

2013-2014 Season

# FREEDOM FARM NEWS



## AN UNLIKELY GROWING SEASON BY ANN RADER

This growing season, we had a motley crew. Edgar and I were in a haze, grieving the loss of his sister Michelle. She died suddenly April 11, 2013 of cancer, after having endured a leg amputation late in 2011 like a true star. (By last Christmas, Michelle was dancing again). And we still ached for Mom. Ruth joined us from her home in the Bronx, mourning the loss of her beautiful mother Bibi, and shaken by having to leave her P.h.D. program. Next we were

blessed with Mikey, our unlikely 16-year old hero, who got in trouble at school in the Bronx and had to leave all his friends behind in the Spring. All of this and we had to recreate the garden after the sabbath year. Mercifully, my farm-lovin' cousin Amanda, from Tucson, AZ, and Karsten Hess, a brave intern from Goshen, IN, joined our crew and helped keep us afloat (along with heaven-sent volunteers.)

*(Cont.'d on p. 2)*



**The Gang's All Here!**  
Top: Mikey, Ann, Edgar, Karsten, Ruth  
Bottom: Karsten, Edgar, Ann, Amanda, Micah, Josiah



Row by row  
We shoveled compost  
Crouched to Pull weeds  
Measured to plant seeds --- corn, squash, pumpkins.....  
transplanted a greenhouse full of anxious crops  
Mikey mowed and played piano  
We prayed  
desperately in need of music

*Precious Lord, take my hand. Lead me on... let me stand  
I am tired. I am weak, I am worn.  
Through the storm, through the night,  
lead me on... to the Light  
Take my hand... precious Lord,  
lead me home.*

And.....somehow, even though we couldn't seem to keep up with the work, things managed to grow

spinach! lettuce! pumpkins! potatoes!

And there was plenty to share.

We welcomed visiting families, children, elders, guys from a local halfway house who harvested food for themselves and others, and urban young people from Camp Deerpark...

We played basketball with Micah and Josiah  
Read and acted out the Garden in Genesis  
Argued theology  
Cooked greens and roti (bread Ruth taught me to make) together

And somehow, despite the chaos, things grew.

Trust. Love. New beginnings.

More than ever, the healing and learning that happened this season was a gift. We were spent. I relished the chance to be with a few young people for longer periods of time. We look forward to cultivating in the new year what was replanted in a moving way in 2013, healing through Christian-based community life and growing food to share.

**Camp Deerpark  
youth preparing a  
harvest breakfast**



## Michael Torres at Freedom Farm :) by Mikey

Freedom Farm is one of the most different places I have ever put my time into. I came to Freedom Farm this summer because I was bored being home playing video games and texting. Doing nothing at home, I talked to Ann about volunteering at the farm. With wide open arms, she and everyone there brought me into the farming life. It was hard at first because I was raised in the Bronx. There is not a lot of farming done there. I first started off by learning how to use a lawn mower. I was nervous at first, but soon after, I got used to it and it became fun for me. Sometimes I got frustrated because I'd finish the whole farm one week, but when I came back a week later, the grass was already a foot high. Other than cutting grass, I've also learned how to keep a garden full of produce maintained. Weeding is done daily at Freedom Farm. No matter how much you weed one day, the next day weeds are all over the place. It's important to weed because weeds take up most of the sunlight, water, and nutrients that the other plants need. So, if you want something to do at Freedom Farm, weeding is always a huge help.

My biggest lesson at Freedom Farm was one day during prayer. Ann told me about weeds. They really are not needed. In life there are tons of people, stuff, or situations that suck up our time that we should be spending with God. God is always a priority. So just like weeds in the ground, I need to pick out all of the weeds in me that are taking me away from God. Because when all the weeds are gone, God's love can grow through me. And through me, I can show others that God wants to grow in them. I thank God for bringing me to Freedom Farm because when I leave, I will have new knowledge and a heart filled with the love of God.



Oh! The Weeds

**MIKEY** JOINS THE CREW





## Saying Goodbye!

Ruth's last day



I was a ball of hurt when I arrived at Freedom Farm. My school put me on medical leave after my mom died of breast cancer and I was dealing with a whirlwind of emotions. I stepped onto the soft cut grass and felt a peculiar sense of belonging. I belonged here amidst the dewy meadow and began thanking God for bringing me to this place - this place of healing.

Being from the city, I had no idea how to farm. But Ann, Karsten the intern, and Renita from Camp Deerpark taught me how. I had a great time learning how to weed while also learning how to uproot things in my life that caused despair. Both the physical labor and spiritual turmoil were ameliorated by the birds singing, the cows grazing, and the crickets chirping at night. I let myself experience emotions in that garden that I once was afraid of. Being surrounded by nature and God's love alike was so refreshing and precious to my broken soul.

For the first time I felt safe to let go. While I weeded, it felt good to taste the salt from both sweat and tears that fell freely on the cushiony black soil. It wasn't all work at Freedom farm though; there was laughter at the dinner table, playing in the pool, swinging on swings, all of which reminded me of happier days when my mom was alive. Being able to commiserate with Ann, her dad, and Edgar and his endearing mother, Mima, was also a great comfort, and I am very grateful to them. As I picked berries, I could hear my mom singing that old hymn: 'I Come to the Garden Alone' and I remember Jesus is always with me.

All these things were a culmination of God's grace on my life. I felt release in a lot of ways and yet as my time drew near I felt a tightening in my chest at the thought of leaving this blissful land. Even now reminiscing, my heart feels heavy with longing to be there again in the dewy meadows of Freedom Farm. I am forever grateful to Ann and Edgar and their family for showing me such unreserved love and hospitality. And most of all I thank God for my wonderful experience at Freedom Farm which, though brief, will stay with me forever.

## Getting Back Into The Swing of Things by Edgar Hayes

How wonderful it was to get back into gardening this year. After a year of Sabbath rest, I was eager to start up again. I compiled a year's worth of ideas and designs in my head but in the end, I might have only accomplished 1/4 of it. It proved most difficult to return to a fresh start. A year earlier, I wiped away seven years of design, tilled, dropped cover crop, and let the ground lay fallow. The difficult part of starting over was my misconception that I could create a seven year garden in one year. I had to come to the realization that the garden isn't built in a year, but rather is a culmination of several years. Once I understood this, it became less frustrating when I didn't get everything done.

I'm currently finishing up an online course on pastoral care. One of the major premises of the class is for us to understand that "our" ministry has to take a backseat to God's. Our tiny 7 year ministry at Freedom Farm is actually working within the framework of God's ministry, created since the beginning of time. Surrendering to God is a very hard concept for me to follow sometimes, because I see Freedom Farm as my little baby (Ann calls the garden my "mistress"). The control I try to maintain on the growing process causes frustration and sometimes mild depression when things go wrong. This past year, the groundhogs finally figured out (after 4 years) that they could go under the electric fence. They, as well as the deer, wreaked havoc in the garden. Redesigning and setting up the garden again cut into the planting phase which threw off our schedule. We missed planting peas, and a lot of beans, the melon section was hurting, the weeds became unruly, the irrigation system was partially installed, and the electric fence went up too late. Instead of taking on the feelings of frustration and depression, I said to God "if you want this to garden to happen, I'm going to leave it in your hands." A huge weight was lifted off my shoulders. It's ok when things go wrong, because God is right there in the midst of the work that we do.

If we put our faith into what God is trying to accomplish right then and there, it will be just a mere setback for us to overcome. Now when troubles arise I try to ask, "Lord, what is it that you are doing here and now?" "And what do you want me to learn, know, or understand?" God wants to free us from our burdens. And I know God wants Freedom Farm to happen (I can feel it in my bones), and so it does... happen. We've gotten through lots of beautiful and frustrating times these last seven years, and we'll get through the next seven as long as God continues to be the central focus of our mission and work. I'm very much looking forward to next year's planting and growing season. The countless ideas and plans are already swirling in my head. Stay tuned to see what God has planned for us and the work that can be accomplished as we strive to serve "the least of these."

*I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Matthew 25.35-40*



# “Ballad of an Intern”

by Karsten Hess

One year ago I discovered a brochure that told me about a place called Freedom Farm Community. This community had a vision to make a space available to people where they could work the land, talk about their faith, and learn how peace, justice, and environmental stewardship fit into those two areas of life.

When I learned that not only did they have a wonderful vision, but had also taken a sabbath year to give the land and themselves a rest, I was hooked. I’ve been at Goshen College in Indiana for two years now, studying Environmental Science. I’ve long had an interest in connecting my major with my love of exploring theology, peace, and justice. And finding all those things lining up in an intentional community was a dream come true.

Still, jumping into the action this summer has been at times confusing and exhausting, but mostly it’s been joyful. I quickly discovered that the community doesn’t all live together (friends and family frequently come to visit), and that there is often so much going on that it can be difficult to get things done the way you want them. But by singing, playing, sharing stories, and praying together we can make the difficult times much more bearable.

Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of God is here, and we will know it when we ask and receive, when we knock and the door is opened, when we heal the wounds of another. After spending two months at Freedom Farm Community I will boldly say Amen!



**Karsten  
pulling  
weeds**



**THANKS to all the: visitors,volunteers,helpers,seekers,retreaters,children,families,youth,healers,and those who were just passing through. You made this year a very special one.**



## Freedom Farm Needs

We are in great need of a **pickup truck** to gather compost from several sources around town. It will also be used to haul fresh produce to people/organizations in need. As always, your donation will be tax deductible.

## Building upon the core

In order for Freedom Farm to grow towards our Vision, we need to build our core team from the ground up.

This could include:

- Another farmer
- Intern/Volunteer coordinator
- Development Director
- Maintenance Worker

If you know of someone who believes in our Mission, is called to serve others, and would be a great addition to our team, please let us know.

## Other Community needs

- Financial Contributions
- Dump Trailer
- Wood Splitter
- Help Weeding and Organizing
- Building Repairs
- Barn Painting
- Carpentry Teachers
- Prayers



## Donations from Freedom Farm

The fertile land provided Freedom Farm with over 1,500 lb.s of fresh organic produce this growing season to share with:

**Cornell Cooperative Extension's gleaning program** that links us to local groups such as  
\*RECAP, *Regional Economic Community Action Program* that empowers people in crisis to become economically self-sufficient  
\**Middletown Emergency Housing*  
\**St. Paul's United Methodist Food Pantries and Soup Kitchens*

**Camp Deerpark**, a local Mennonite camp that helps involve young people and churches predominantly from the Bronx and Brooklyn in cultivating, eating, and sharing Freedom Farm Produce. Young staff come here and learn where food comes from and reflect on God's edible bounty.

**Otisville Mt. Hope Presbyterian Church** - whose vibrant youth group is beginning to help us plant, weed, harvest, eat, and distribute food for our immediate neighbors and families in need.

## Donating to Freedom Farm

You can mail a check to the address below or donate online:

Freedom Farm Community  
2407 Mount Hope Road  
Middletown, NY 10940  
Email: [info@freedomfarmcommunity.org](mailto:info@freedomfarmcommunity.org)  
Web: [www.freedomfarmcommunity.org](http://www.freedomfarmcommunity.org)

THANK YOU! Have a fruitful 2014!