast to form a pocket. Stuff each with spinach mixture, divided evenly. Close pockets with toothpicks and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Wipe skillet clean and return to heat over med-high heat. Add remaining olive oil to pan. Add chicken and cook for 4 minutes or until bottom is golden brown. Flip chicken over and cover pan, reduce heat to medium, and cook 5 more minutes or until chicken is done.

*This recipe courtesy of Erin McGuire, VOF Certification Program Assistant*

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# Jr Iron Chef VT 2017

Congratulations to the winners of this year's Jr Iron Chef VT competition, a project of NOFA-VT and Shelburne Farms. Thank you to everyone who helped make this a successful 10th anniversary of the culinary contest for young chefs! You can learn more about the event at [jrironchefvt.org](http://jrironchefvt.org).

## Morning Heat – High School

Crowd Pleaser: Kindle Farmers, Kindle Farm School

Lively Local: Chef'd, South Burlington High School

Mise en Place: CVU Chefhawks, Champlain Valley Union High School

## Morning Heat – Middle School

Crowd Pleaser: Flood Brook Tigers, Flood Brook School

Lively Local: Chef Jackets, Milton Middle School

Mise en Place: Pawtastic Chefs, St. Albans Town Education Center

## Afternoon Heat – High School

Crowd Pleaser: Thunderchefs, Missisquoi Valley Union High School

Lively Local: Green Mountain Cheftains, Green Mountain Union High School

Mise en Place: Fork in the Road, Burlington High School

## Afternoon Heat – Middle School

Crowd Pleaser: The Cougars, Crossett Brook Middle School

Lively Local: Turnip the Beet, Green Mountain Union High School

Mise en Place: Vergennes Jalapeno Hotties, Vergennes Union High School



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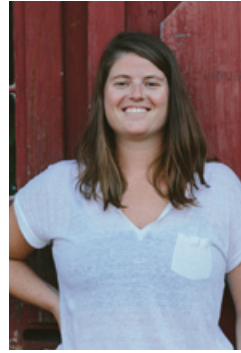


# Welcome New Board Members!

The following four people were elected by member ballot at the NOFA-VT Winter Conference in Burlington on February 18th & 19th.



**CHERYL CESARIO** is a Grazing Specialist with UVM Extension in Middlebury where she works with dairy and beef producers on improved grazing management practices. Cheryl has a history with NOFA-VT, working for VOF as a livestock certification specialist for 8 years before moving to Addison County. At home, Cheryl and her husband Marc own and operate Meeting Place Pastures in Cornwall. Their grass-fed beef and custom grazing operation raises cow/calf pairs, stocker cattle and dairy heifers on approximately 375 acres of owned and leased pastures.



**MAGGIE DONIN** has been farming in Vermont since she graduated from the University of Vermont in 2010. Maggie works at the Intervale Center as the Beginning Farmer Specialist where she coordinates and assists Incubator farms through their nationally known Farms Program. When she is not working with new farmers Maggie can be found teaching yoga, raising poultry and pork, walking in the woods, learning about making sausage and salami, and spending time with family and friends.



**WILL STEVENS** and his wife Judy farm at Golden Russet Farm in Shoreham. They produce certified organic vegetables and bedding plants in their greenhouses. Will and Judy focus on local sales, with 90% of their produce consumed within 20 miles of their farm through their farm stand, CSA, and retail markets and restaurants in Addison County. Will served 4 terms in the Vermont legislature (2006-2014), serving on the House Ag and Forest Products Committee.



**JON TURNER** operates Wild Roots Farm Vermont in Bristol, teaching students, veterans and community members ways to interact with the land and produce a yield from a whole systems approach. He is the former chair and co-founder of the Farmer Veteran Coalition of Vermont, while also sitting on the board for Addison County Farm Bureau. Wild Roots Farm Vermont consists of a 2.5 acre forest farm and 10.5 acre homestead and utilizes crop rotations, limited/no tilling, cover cropping, and rotational grazing to produce a yield.

.....



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# Farm Share: Making Local Food More Accessible

By Kate Spring, Good Heart Farmstead

In 2013, my husband and I started Good Heart Farmstead with the mission to make local food more accessible. Not only did we aspire to make it easier for people to find local food, but we wanted to make it easier for them to afford it. We made connections with the local food shelf, and organized to drop off left-over produce after the CSA pick-up each week. While this helped us work toward our mission, when we had the opportunity to sell that excess produce, we always took it, feeling the rub between generosity and solvency. When a local gleaner organization came by to ask about cleaning our fields, we again felt the discomfort. As a farm with a social mission, shouldn't we immediately answer yes? But what about the value of that "excess" produce as organic matter to turn back into our fields? If we couldn't sell it, couldn't we at least recoup the nutrients?

We quickly learned the impossibility of giving too much food away while maintaining a financially viable farm. As any farmer or small business person knows, the early years are fat on expenses and lean on cash. We were willing to go a few seasons without paying ourselves as we established the farm, but the bills couldn't wait. Still, we had sowed our mission right along with our seeds, and were unwilling to uproot it. So, how to meet financial needs and work to increase local food access at the same time? The answer for us came in the form of the NOFA-VT Farm Share Program.

Established in 1994, the Farm Share Program was created to ensure that farmers receive full price for their produce while offering it at a subsidized rate to limited-income Vermonters at the same time. Through a cost-share system, the Farm Share Program makes CSA shares available at half-price to income-eligible Vermonters, with 25% of the share raised by the farm through community contributions, and the remaining 25% matched by NOFA-VT. At Good Heart Farmstead,

the work of fundraising 25% of the share cost fit in with our mission, as it gave us a framework to engage our community around the issue of food access. At Good Heart, that engagement culminates with on-farm fundraising events for the Farm Share Program, giving folks the opportunity to connect with the land, the food, and fellow community members.

Since its inception in 1994, the Farm Share Program has grown from three participating farms to 39, located all across Vermont. In 2016, NOFA-VT helped fund 211 CSA shares, a value of \$98,011, serving 645 people in all. Though the program has grown substantially, the need is still greater than funding allows. Income-eligible applicants are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, but each year, NOFA-VT's matching funds are exhausted before all shares are paid for. Farms that have raised enough money on their own can choose to cover 50% of the share cost; alternatively, applicants might receive a smaller subsidy and pay up to 75% of the share cost. Still, there are times when there are no funds left on either side to offer a subsidy, and in these cases, the applicants must wait for the next season. Last year, 21 CSA shares were unfunded by NOFA, but still funded by farms, while 22 CSA shares were not approved for the program at all, as the money had run out. If anything, this speaks to both the success of the program in creating a framework that meets Vermonters' needs, as well as the appetite for program growth.

It's counter-intuitive, but because of its popularity, NOFA-VT has done little outreach for the Farm Share Program. "If we did, we'd expect the number of shares we aren't able to fund to increase dramatically," says Erin Buckwalter, the Market Development Director at NOFA-VT. The largest single fundraising event for the Farm Share Program is NOFA-VT's "Share the Harvest" fundraiser, in which restaurants, coops, and food stores donate a percentage of the day's sales to the support the program. In 2016, 65 participants raised \$17,450, all of which will help subsidize CSA shares come spring. Donations, of course, are welcomed year-round, with many participating farms including a donation option on their CSA sign-up forms.

The strength of the Farm Share Program lies in the fact that it is not prescriptive; farms decide what fundraising methods work best for them and how to engage

## Funds available now!



A loan from the Vermont Farm Fund helped Seedfolks drill a well to wash & cool vegetables, as well as irrigate our high tunnel and water plant starts. The loan offered us the ability to farm on this property efficiently and provide high quality produce to our customers who always remark how clean our veggies are.

-Nicole, Seedfolks Farm



[www.VermontFarmFund.org](http://www.VermontFarmFund.org)

with their communities. While CSA members typically receive a 50% subsidy, they may receive more depending on need and fund availability. Similarly, donations come in anywhere between \$5 and \$250 or more. It is a give-what-you-can model, strengthened by community involvement.

“The program is really about connecting and creating sustainable relationships,” says Mike Good, Community Food Security Coordinator at NOFA-VT, which in turn strengthens the local food system. At Good Heart Farmstead, we’ve been fortunate to cultivate long-term CSA members on both sides of the program, those who make annual donations and those who are able to access fresh, local food as a result. In some cases, we’ve funded 75-100% of a share, and in other cases, families who once took advantage of the subsidy returned the following year to pay in full and make a donation to the program.

A sustainable food system depends on the viability of farms and the accessibility of nutritious food for everyone. That we are able to get paid the full price of a share even while offering financial assistance



helps make it possible for us to grow a sustainable business. That we can work with our community to increase awareness of food access issues, and raise money in the process, makes it possible to grow our mission. With increased farm participation and community involvement, the Farm Share Program has the opportunity to bring local food to more people who need it. ✿

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED IN THE FARM SHARE PROGRAM, EITHER AS A FARMER, EATER, OR DONOR, VISIT [NOFAVT.ORG/FARMSHARE](http://NOFAVT.ORG/FARMSHARE).**

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Golden Russet Farm, Shoreham

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# Thank you for supporting sustainable agriculture!

**NOFA Vermont welcomes the following members who recently joined us, as well as the following businesses for their ongoing support.**

## NEW MEMBERS:

Zachary Adams, Adams Maple Sugaring, Johnson, VT  
Jessie Alfarone, Middlesex, VT  
Polly & Kasey Allen, Craftsbury Common, VT  
Derek Anderson, Manchester, VT  
Molly Anderson, Middlebury, VT  
Andrea "Trey" Angera, Edgartown, MA  
Kelly Arbor, Plainfield, VT  
Brett Bailey, Greenfield, MA  
Grey Barreda, Hartland, VT  
Melanie Barsamian, Morrisville, VT  
Susan Baxley, Burlington, VT  
Jericho Bicknell, Newark, VT  
Michael Bisogno, Common Roots, S Burlington, VT  
Aneida Blackburn-Corvo, Winooski, VT  
Cris Blackstone, Alton, NH  
Lynne Boudreau, Kroka Expeditions, Marlow, NH  
Michael Boudreau, The Elmore Sugarhouse, Lake Elmore, VT  
Francesca Boulton, Burlington, VT  
Colin Bradley, Burlington, VT  
Jacinthe Briand-Racine, Saint-Germain, Quebec  
Sarah Burrows, Brown Boar Farm, Wells, VT  
Daniel & Christine Bush, Amsterdam, NY  
Benjamin Butterfield, Besteyfield Farm, Hinesburg, VT  
Rona Carr-Marzec, New York, NY  
Matthew Carter, Pietree Orchard, Sweden, ME  
Marcia Cassidy, Naperville, IL  
Andy Chamberlin, Underhill, VT  
Jono Chapin, Bristol, VT  
Jennie Cramer, Brooktondale, NY  
Dylan Cullen, Burlington, VT  
Meredith Davis, Lake Elmore, VT  
Douglass DeCandia, South Salem, NY  
Ayesha DeLorenzo, West Palm Beach, FL  
Thomas Dunkley, Westford Sugarworks, Westford, VT  
Eugene Duplissis, Shoreham, VT  
Lael Eisman, Six Circles Farm, Lodi, NY  
Michael Epchook, South Royalton, VT  
Ginger Etkind, Woodbury, VT  
Lelia Evans, Stowe, VT  
Meredith Eyre, Montpelier, VT  
Jamie Fanous, Somerville, MA  
Ellen Fine, Needham, MA  
Miranda Fisk, Hinesburg, VT  
Nancy Fitzgerald, Wardsboro, VT  
Ben Freeman, Peru, VT

Christopher Fuddy, Burlington, VT  
Isamar Genis, Brooklyn, NY  
Tom Gilbert, Black Dirt Farm, Greensboro, VT  
Xia Gillespie, South Strafford, VT  
Jane Statchen & Lee Gluck, W Hartford, CT  
Steve Wyatt & Lissa Goldstein, Keene Valley, NY  
Jeannine Guttman, Rutland, VT  
Victoria Hahl, Burlington, VT  
Ella Halpine, Bethany, CT  
Joshua Harris, Gorham, NH  
Carol Holmquist, New York, NY  
Kathleen Hoyne & John Grosvenor, Cabot, VT  
Emily Irwin, Winooski, VT  
Carolina Lukac & Victor Izzo, Burlington, VT  
Beth Jenkins, Shelburne, VT  
Zach Jenson, Winooski, VT  
Kristen Judkins, Randolph, VT  
Amy Kamstra, Collingswood, NJ  
Caelan Keenan, Farm at VYCC, Richmond, VT  
Robert Kurth, Essex Junction, VT  
Julie Kurtz, Dorchester, MA  
Clai Lasher-Sommers, New Dawn Farm, Westmoreland, NH  
Andrea Lenco, Montpelier, VT  
Zach Leonard, High Hopes Orchards, Westfield, VT  
Scott Lewins, Montpelier, VT  
Andrew Linnevers, Back 40 Farm VT, Stowe, VT  
Harvey & Emily Liss, Brattleboro, VT  
Bob Little Tree, White River Jct, VT  
Jamie Lombardo, Dorset, VT  
Holly Lorinser, Shelburne Falls, MA  
Patricia Lust, Farmville, VA  
Liam Madden & Lauren Murphy, Bellows Falls, VT  
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Sarah Maness, Pawlet, VT  
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Margaret Merrill, Riner, VA  
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Sue & John Morris, Marshfield, VT  
Laura Morse, East Montpelier, VT  
Gabriel Noard, Black Mountain, NC  
Michael Olmstead, Bethel, VT  
Daniella Orias, South Burlington, VT  
Sarah Palacios & Peter Pugh, Cambridge, VT  
Annie Paradee, Long Winter Farm, Stowe, VT

Gabe Parent, St. Albans, VT  
Ceilidh Peden-Spear, Jericho, VT  
Charles-Antoine Peloquin-Guay, Saint-Pascal, Quebec  
Ruby Perry, Burlington, VT  
Willis Phelps, South Strafford, VT  
Janet Poeton, Williamstown, VT  
Mari Princiotto, Tilton, NH  
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Gillian Welch, Bar Harbor, ME  
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Kristin Williams, So Burlington, VT  
Katy Wolfe, Boondoggle Farm, Putney, VT  
Kate Yeh, Underhill, VT

## NEW & RENEWING BUSINESS MEMBERS:

American Meadows, Shelburne, VT  
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Butternut Mountain Farm, Morrisville, VT  
Center for an Ag Economy, Hardwick, VT  
Deep Root Organic Co-op, Johnson, VT  
East Park Revitalization Alliance, Philadelphia, PA  
Eating Well Magazine, Shelburne, VT  
Essex Farm Institute, Essex, NY  
Farmers To You, Calais, VT  
Goodwin & Son Maple Farms, Enosburg Falls, VT  
Grow Compost of Vermont, Waterbury, VT

Grower's Discount Labels, Tunnel, NY  
Hanover Co-op Food Stores, Hanover, NH  
Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home, Andover, VT  
Intervale Center, Inc, Burlington, VT  
Iroquois Valley Farms, Arlington, VT  
Kinney Pike, Rutland, VT  
Kitchen Table Consultants, Bala Cynwyd, PA  
Kreher Enterprises, LLC, Clarence, NY  
Ludlow Farmers' Market, Ludlow, VT  
Nationalities Services Center, Philadelphia, PA  
Sterling College, Craftsbury, VT

TAM Organics, Shaftsbury, VT  
Tom's Lil Sugar Shack, Hyde Park, VT  
Two Bad Cats LLC, N Clarendon, VT  
Upper Valley Food Coop, White River Jct, VT  
UVM Extension, Barre, VT  
UVM Medical Center, Burlington, VT  
Vermont Land Trust, Norwich, VT  
Vermont's Local Banquet, Saxtons River, VT  
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WhatsGood, North Kingston, RI  
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**Thank you to our members and friends for your generous donations** to our annual fund which raised over \$61,400 from 227 donors. Donations ranged from \$5 to \$10,000. All our donors will be recognized in our upcoming annual report.

And, over \$600 was raised from individual donations to support the NOFA Vermont Winter Conference Scholarship Fund which helped support 30 scholarship awards.

#### THANK YOU TO OUR RECENT SUPPORTERS:

- Dorothy D Johnson, \$100 in memory of Beverly Gardner
- Deirdre Pontbriand, \$50 in memory of Bev Gardner
- Thomas Gardner, \$250 in memory of Bev Gardner
- Wayman & Joan Lawrence, \$1,000 in memory of Beverly Gardner
- Brattleboro Food Co-op, \$209.30 Bag-a-Bean Program for general support
- Earl Rosenwinkel, \$50 for general support
- King Arthur Flour, \$50 company match
- Michele Granitz \$200.03 for general support
- David Soccodato \$500 for general support
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- Goodwill Project, Betty McEnaney, \$117.50 for general support
- Ben & Jerry's Foundation \$20,000 to support general capacity
- Ben & Jerry's Foundation \$5,000 for general support
- Housing Vermont \$500 for Farm Shares for lower income Vermonters
- The Franklin Conklin Foundation \$5,000 for program support
- Liz & Tom Lackey \$150 for the Farmer Emergency Fund in honor of Matt and Mandy Woodard's wedding
- Matthew Witt, \$384 for the Farm Share Program
- Joe Kayan, \$75 for the Farm Share Program
- The Wurster Family Foundation, John & Janine Putnam, \$2,500 for the Farm Share Program
- AquaVitea \$536.52 for the Journey Farm Program
- Amy Anselmo \$200 for bee policy support
- Jeffrey & Irene Horbar, \$200 for the Farm Share Program
- Lawrence & Linda Hamilton, \$1,000 for the Farm Share Program
- Deborah Lusk, \$50 for the Farm Share Program
- Eliza Ziglar, \$100 for the Farm Share Program
- Mark Twery, \$30 for the Farm Share Program

#### PROGRAM GRANTS:

- High Meadows Fund, \$5,000 for sponsorship of the NOFA VT 2017 Winter Conference in support of climate smart farming education
- King Arthur Flour, \$4,500 support for the 2017 winter conference, Farm Share Program, and outreach to organic farmers and consumers at farm socials
- Lintilhac Foundation, \$500 support for the NOFA Vermont Winter Conference
- Vermont Community Foundation, \$50,000 grant for the Farm to School 12 Months of the Year-Part 2
- Vermont Community Foundation, Johnson Family Foundation Fund, \$3,500 for exceptional youth education programs, especially the 2017 Winter Children's Conference
- Vermont Community Foundation, Hills and Hollows Fund, \$5,000 for NOFA Vermont's regional agriculture education program
- Stonyfield Farm, \$5,000 for support of the 2017 winter conference, on farm workshops, and the Vermont Organic Farm and Food Guide
- The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, \$7,000 to develop a business plan for Vermont Organic Farmers

## New VOF Certifications

*Vermont Organic Farmers would like to welcome the following new producers who have recently obtained organic certification for all or a portion of their operation, joining the nearly 600 organic farmers and processors throughout the state.*

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- Brio Ice Cream, Montpelier
- Dobra US LLC, Burlington
- Elm Hill Farm, Colchester
- Farmer Brown, Enosburg Falls
- French Hill Maple, St. Albans
- Full Steam Ahead, LLC, Fairfax
- Heinlein's Maples, Enosburg
- Hunnewell Farm, Whiting
- New England Colonial Inc, Jeffersonville
- Phelps Family Sugaring, Strafford
- Republic of Vermont, Goshen
- Sweet Farm, Jeffersonville
- Totman Hill Farms, Woodstock
- Waibel Maple, LLC, Richford
- Wild Cud Farms, Albany



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*High Meadows Fund appreciates the hard work NOFA-VT puts into supporting and expanding organic farming and farm viability across Vermont.*



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*happy spring!*

## STROLLERS WANTED!

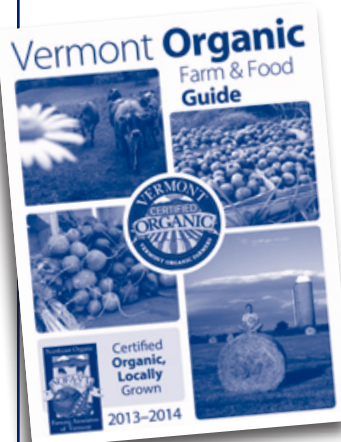
*(Not the baby kind,  
the marching kind.)*



**NOFA-VT will be participating in the Strolling of the Heifers parade with our big puppets on Saturday, June 3rd in Brattleboro, and we need volunteers to march with us! If you'd like to help, please contact Kim Mercer at [kim@nofavt.org](mailto:kim@nofavt.org) or (802) 434-4122 x 15**

## Advertise with us & support NOFA Vermont!

Call (802) 434-4122 or email [info@nofavt.org](mailto:info@nofavt.org) for sizes, rates, & details



### Vermont Organic Farm & Food Guide

*Reach Vermont customers seeking local, organic products by advertising in the only print directory of Vermont's certified organic food producers. Full color, distributed statewide! (Deadline 5/22/17)*

### NOFA Notes

*Our quarterly newsletter mailed to members and supporters, with rates from \$30 to \$85 for a half page! (Summer issue deadline 6/1/17; Fall issue deadline 9/1/17; Winter issue deadline 12/1/17)*

