

From Saving to Serving - A New Year of Opportunities



Nancy thinks it's funny that when I speak about next year's plans for the farm it's always about 'when' we're going to do the raised beds with money from the CT State Dept. of Agriculture Viability Grant, not 'if' we're going to do them.

She thinks I'm being a positive thinker - and I am!

BUT!

My positive thinking is based on my five years experience in corporate America as a communications specialist. During that time I regularly wrote communications to reassure people in positions of authority, including those from both the federal and state governments, that we were doing what they needed us to do.

It's that experience that makes me know the grant submission I helped Nancy draft will result in the farm getting the grant.

When Nancy needed help in the farm store, it was my retail experience that I put to use.

In writing this weekly newsletter, it's my content marketing experience that's useful. In helping Nancy get ready for this year's projects, it's a combination of my auditing and project management experience.

The Farm is Changing

It's not just that new raised bed gardens are going to be created, it's what those gardens represent.

Farming is back breaking work, and that limits who can participate.

The raised beds, which will include at least one accessible from a wheelchair, represent the farm's ability to serve a larger community and enable more people to have a farming experience.

The raised beds allow growing different types of fruits and vegetables than has been possible in the past. That in turn will better serve the diverse population of the Vernon community.

The raised beds will grow more produce over a longer growing period. That means the woman who loves our fresh red beets will be able to find them more often in the Farm Store.

The more the Farm Store can sell without having to first buy from other farms, the more profitable it will be.

And with or without the Ag Dept grant, those changes have to happen.

From Saving to Serving



When Nancy first approached the Vernon community, it was with the idea that the farm needed saving and the hope that the community agreed.

They did, and the farm is where it's at today because of a heck of a lot of hard work by people and donations from people who found value in saving the farm.

Yet, not enough people in the community have been reached. In order to ensure the survival of the farm, more people have to interact with it.

That is why the farm's focus is changing. It's going from needing saving because it deserves to be saved, to ensuring that it remains an integral part of the community.

The greater focus is now shifting towards serving the community in ways that only the Strong Family Farm can.

A New Year of Opportunities

While putting raised beds in is a significant activity, there are other things that will be going on as well in order to position the farm successfully for the future.

The farm has a history that inspired people to try and save it.

I have a history of experiences that give me a variety of ways to put them to use in helping the farm create an enduring legacy.

You too have a history of experiences that can help you do the same.

You see, the farm is more than just a farm. It's actually a business, an agri-tourism business. It's an agricultural environment that requires people to keep it going.

Like any business, even a nonprofit one, there are many opportunities available to put your experiences and your interests to work.

Once we get the CT State Dept of Agriculture grant (there's that positive thinking again) or figure out how we're going to move forward without it, there will be lots of opportunities to help out, and do so in a variety of ways.

And trust me . . . as soon as we figure what they are and when they're needed, we will let you know. But in the meantime, if you have ideas about how you'd like to see the farm become more interactive with the community, let us know by emailing us at info@strongfarm.org

A New Year of Challenges

The greatest challenge facing the farm, and indeed all the nonprofits that rely on donations, is the one created by the new tax plan recently signed into law.

"A central pillar of the massive tax law doubles the standard deduction that two-thirds of Americans use, to \$12,000 for individuals and \$24,000 for married couples. That means many taxpayers who now itemize deductions will find it's no longer beneficial for them to do so. They'll find that the deductions they normally take, including for charitable giving, don't add up to as much as the new standard amount."

Unless the law changes in the future, 2017 is the last year many people will be itemizing their deductions including their charitable donations.

That means you have but two days left to take advantage of the existing tax benefits.

To make a donation in support of the farm, please [click here and you'll be taken to the donation page on the website.](#)

While it takes a village to raise a child, only people within the community who find value in a nonprofit family farm can help make and keep the farm as an

asset the community can't do without.

What you can contribute to make that happen is greatly appreciated as the merits of your gifts exceed their monetary value.

We thank each and every one of you for your ongoing support, and look forward to what we can achieve together in the years to come.

May you all have a healthy and happy 2018!



Nancy Strong, Executive Director
Quinn Eurich, Editor