



Strong Family Farm



2016 - 2017 Annual Report

274 West Street
Vernon, CT
860-874-9020 info@strongfarm.org
www.strongfamilyfarm.org

A Word From Our Executive Director

We've done it again!

Can you believe that it has been 5 years since we held our initial planning meeting?

Can you believe that we're already doing items from year number 10 of our 10-year plan?

Can you believe that our new farm store is going to be 1-year old next month and that a pretty new fence graces West Street?

We've done so much! Even as I write this, I'm so proud to share that not only does our beautiful barn have new windows but it will be sporting a new floor sometime soon!

Because we have already accomplished so much, the timing is perfect for us to revisit our existing plans and leverage them in developing our next strategic initiatives.

So many have worked hard to save our community family farm for future generations to experience, and I give you my heartfelt thanks for all that you have done for us and for all that you continue to do!

It is you who have made Strong Family Farm the wonderful community that it is! I look forward to what we will create together in the future. To that end, I will be reaching out to all of you and our greater Vernon community for your input on how our mission of preserving the farm for future generations will continue to grow.

We have accomplished all of this because of you.

Warmly,

Nancy Strong, Executive Director

"Were you raised in a barn?"

I was raised in a barn and that is where I learned the most important lessons of my life:

- I watched life begin and end in a barn.*
- I discovered that hard work builds character and kills no one.*
- I learned respect, love and compassion.*
- I realized optimism is sometimes the only way to keep going.*
- I found sometimes that you have to let go, even when it breaks your heart.*
- I failed and kept trying until I succeeded.*
- I gained confidence in my abilities and myself.*
- I understood you have to stand for what you believe in.*

So, the next time someone tells you, you act like you were raised in a barn . . . thank them!

(Anonymous)

A Word from our President

Another year of success and progress for the Strong Family Farm.

A wonderful and dedicated group of volunteers led by the untiring Nancy Strong has brought us further down our path. We all get strength as we channel Nancy's her excitement and vitality into all we do.

It's unbelievable!

Nancy's leadership has created a healthy, focused and energetic organization. We have entered the second year of our Farm Store! We are progressing on our fencing initiative. The barn continue to progress to completion. Many of our own events, the Harvest Fest, the Chicken run and other's events, the Civil War kids camp, are past their initial years and provide enjoyment for attendees and activities that bring new visitors and perhaps future Farmers to own "place".

We have an organization that we can be proud of, the town can be proud of and if I dare say, Norman Strong could be proud of.

We will continue to progress. When we do, let us remember what came before us and bring that strength, direction, focus, hard work and thought into the future with us.

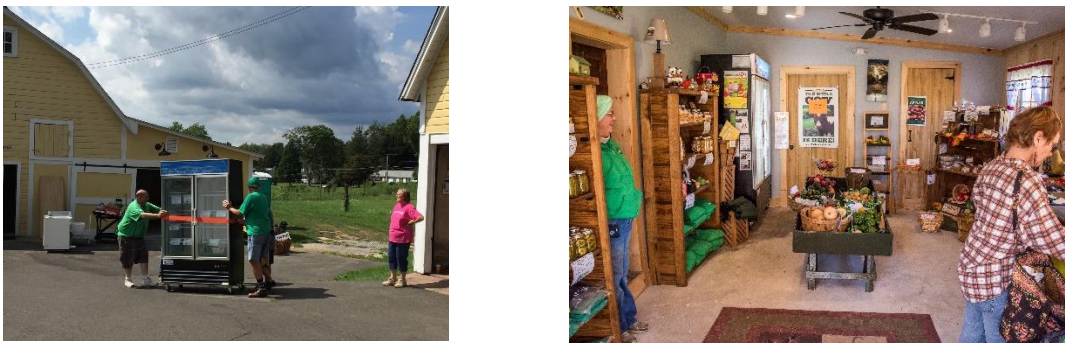
Truly, the Strong Family Farm has become the result of what has been sown before.

We reap what we have sown and are sowing now.

Here is to a wonderful and vibrant future.

Brian Motola
President

Farm store - moving day and finished product.



Our Mission

The mission of Strong Family Farm is to preserve a seven-generation farm and provide educational, historical and agricultural experiences to adults and children in perpetuity.

The Year in Review

The work, joy and love associated with preserving the farm, educating the public about agriculture and history, traditions, healthy social interactions with man and beast, good nutrition and its sources, our natural environment – all of this work and love continue, unabated in this wonderful farm project.

As we noted in last year's annual report, the key to the longevity of this historic property is showing the community a beautiful place to record history, find community and provide relevant programs and services while integrating an appreciation for the past. Strong Family Farm continues its transformation, fusing past and present. The community continues to love this farm in new ways, while appreciating its heritage. We are confident that the farm will attract new generations who will also come to love it and work to preserve it.

Farm Programming – 2016-2017

1. Farm Volunteer Work Days Volunteer days keep the farm humming. In addition to our bi-annual volunteer work days, this year, each Saturday morning between 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. the public has been invited to engage in volunteer activities, particularly gardening, to help preserve, restore and spruce up the farm.
2. Adopt a Chicken Program It is year number five for this popular program. Alexis Carmicheal, the originator of the idea for this program, leads the class every other Wednesday for 8 weeks during which a group of young and old visit the chickens and care for them as they grow to maturity.
3. Civil War Day Camp Thanks to the Civil War Re-enactors in the Alden Skinner Camp of the Grand Army of the Republic and the 14th CT Volunteer Infantry Co. G under the direction of Frank Niederwerfer for bringing Civil War history alive again this year. More than 20 youth were enlisted into service that day and at the end, they got their discharge papers before released to go home. A very successful day, which will be brought back by popular demand!



4. Scarecrow Contest Now in its sixth year, the Vernon community eagerly awaits the next round of community scarecrows to adorn the SFF fence line in October. Families, adults, youth organizations, and businesses continue to design amazing creations, and the farm gives them a place to show case their creativity. We thank the public for one of the fall season's local highlights. Local judges award prizes for a variety of categories and the community gets to view the scarecrows for several weeks. We had an all-time high of 26 scarecrows!
5. Fence Project With generous support from its membership and public, a handsome section of memorial fencing was installed on West Street. The second section will soon be installed along Peterson Road. Each post and rail has a plaque with wording of the donor's choice. There is still time to sponsor a post or rail for the Peterson Road section of the farm fence. The cost of a rail is \$50 and a post is \$100, including the plaque.
6. Harvest Festival The annual October Harvest Festival offers a visit with farm animals, demonstrations of farm activities such as canning, driving tractors, seasonal craft projects for children, pumpkin decorating, apple sales, pumpkins checkers, corn box play, and a hay bale maze. It also provides a platform for local farmers to display, advertise, educate, sell their products and compare notes with other farmers. We also say good-bye to the adopted chickens that go to a new farm to begin their careers as egg producing chickens. The Adopt-A-Chicken gang sang the Strong Family Farm Chicken Anthem, written by Mrs. P.B., as the chickens departed the farm in an antique pickup truck. There was also an apple pie baking contest for adults and children, and we had a raffle to support our Girl Scout bee project. The winners of the Annual Scarecrow Contest were announced, and our friends, Gypsy Hearts, provided music for the day. Bryan Flint did his wonderful "MC"ing pulling the day's activities all together.
7. Chicken Run 5K Road Race The fourth, annual 5K Chicken Run was held on Sunday, April 9, 2017. Sponsorship continues to grow for this popular, early season road race. The race was again filmed this year by the Community Voice Channel and shown on its local television station and our YouTube page. The event continues to be a great fundraiser for the farm as well as a way to shake off the fatigue of winter weather. We thank Pro-Health Chiropractic for being the Gold Sponsor again this year, Last Mile as the race organizers and all our community sponsors and our faithful runners and walkers. Each year gets more sponsors and runners!
8. Workshop Series Once again, we hosted Cathy Testa and a container gardening class on May 21st.. Programs have taken a back seat due to construction and other time constraints. If anyone has ideas or wants to do a workshop, we are always open for volunteers and suggestions.
9. Co-op Gardening The farm invited community members to participate in a co-operative garden and reap its bountiful rewards. A meeting was set up to plan the garden this year and Barbara Jubinville designed a plot plan and helped with advice. Claudia Steele cans many of the vegetables and pickles that are sold at the farm stand.

The vegetable garden on the farm provides gardening experiences and produces vegetables for both the volunteers and the new farm stand. We always need new members to help. The old shade garden has been transformed into a dahlia garden thanks to members and friend David Murphy, who heads the Elizabeth Park dahlia garden.

10. Community Service Host The farm continues to host many Vernon youth groups. The farm being a non-profit is able to offer area school children opportunities to perform their school required community service by practicing farm-related activities. RHS Ag.Ed. students continue to be present on the farm, year round. We also had the privilege of hosting the Ellington Congregational Church TELOS Youth Group for a day of hard work. Thanks to Key Bank employee volunteers for setting up and planting, the borders of the dahlia garden and other work on their community service afternoon. Many hands make light work.
11. 4-H Meetings Host Site The farm is an ideal place for animal and agriculture oriented 4-H groups to hold their meetings. The Hop-A-Long 4-H Club meets on the farm. Each member learns how to care for animals and prepare them for 4-H shows. Norman Strong was an active 4-H member and leader. He would be proud!
12. Bees on the Farm The farm welcomed the visiting bee hives from Walter Moody this past year. In May, Jasmine Kermode, a Girl Scout looking for a gold award project, approached the farm about creating permanent beehives for the farm. Walt and Jasmine have worked together and the new bees are buzzing behind the barn. Walt says we have the “strongest” hive here!



Farm Store

The second season of our lovely farm store is well underway. The store provides the fixins' for a hearty summer meal and more. In addition to local produce, this **Connecticut only** grown or made farm stand offers milk, eggs, breads, bakery items, popcorn, quiches, pies, honey, maple syrup, pickles, relishes and jellies, ice cream, and beverages. We also have some new Connecticut made items such as recycled maple bowls and utensils. We are hoping to attract customers who share our pride in what Connecticut has to offer. Every dollar goes to support these local farmers AND the farm! Much thanks to Keela Parsons and Barbara Hunter – sales people extraordinaire and to Tracy Langore of Aussakita Acres Farm for setting us up and guiding us this year while Keela finished out her school year. One of our RHS Ag Ed Students, Javon Wilkes, joined us this year as a sales clerk.

Financial page

What's Next for the Farm?

We have accomplished an awful lot in the past five years. Here is how the vision continues:

- **Hay barn floor** The hay barn, the largest section of the barn complex, will get a new floor. Once the new floor is in place and a support beam is re-positioned, the barn can be rented for weddings and other events. It can also host farm-to-table dinners and other dining experiences.
- **Commercial kitchen** At the other end of the hay barn is an existing chicken coop. It will become a commercial kitchen with a classroom and restrooms. The commercial kitchen will be used by the community and individuals to can, freeze, make jams and other marketable products either for farm sales, home use or other commercial use. Workshops and classes will be held in the kitchen and the classroom. The kitchen will also serve as the staging area for farm dining experiences and for caterers to support other events.
- **Landscaping and gardens** The six acres of farmland will be transformed into commercially viable gardens. Wetlands behind the barn will be carved and landscaped from the lowland section of the pasture to attract native birds. Walking paths, sitting areas and livestock viewing areas will be added so that the entire property becomes a destination, natural experience. Tall plantings such as berry plants will be planted on the edges of the pasture to camouflage the outside structures to make the property picture perfect.
- **Parking lot** A modest, landscaped, gravel parking lot will be added in the pasture on Peterson Road to blend with the rest of the landscaping while adding a safe and inviting entrance to the farm.
- **Pavilion** At the corner of Peterson Road and West Street, a small pavilion-type structure will be built on the existing stone foundation. The pavilion will provide an elevated, restful viewing area of the entire property.
- **Infrastructure** With a new electric system in place, the next phase of planning envisions a new plumbing system to support the commercial kitchen, store, bathrooms and any watering systems for the gardens. We need an architectural drawing of all of the proposed changes to the property in order to bid the project. ADA accessibility is a priority. It is hoped that funds and grant money can be obtained to make as much of the property accessible as possible.
- **Museum** Many artifacts and pictures are available to create a timeline history of the family farm. This will preserve the history of farm. It will rekindle old memories of life growing up on a farm and preserve the legacy of the family farm.

Share a Farm Story – either your own or one on Strong Family Farm

Do you have a farm story to share? Norman Strong wrote his memories the year before he passed away. Morgan Strong has spent this past winter mailing home his memories from Virginia where he now lives. When we held our first meeting to form Strong Family Farm we went around the table with a dozen people and everyone had a farm connection with a story.

Share one with us and we may publish it on our website or in the annual report next year.

Here is one from our Secretary, Wendy Wanchak:

Growing up, my favorite aunt had a fifty-three acre farm. The farm may have been the singular reason she was my favorite aunt! She acquired chickens, cows, pigs, horses, dogs and cats in a variety of ways. Her collection of horses grew, from purchasing a few for her own children, to accepting a “gift horse” - a retired pacing racehorse. That racehorse had seen better days but in our eyes, what stepped off the truck that brought him to the farm was a magnificent, finely boned black silhouette gift of a horse, bundled in bright red horse blanket. It was only when the blanket came off, that “Traveler” emerged as a thinly wrapped package of bones and winter fuzz, his back covered in fungal rain rot. We cared not. He would be mended by our efforts. He was our newest love. Within a few months of arriving at the farm, he had settled in, his skin healed, his bones now hidden beneath new fine flesh, his eyes bright.

Because he was a former sulky racing horse, we wanted to make sure that he was only asked to perform the kind of work he knew. Trouble was, we didn’t have a harness or a sulky or a race track. We used what we did have - our imaginations. We had an abundance of imagination. It was winter. We had a *Flexible Flyer* sled. We had a deflated inner tube. We had a wooden box.

We put the inner tube over “Traveler’s” head and around his fine neck and attached a makeshift harness to the two-man sled. We put the wooden box on the sled for a seat and prepared for a rustic sleigh ride. With one flick of the twine reins, Traveler was off, and so were we. He bolted forward and we bolted backward, off the sled.

We sat in the snow, horrified, watching the terrified animal streak across the pasture, turning the sled into a modern sculpture of twisted wood and metal. And, then it was over. Traveler halted and snorted. He had won his last race.

My cousin went on to get an “A” in her art class for the “sculpture”. Traveler was rewarded with a more dignified retirement.



Board Members

The Board of Directors is looking for individuals who feel strongly about our work, to serve as members of the Board, Steering Committee, Programming Committee, Building/Grounds Committee, Garden Committee, Store Committee, Marketing/Publicity Committee and Fundraising Committee. If you are interested in joining any of these, please call or email Nancy Strong for more details.

Board of Directors 2016-17

- President: Brian Motola
- Vice President: Gordon Gibson
- Treasurer: Claudia Steele
- Secretary: Wendy Wanchak

Board members at large:

- Michael Nelson
- William Nicholson
- Ellen Marmer
- Amy DeBaum
- Carl Schaefer

Steering Committee:

- Richard Steele
- Roger Mooney
- Alexis Carmicheal
- Rena Schwarz
- Lynn Johnson
- Loyd Johnson
- Ellie Swan
- Lisa Moody
- Susan Bair
- Theona Wheelock

Executive Director – Nancy Strong

"I would rather be on my farm, than be emperor of the world." George Washington

WE SAY GOODBYE (BUT NOT TOTALLY GONE) TO OUR FIRST AG ED GIRLS – OLIVIA FONSECA AND BRITTANY FISHER.

They have been with us since our first year and have stayed with us throughout the years. They promise they will come back to help! We also picked up another RHS AgEd Senior this year – Javon Wilkes, who will be working with us in the stand until he starts college in the fall. We also added Nick Polaski last year as a Freshman and as of this writing have two girls starting as Freshmen – Averi Nicholoy and Kristyne Buessiere helping out this summer.



Membership List

Pamela Abbott
Kimberly Ackerman
Brian Andresen & Joanne Wright
George & Joan Apel
Fred & Cheri Artz
Susan Bair
Mariellen Baxter
Charlotte Benson
June Bray
Carol Brennen
Mary Brescia
Laurie Brookes
Linda Brown
Carol & Ronald Burke*
Barbara Campbell
Carol Chappel
Tony & Nancy Choma
Richard & Julie Clay
Mary DalPorto
Gerry & Dottie Davies
Whitney T. Ferguson & Family
Mary Gelezunas
Gordon Gibson
Ginny Gingras
Daryl and Eric Gottier
Barbara Greenleaf
Frances Grube
David Gutzmer
William & Diane Gutzmer
Susan Ham
Judy Hany
Phil & Cindy Hays
Cheryl Hazen
Virginia Hickton
Dennis Himes & Laura Cook
Barbara Hinsdale
Nancy & Richard Huebner
Alan & Darlene Humphries
Charles Iadaresta
Claire Janowski
Arline Jacob
Len & Sharon Jacobs
Edith & Stephen Johnson
Kurt & Ann Johnson
Joyce Jordan
Barbara & Richard Jubinville
Heather & Josh Keton family
Judy & Russel Kelly, Jr.
Chris Kunz
Robert & Suzanne Langone
Deborah Lavoie
Daniel Leblanc
Ann & Bob Letendre
Jean Luddy
Bob & Kathy Lyle
Steve & Candy Malinoski
Ellen Marmer

Jim & Gail Martello
Karen Meehan
Erik Meyers
Gail Meyers
Mary Ann Mierzwa
Lisa Moody
Walter and Erin Moody
Meredith & David Moseley
Brian & Penny Motola
Barbara Muldoon
Jan & Tony Muro
David Murphy
Mike Nelson family
Frank & Claire Niederwerfer
Merrilyn Niederwerfer Cummings
Richard & Bunny Oltedale
Ray Page
Jane Peacock
Irene Percoski
Lisa Perrone
Eileen & Dick Phelps
Gail Phillips-Bosshart
Michalina Pietras
Trish & Mike Pio
Alan & Joyce Pouliot
Karen & Karl Prewo
Richard & Barbara Quinby*
Richard Jr. & Lisa Quinby*
Robin Parks
Wayne Reiske
Jon Roe
Diane Ruckdeschel
Carl & Polly Schaefer
Tom Schirmer & family
Rena Schwarz
Paul Shimer
Ed & Carole Slattery
Margaret Sorenson
Sheril Stanford
Richard & Claudia Steele
Catherine Steinnagel
Nancy Strong*
Bob & Kathy Sumislaski
Elly Swan
Don Tenerowicz
Tony Muro & Associates
Vernon Police Association
Kris Viens & family
Dan Villeneave
Beth Villodas
Doreen Ward
Nancy Weissmuller
Theona Wheelock
Dan & Isabelle Whelton
Steven & Emily Westerberg family
John & Gloria Wraight

*Blue Ribbon Life Members



Thanks to all our 5K Chicken Run Sponsors and ALL the many helpers!



Special Thanks to:

All out faithful SFF Volunteers!

All the BOD & Steering Committee
 Container Gardening with Cathy Testa – Container Crazy CT
 Judy Hany – Chicken Promotion & Supporter
 Brian Flint – MC Extrodinaire
 Kris Viens and Family
 Dave, Bill and Diane Gutzmer
 Jim Martello and Carl Schaefer – weed whackers
 Jon Roe and Vernon Volunteers Collaborative
 Theona Wheelock and Nancy Rowe Huebner
 Vernon Police Department
 Lt. William Meier & Vernon Police Explorers
 Vernon Community Emergency Response Team
 Gypsy Hearts
 John Andresen – Andresen Electrical (and also barn door hanger!)
 Bill Daugherty, Builder
 Dave Taylor Painters
 Robert Hurd, Architect
 Rena Schwarz, BuilderLady
 All at CT Dept. of Agriculture
 SFF Proof Readers
 Quinn Eurich – freelance writer and advisor
 SFF RHS Ag Ed crew
 Barbara Jubinville – Garden Advisor
 Walt Moody – Walt's Bees
 Jasmine Kermode – Girl Scot Bee Keeper
 Josh Virkler – LuAnn's Bakery
 David Murphy – dahlia man
 Clucky T. Rooster – Hunter and Karen

Roger Barker
 Tom Barnas – painter extraordinaire
 Richard and Claudia Steele
 Loyd Johnson, Plumber, and Lynn
 Katie Riordan
 All our Harvest Festival Vendors and volunteers!!!!

Our Farmer Friends

Hop-A-Long 4-H Club
 RHS Ag.Ed. Department & Students
 Tracy & DJ – Aussakita Acre Farm
 Burbank Bend Farm
 Aubin Farm
 Driggs Hill Farm
 Smyth's Trinity Farm
 The Farmer's Cow

Farm Photographers

Dan Villeneuve
 Andre Garant
 Elana Owens
 Michael Nelson
 Community Voice Channel



Dan at Chicken Run taken by Andre!

**AND ALL OTHERS WHO HELPED MAKE
 OUR YEAR A SUCCESS!!!**