

FREEDOM FARM NEWS



LEFT: EDGAR AND ANN WITH A LOCAL BROWNIE TROOP

RIGHT: VIEW OF THE LEAFY GREENS SECTION IN THE SPRING

Growing in Faith by Ann Rader

From local Otisville Busy Bee preschoolers to Middletown youth in a halfway house to UPROSE (United Puerto Rican Organization of Sunset Park) in Brooklyn, people want to come to Freedom Farm to learn about how things grow. I'm so pleased to read in the thank you notes, "I learned how to plant seeds," and, "I already started growing tomatoes and strawberries. You inspired me." Edgar, who has been working hard to collect food scraps for compost from the firehouses in NYC and from our local food vendors, must be happy about this young person's comment; "I learned so much, especially the way I look at fruit and vegetable skin that can be reused to help grow more." One of my favorite moments this summer was when Naiomie, an urban teen participating in a leadership week at Camp Deerpark, emerged from our pumpkin patch after pulling weeds for an hour and said, "I feel like a hero to the pumpkins that are trying to grow." I blurted out, "You Are!"

Cultivating good soil, planting seeds, pulling weeds, sharing the harvest (and work!)..... this is our calling.

By the summer of 2004, when we had our first Freedom Farm Retreat with ten wonderful young people from Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice in the South Bronx where we worked, we decided our motto should be, "Growing in Faith." It had to be faith, because we sure did not know much about farming at that point. We tried planting pumpkin seeds with the young people in August (not enough time to grow before winter!). The following Spring of 2005, Edgar, Josiah, and I (pregnant with Micah) moved from the Bronx to the farm full time. Although we had done a little garden work in former jobs, we were by and large - total beginners.

These past seven years have been so hard --- and so beautiful. This is how growth is. This is how faith is. You are in the dark. You don't know what is going to happen and how you are going to make it happen. And then you cry out to God, "Help me! HELP! This is so overwhelming. I'm over my head."

And down there with you, in the dark, is the Spirit. She whispers, "I got you." And as much as I keep forgetting that, She does.

We plant the seeds, but we don't make them grow. That's the Spirit. That's why we are growing in faith, right along with all those who come to Freedom Farm, and with all of you, our extended Freedom Farm Community.

Sending you much love in this New Year!



ANN PLANTING CORN



COMPOSTING (CAMP DEERPARK)



REFLECTION @ BONFIRE (UPROSE)



BUMBLEBEE IN THE SUN



LEARNING ESSENTIALS OF COMPOSTING (UPROSE)



PLANTING BEETS:(4H MIDDLETOWN)

Past, Present, & Future by Edgar Hayes

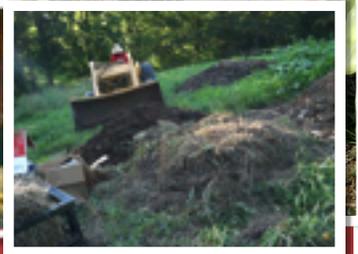
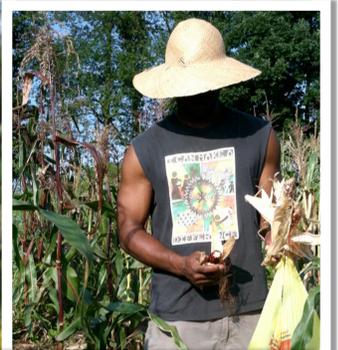
Whenever I get the chance to talk with volunteers at food pantries or read an article on hunger, I make a point to assess whether the number of individuals/families needing help is increasing. The answer is a resounding YES! Since the economy has yet to turn around for the better, more and more people who are struggling are turning to food assistance programs to alleviate financial burdens. Food pantries, which are usually run by dedicated volunteers from local churches or nonprofit organizations, stock their shelves with canned and boxed goods that come from a wide range of donors. Some include the area Food Bank, organizations that set up food drives, or a single family who wants to help out. These donations provide sustenance and nutrition, but how can the essential nutrients found in leafy greens, root crops, fruit, herbs, squash, corn, etc. be acquired? That's where we come in. Most pantries cannot store fresh produce for more than a day or two so it's always a blessing when our harvest time connects with their schedules. April Nastro, one of our pantry connections, and a mother of four, feels called to helping others. She comes to Freedom Farm every other week to glean whatever produce we have to bring it to Shepherd's Pantry in Monticello, NY. We love to celebrate and uplift people such as April who ask the question, "When did I see you hungry and give you something to eat Lord?" (excerpt from Mt. 25: 35, 37)

Although we had a lot of success stories this past year, it had to be the most challenging of growing seasons to date. The weather was the harshest it has been in a long time (i.e...flooding rains and hurricane winds). Many farmers in our area lost most if not all their crops due to bad weather. We came into the season with high expectations of doubling our food donations of 1444 lbs from the previous year. We were far off the mark of our goal but God's wonderful grace still guided us through the storms to help us donate 1476 lbs. of fresh produce to help ease the strain individuals/families are going through. Also, due to family & health concerns (Ann's mom and dad (both w/cancer)) and Ann's desires to travel back and forth to assist them with their house cleanup and recovery (tornado caused 10 ton tree to fall on their house), we decided to forgo all applications for the internship program. I must admit, that was a hard decision to make. The help interns provide is invaluable. The purpose of the internship program is to provide a love-filled environment for young adults that nurture their spiritual, mental, and emotional needs as they help us with community life, growing and distributing produce, and helping out with the youth program. I'm very thankful that God blessed us with many wonderful volunteers who helped us throughout the year in the absence of interns. I believe we will do wonderful things during the growing season when the internship program returns in 2013 coupled with the volunteers that faithfully lend their helping hands.

It is written in the book of Leviticus, "*For six years you may plant your fields and prune your vineyards and harvest your crops, but during the seventh year the land must have a Sabbath year of complete rest. It is the Lord's Sabbath.*" (Leviticus 25:3-4)

Our first Sabbath year is 2012. We will take that time to give the land a break from producing food as well as replenish the soil's nutrients (i.e. composting, cover cropping), nurture our spiritual formation through contemplative rest and prayer, visit and learn from organizations that do similar work for people in need, revisit our strategic plan and mission, and retool and refine our youth/internship programs. We will also tend to the perennials (fruit trees/bushes, herbs and flowers). Though I am anxious for the 2013 growing season to begin, I am equally excited to take this time and opportunity to rest, rethink, reshape, listen to and learn what God is calling us to do and be at Freedom Farm.

YEAR IN PHOTOS



Poetry Corner

poems by
Celmali Jaime

Perfect Imperfection

So I...
Examine my reflection
In a mirror-image me.
Head to toe in my perception
The following I see:
Hair, too much, too nappy.
Skin, two shades too dark.
Charcoal-black complexion scarred by scratch and pimple marks.
Baggy eyes embedded
Within an ugly face.
Lips too big and
Breasts too small so
Label me
"Disgrace."
Short and brittle nails cover bony fingertips.
And how can I seduce a man with these non-existent hips?

So I...
Slip on heels, add lipstick
Foundation and fade cream.
I'm an empty beauty brainwashed by Glamour magazine.
While I change from black to blue eyes
Glue on nails, sew in a weave.
Tell them "I was born with it,
No, it wasn't Maybelline."

But then I
Look at my reflection
And I see a costumed clown.
I realize pretty lipstick
Don't hide an ugly frown.
So I...
Take off the nails
Make-up and blue
Contacts, mascara, I toss the shoes, I
Tear down the Halle poster, burn the costume
Murder your expectations and give birth to a new
True and improved woman of virtue
It's time to let my hidden inner beauty shine through...

So I...
Examine my reflection
With my new found self-esteem.
God made a perfect imperfection
The day He smiled
On me.



Celmali Jaime helps direct youth at Camp Deerpark in Westbrookville, NY, partnering with Freedom Farm to enable young people to experience the sacredness of individuals, God, and creation. During one session this summer, we shared writing about "seeds" we want to plant in our lives. She spontaneously performed "Perfect Imperfection," a poem she wrote as a teen that expresses the struggle young people face to accept their perfection as children of God.

I saw God there

I saw God there
She was beautiful
Her dark hues were mirrored
in the black skin of children
And smoke clouds of passing trucks
She called me by name
Through their singing voices
Rained peace
In their mass graves and skulls
And then she braided my hair...

*Ni nani kama wewe bwana?
Nani kama wewe?*

She was robed in the shine of their smiles.
I hear it
She still lives in their laughter
My heart danced with god
She was the drummer
I learned to listen

And then
She taught me
to love

*Hakuna kama wewe
Bwana wa mabwana.*

She fed me mangos,
eggs sold at the roadside
From her very own jeweled hand
At dusk she painted sunsets for me
And crescent green hopes
From loudspeaker mosques

*Hakuna kama wewe
Bwana wa mabwana.*

I've always looked for God everyday everywhere
And then she revealed herself to me
In garbage covered slums
And drunks laying in sewage
Alongside shadow kids
sniffing glue

She cradles single mothers in her arms
laughs
hand in hand with prostitutes

*Hakuna kama wewe
Bwana wa mabwana.*

She wears hijab

*Hakuna kama wewe
Bwana wa mabwana.*

I used to look for God everyday everywhere
And then...
she was there



This September, Freedom Farm hosted a poetry night in which Cel mali shared her poems and photography from her time in Kenya and the surrounding region. It was a wonderful evening of sharing food (including Freedom Farm Greens seasoned Kenyan-style) and celebrating art as a powerful means to educate us about the lives of our brothers and sisters across the globe in Africa. Cel mali is currently helping at a youth center in Kenya and hopes to visit us again in March.

It Takes a Village To Raise a Tractor Shed

by Michael Domer

The Freedom Farm Community is proud and happy to welcome it's latest addition: a tractor shed that will house Freedom Farm's yellow Massey Ferguson tractor (a recent donation from Rick and Julie Vreeland.) It's just a shed. Right? Actually, this particular edifice is much more. It is a thing of character - still in need of a name - but it has a story. Most importantly, it represents the values and vitality of the Freedom Farm Community. The project was a collaboration that brought the broader community together around a common objective. It incorporated architecture and planning by Camp Deerpark's Facilities Director, Sean McConaghay, on-site guidance from Farmer Rick Vreeland, and construction work by Edgar, Deerpark Intern Mike Domer, and of course, Josiah and Micah Rader-Hayes. Even the wood is locally harvested and milled from Camp Deerpark. Despite much enthusiasm and the combined expertise of all involved, the work was thwarted by a series of challenges and missteps. Setbacks included forgotten steps, last minute height adaptations, site limitations, and deficient tools. Yet, in true Freedom Farm style, the building crew remained undaunted and overcame frustration with renewed teamwork and an eagerness to learn. Their success can only be attributed to the efficacy of resolve and reciprocity. The shed will shield the tractor from rain and snow and - as long as it endures - will serve as a tangible symbol of the potential of partnership and persistence. It will face the assaults of violent storms and have to bear the weight of mountains of snow. Now that we have bestowed so much significance on the humble monument we can only hope it survives. (Consider this an official prayer request.)



tractor's new home

THE SHED PROJECT



SITE PREPPED



NINE FOOT WALLS

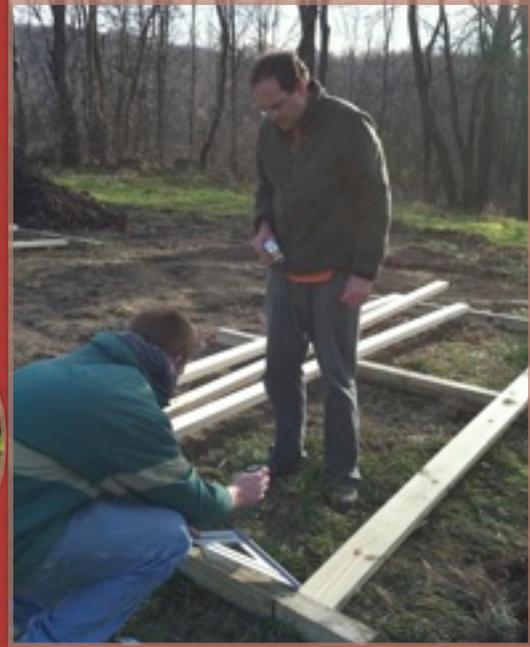


WALLS/RIDGE DOWN 3'



MIKE WORKING ON ROOF

VOLUNTEER PAGE



SPECIAL THANKS TO:

OUR NEIGHBORS, RICK AND JULIE VREELAND, FOR DONATING A TRACTOR TO FREEDOM FARM, TO CAMP DEERPARK FOR HELPING US ERECT A TRACTOR SHED AND SENDING US VOLUNTEER WORK GROUPS, TO MANHATTAN MENNONITE FELLOWSHIP WHO HELPED WEED AND HARVEST, TO JENNEFER MARKER FOR HELPING TO HARVEST AND PRESERVE LOTS OF PRODUCE, TO APRIL NASTRO, CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION, CELMALI, AND THE CAMP DEERPARK YOUNG WOMEN IN L.E.A.D. FOR HELPING HARVEST AND DISTRIBUTE OUR PRODUCE TO THOSE IN NEED, TO AMANDA RADER, WHO HELPED FARM HERE FOR 2 MONTHS, AND TO ALL OUR FAITHFUL VOLUNTEERS (SORRY WE CAN'T NAME YOU ALL) AND DONORS- PLEASE KNOW THAT YOU ARE A REAL BLESSING!

Community Needs

Though we're letting the land rest in 2012 by not planting hordes of seeds this Spring, we will still need volunteer help. Some of our upcoming projects will be: painting the barn with linseed oil, fixing the fence and outdoor greenhouse broken from storms, creating compost, mowing, weeding and tending perennials like strawberries, garlic, asparagus, raspberries, blueberries, herbs, and fruit trees. Give us a call (845)386-8117 or email us (info@freedomcommunity.org) if you want to come out and join the Freedom Farm team! Your help, support, and prayers are greatly appreciated.

You can also send a tax deductible contribution to Freedom Farm Community at 2407 Mt Hope Road, Middletown, NY 10940 or donate online at www.freedomfarmcommunity.org. Our other needs include: pickup truck w/ diesel engine (that will be converted to run on vegetable grease), barn painting supplies, 5 camp mats and washable sleeping bags, a grain grinder, and a hoop house (greenhouse).