

# Hosting a Successful Harvest Festival



Raising money to subsidize CSA shares for Vermont Farm Share Program participants can be challenging! The following fact sheet outlines a successful Harvest Festival fundraiser hosted by Cedar Circle Farm and provides tips for hosting your own farm fundraiser.

## What exactly is a Harvest Festival?

Harvest time is one of mankind's oldest holidays - since the birth of agriculture people have been celebrating the end of a successful growing season. Harvest festivals can be diverse and allow much room for creativity and an opportunity to exhibit the strengths of your farm. Most harvest festivals focus on a particular crop and may include food, music, and crafts too!

## Evaluating whether a festival is a good fit for your farm:

- Do you have a wide marketing base or do you feel confident in your ability to effectively advertise?
- Do you know your clientele/feel able to predict what activities would interest them?
- Where on the farm will the festival take place and how many people do you have room for (parking, seating, restroom facilities, etc)?
- If the focus is on a specific crop, do you have enough available for sale, pick your own, or both?
- Do you have other activities for people to participate in?

## Planning and preparation:

The most important start to a successful fundraiser is setting achievable goals in a realistic timeframe. When starting, ask yourself:

- What am I trying to achieve (fundraising, community awareness, etc)?
- How much time do I have to organize the event?
- Are my family members/employees on board?
- How much money am I trying to raise?
- What resources do I have that can help me?
- How will I communicate my goals at the fundraiser?

Once you have established that you have the resources and time to achieve a successful event, it's time to move on to the nuts and bolts of the fundraiser.

- Who is my clientele and how much will they be willing to pay?
- Does my insurance cover farm-based events?
- Do I want prepared food for sale, and if so, do I have a license for that?
- What sort of follow-up do I want to do

Have questions? Contact NOFA Vermont's Farm Share Program at [info@nofavt.org](mailto:info@nofavt.org). Also, let us know what's brewing on your farm!

# Featured Farm:



## **Cedar Circle Farm Fundraiser:**

**Cost of Tickets:** \$5 per car, free for walkers/bikers

**Festival Details:** Cedar Circle Farm hosts two harvest festivals annually - a Pumpkin Festival and a Strawberry Festival. This year's Strawberry Festival attracted over 1,400 people, despite the rainy strawberry season. The festival proceeds go to Cedar Circle Farm, but they host a raffle during the festivals to raise money for their Farm Share shares.

**Insurance:** Cedar Circle is both a farm and an education center, and their insurance already covers farm-based events. Don't forget to check your insurance policy to make sure you're all set too!

**Outreach/advertising/tickets:** Cedar Circle advertised using social media, their e-newsletter, their website, posters hung in local shops, the four farmer's markets they attend weekly, and advertisements in both local and regional newspapers. Advertising is helped by the annual nature of the festival (2013 was its eleventh year) and Cedar Circle's broad outreach base because of its educational programming.

*Note from NOFA-VT: To broaden your marketing outreach, consider listing events on NOFA-VT's online calendar at: <http://nofavt.org/upcoming-events-calendar>.*

**Activities:** Most of the activities of the festival were free, including horse-drawn wagon rides to and from the strawberry patch, children's coloring and face painting, kite making, puppetry, live music, and a self-guided farm tour. There were also strawberry-themed foods for sale and the NOFA pizza oven was present to provide lunch.

*Note from NOFA-VT: To learn more about renting and scheduling the NOFA pizza oven, please contact our office at 802-434-4122 or [info@nofavt.org](mailto:info@nofavt.org).*

**Raffle:** Every half hour during the festival a farm employee made an announcement about the Farm Share fundraising raffle to encourage ticket purchases. This was an opportunity both to sell tickets and to raise awareness about the Farm Share program in all attendees.

**Funds raised:** At the 2013 Strawberry Festival, the raffle made \$199 to go to Cedar Circle's subsidized fall and winter CSA shares.

## **Other festival ideas:**

- Consider charging slightly more for admission and have part of those funds go to your Farm Share shares.
- Solicit donations for the raffle items to increase the amount of money earned for Farm Share shares. Cedar Circle Farm Education Coordinator, Cat Buxton, has created a pamphlet describing the Farm Share program to use when soliciting donations for the raffle. To see the pamphlet, email [erin@nofavt.org](mailto:erin@nofavt.org).

*Special thanks to Cat Buxton for sharing this information!*