

# Strong Family Farm 2018-2019 Annual Report



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

## **WELCOME MEMBERS!**

Our heartfelt welcome to our members. We are most grateful for your continued support of this project. We are delighted to bring you up to date on what has been happening at the farm!



#### A Word from our Executive Director

What an exciting seven months it has been for me working at Strong Family Farm. When I came on board in early January, I dipped my toe into the deep water of the Farm's history and begin learning about all that happens as the weather warms. Over the past six years, I have watched the Farm grow under Nancy Strong's guidance and have been amazed and impressed by her passion and hard work getting the Farm designated as a non-profit. The Board of Directors, Steering Committee, Farm Store committee, the Town and the faithful members and volunteers all support the Farm and want it to be a success. Right away, I went out to meet all the wonderful group and community leaders and reached out to collaborate with them all. My first farm assignment was to implement the Department of Agriculture Viability Raised Bed Grant. It has been a joy and a challenge to watch the beds be installed and get them adopted, along with finding someone to create a curriculum and then give weekly classes. Bringing in speakers to enhance the farm experience with the animal visits on Sundays has also begun. With help, I have turned the room next to the Farm Store into a shop that will sell farm related items and seasonal produce will spill over from the store when necessary. Managing the many new Rockville High School Agriculture Education students and other community service volunteers is another of the duties I have taken on. There is much to do on a farm, the quote, "a farmer's work in never done" is the truth, and so much could not be done without these students and our other faithful volunteers.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have suggestions, comments, or questions. My door is always open!

Mary Millican, Executive Director

-I am a farmer, what's your superpower?-

### A Word from our President

Dear Fans and Supporters of Strong Family Farm-

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. It's unbelievable! Nancy's leadership has created a healthy, focused and energetic organization.

- We have entered the fourth year of our Farm Store! We are open more days and longer hours, extended the store to include local arts and crafts and created a "Sunday Fun Day" with animals and activities gracing the farms' grounds. Those days have introduced the Farm to many people who never would have come otherwise.
- Many of our own events, including the Harvest Festival, the 5K Chicken Run, the Civil War Kids' Camp and other events are past their initial years and provide enjoyment for attendees and activities that bring new visitors and perhaps inspire future farmers.
- We went through fits and starts with our Executive Director position. As they say, "life happens around your best made plans". Patience and a can do attitude got us through and we hired Mary Millican as our new ED. She brings a wealth of experience to the position. You can see her drive and ambition in the changes to the store and the coordination of activities on the farm. She and Nancy are working well together and we see a bright future with her.
- Our biggest news for the coming year is land, land and more land. Before the year is out Strong Farm should be its old self. Thanks to a Farm Land Preservation Grant and the hard work of many people, we will be reunited with the Strong Farm Red Barn and land on Route 30 and the parcel on West Road. This is great news. The addition will bring us back to our "heritage" and allow us to expand our programs and offerings.

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. We have an organization that we can be proud of, the Town can be proud of and, if I dare say, Norman Strong would be proud of, too. Truly, the Strong Family Farm has become the result of what has been sown before. We reap what we have sown and continue to sow and we see the truth of this statement in the Strong Family Farm! Here is to a wonderful and vibrant future.

#### Brian Motola, President

-A man should never plant a garden larger than his wife can take care of – OR QUESTION. –If a man is alone in his garden and speaks, and there is no woman to hear him, is he still wrong?-

#### **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.

With the increasing break-up and sale of family farms and farmland both in Connecticut and the rest of the country, it is imperative to save every farm possible, including the Strong Family Farm.

#### The Year in Review

In its 7th year of events and programs, the farm continues to bustle with new ideas and interests for programming. The farm's motto is to keep open the barn doors to agricultural history and preservation, and create a special place to learn and have fun. Certain programs such as the 5k Chicken Run, the Annual Harvest Festival and the Backyard Chicken Program, and volunteer days are all well attended and have become part of the permanent programming at the farm. We continue to experiment with other activities and programs.

#### The list of programs and activities from this year include:

**Farm Store** – Opened the day of the Chicken Run on April 7 and then officially for the season on June 19 this year, the store is off and running. Judy Olivieri is our wonderful store manager for the second year. Judy and others have searched throughout the State to find locally grown or Connecticut made products <u>only</u>, to sell in our store. We hope to expand our message to travelers and vacationers as well as remind locals that Connecticut is an agriculturally productive and vibrant market place. Stop in and say hi! We are here when you need a tomato and much more, straight from CT farms!

#### -Farm stands are the only reason I get up early on weekends-

**Farm Volunteer Work Days** – The work on a farm never ends, nor does the farm's ability to attract volunteers to help with the chores. The annual spring farm spruce-up day, just before the *5K Chicken Run*, got things rolling early on April 6. Over 45 volunteers put in several hours of work in the morning and then enjoyed chatting about the farm over a potluck lunch. New ideas come out of volunteer days when the farm freshens its face. We give special thanks to this year's many volunteers who finished the "to do" list in record time – they did 4 hours of work in 3 hours!!! Volunteers will join us again in October to set up 6th annual SFF *Harvest Festival*.

-Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart- Elizabeth Andrew

#### Backyard Chicken Program (formerly Adopt a Chicken) -

Under the excellent direction of Alexis Carmicheal, the founder of the program, we are still at it! In its 7th year, this highly successful and nationally recognized program (thanks to Quinn Eurich's beautiful, feature article in *Backyard Poultry* magazine) offers young and old alike the opportunity to adopt a farm chick (which remains on the farm), see it grow into a laying hen and attend events every other week. The activities include chicken visits, farm oriented crafts, sample farm chores, games and an education series for all ages.

-Chickens: the only animal you eat before they are born and after they are dead-

#### Civil War Kids' Camp -

This spring's Civil War Day Camp, held on April 28 had a full regiment of 34 enlistees – both boys and girls. Organized by Frank Niederwerfer, the Civil War Re-enactors of the Alden Skinned Camp of the Grand Army of the Republic and the 14<sup>th</sup> CT Volunteer Infantry Co. G, 34 students and their parents enjoyed a full day of enlistment with all aspects of Civil Wars experiences. The "soldiers" braved the cool weather and drizzle to serve their time in the military. Discharge papers were given at the end of the day. If interested in seeing more – Community Voice Channel filmed the day and you can watch it on their website – http://www.cvcct.org.



<u>Scarecrow Contest</u> – This annual contest, now in its 8th year of fun, invites businesses, groups, families and individuals to express their creativity by decorating the Peterson Road and West Street farm fences with sensational, seasonal scarecrows. Local judges award prizes for a variety of categories and the community gets to view the scarecrows for several weeks. A new memorial fence on Peterson Road will soon host the latest fence line full of scarecrows. This year the event will be enhanced by videos of the participants explaining the stories behind their creations. Stay tuned. It never gets old!

#### -I'll miss you most of all scarecrow!- L. Frank Baum

**Harvest Festival** – This year's event will be held on October 19. Last year's event was testament to the fact that it has become a well-loved celebration of the farm project and of local farming. This past year featured pumpkin demonstrations by our container gardening program teacher Cathy Testa, a Civil War Camp with Frank Niederwerfer, Canning with Claudia Steele. All got to see working tractors, a corn box, seasonal craft projects for children, pumpkin checkers and a hay bale pyramid, crafts and face painting. It also provides a platform to meet animals from Aussakita Acres Farm and non-profit organizations in Vernon as well as crafters and artisans. There was also music by our friends, Gypsy *Hearts*, and a raffle to support farm projects was run by our resident 4-H Hop Along Gang. It is the last day the farm store is open and is always one of our best sales days. For 2019, new food vendors and attractions are being planned. We always **need help** in organizing and running the day. Let us know and we will add you to the planning committee list.

-I am so glad that I live in a world where there is October-

**Chicken Run** - The 6th annual 5K Chicken race to welcome the baby chicks to the farm was held on a sunny, beautiful spring morning on April 7. 2019. This year we collaborated with Center Road School and our attendance numbers and enthusiasm increased dramatically. Attendance and participation was at an all-time high. 170 runners, 53 kids and 54 walkers moved their feet to the rhythm of the farm and were, once again, welcomed to the farm by our own "Clucky" our chicken mascot and the Hop Along Gang 4-H Club. All also got to see this year's new baby chicks. The race was filmed by the Community Voice Channel and is shown with images of past years on its local television station. It is also available to watch on YouTube, along with the *Harvest Festival*. The event was another great fundraiser for the farm and attracted a record number of sponsors. Walk a mile with us next year – you do not need to run to enjoy the fun. We want to thank our 34 volunteers including Vernon Police Explorers and Vernon CERT! This year we opened the farm store for race day. There is always something for everyone!

-"You didn't beat me. You just finished ahead of me."- Hal Higdon



Sunday Visiting Animals & Programs This

year we have been able to increase the number of special programs as well as Sunday visiting animals thanks to Tracy and DJ of Aussakita Acres Farm, Lori Sanchez with her special chickens, Wendy Wanchak with Hootie, Annie and Charlie Brown, and our Hop Along Gang 4-H Club's rabbits. Programs about gardening, raised bed, fun painting party, and container gardening have taken place with so more to come. We also ventured to have a "Big Bad Barn Sale" hosting a community tag sale site.

<u>Of Bees, Bats, Birds and Pollinators</u> - The Center Road School's Pratt & Whitney Grant to establish bees, blue bird and bat houses, and plant pollinators is just about finished. We are thrilled to have Jessica Donovan of the RHS AgEd Program take over Jasmine Kermode's Girl Scout Gold award bee project under the mentorship of our apiary specialist Walt Moody. Carissa Horton as her RHS AgEd project and Girl Scout Gold award project has taken on the bat portion of this project. The bluebird houses are up and have residents in them. Some of the pollinators have survived along the Center Road School fence line, though it is a constant battle with the invasive plants each year. Thanks to the many volunteers, we work at keeping them at bay.

-If the bee disappears off the face of the earth, man would only have 4 years left to live-

<u>Co-op Gardening</u> – The raised beds are in! This was a special year for community gardening at the farm. With a Connecticut Department of Agriculture Viability grant, the plantings at the farm were increased by the design, building and installation of 16 raised bed and garden boxes. A goal here on the farm is to engage the community in vegetable gardening. The grant from the Department of Agriculture allowed the farm to create handicap accessible, raised bed planters, which enable all members of the community to enjoy this activity. The purpose of the traditional vegetable garden on the farm is to create gardening experiences and produce vegetables for both the community gardeners and the farm stand. We are well on the way to a healthy harvest this summer.

#### -To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.-

**Farm Fencing** - The new perimeter post and rail fence on West Street hosted an array of scarecrows last year. The completed portion of the fencing is lined with commemorative plaques. The Peterson Road section is to be installed as soon as the Town fixes drainage problems. Mayor Dan Champagne is working on this for us. Many plaques are patiently waiting. We hope he can move the Town Public Works Department along in time for the 2019 October Scarecrow contest. If you have time, take a walk along the completed portion of the fence and experience fond memories with a beautiful view of the farm in the background. Many fond memories.

#### -A fence can become a perfect frame to a lovely piece of land-

**Community Service Host** – The farm continues to host many Vernon youth groups. The farm also invites many different schools students to perform their community service learning and practicing farm-related activities. RHS Agricultural Education students, in particular, have become a fixture at the farm. Each year new and returning students help with all manner of farm projects from preparing planting beds and harvesting crops to painting, creating signs, helping with craft projects, as well as volunteering to assist with events, programs and the farm store. As of present, we have four new students and two returning students. This does not take into account two Rockville High School AgEd students doing the bee and bat projects. We worked in conjunction with Center Road School to be the starting point for their bike and walk to school day.



**<u>4-H Meetings Host Site</u>** – The farm is an ideal place for animal and agriculture oriented 4-H groups to hold their meetings. Our *Hop-A-Long Gang 4-H Club* meets on the farm learning how to care for their animals and prepare them for shows. They participate in all our big programs during the year and special events, as well as help us out on our clean-up day. This year they even helped decorate the real Christmas tree in the living room of the house and had a nice party to start a new tradition on the farm. Norman Strong was an active 4-H member and leader would be proud!



-4-H: Unchanging values in an ever-changing world-

<u>CT Open House Day</u> – SFF participated in the CT Department of Tourism's *Open House Day* on June 8 again this year. Collaborating with the Vernon Garden Club and our 4-H Hop along Gang Club, 81 visitors came to the farm and enjoyed free seeds and garden advice from the Vernon Garden Club volunteers and visit with Hootie and Annie, our neighborhood pigmy goats, rabbits and chickens. The Strong Family Farm opened the store for the day and did farm tours.

**Stepping Out!** - SFF goes on the road to promote the farm in many different venues. This past year, we participated in the Vernon Historical Society's *November Craft Fair*, Community Voice Channel's *Meet the Easter Bunny* with our new "Clucky", the 2019 Vernon *Healthfest*, Rockville Community Alliance's *National Night Out*, Center Road School's Spring Fling and Anniversary celebration and Channel 3's "20 Towns in 20 Days" with Scott Hany. Special this past September was an opportunity and honor to have a Strong Family Farm team of volunteers at the FARM AID 2018 concert in Hartford. Seven of our faithful volunteers donned their Strong Family Farm hats and shirts to help set up the HOMEGROWN VILLAGE addition to the concert to promote agriculture and the issues that surround it with representative lectures and booths from national agricultural organizations.



-You have to pay attention or you are going to lose your family farms. If you don't stop at your local farm stand it won't be there tomorrow. So what are you going to do next time you go by a local farm? STOP!- -Neil Young

#### PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

**Hay barn** - The hay barn, the largest section is in the process of being finished to obtain a certificate of occupancy. A large door is in the process of being added to the back of the hay barn, allowing the barn to be flooded with light when opened along with adding stabilization to the west wall. It is envisioned that the new door will have a descending set of stone stairs, which will lead into a large stone landscaped terrace with room for dining and gathering. The barn will be available for weddings and other formal and informal events. It can also host farm-to-table dinners and other dining experiences

**Commercial kitchen** – At the opposite end of the hay barn is an existing chicken house shed row. It will become a commercial kitchen with a classroom and restrooms. The commercial kitchen will be used by the community allowing them do canning, make jams and produce other marketable products. This can be for farm sales, home consumption, or other commercial uses. 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/or for caterers to support other events.

Landscaping and gardens – The six acres of farmland will slowly be transformed into both commercially viable gardens, beautiful native wildflower and cultivated flower landscapes. A memorial orchard now stands at the west end of the field. A pond might 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 can become a destination, natural experience. Tall plantings on the edges of the pasture will camouflage the outside structures to make the property picture perfect.

<u>**Parking lot**</u> – A modest, landscaped, pea gravel parking lot may be added in the pasture off Peterson road to blend with the rest of the landscaping while adding a safe and inviting entrance to the farm.

<u>Community garden</u> – Community vegetable gardens will continue to exist now in the new raised beds areas. A pick your own flower garden as well as pollinator gardens will be planted on the West Street fenced area with a new sales booth in progress as Gavin Houghtaling's Eagle Scout project.

<u>Memorial Orchard</u> – Over three years old now, the young orchard is bearing its first fruits. Not yet mature, the orchard is also a place to reflect.

**Infrastructure** – A new electrical system was needed at the barn to accommodate all of the new projects. A commercial meter and wiring were installed paving the way for future electrical and plumbing projects. The next infrastructure will likely be water and sewage for visitor bathrooms and a commercial kitchen.

<u>Museum Area</u> – We envision a history of the Strong farm and family farms museum area in the dairy barn area.

<u>**Old Garage**</u> – A vision of having this 1920s garage (where the hired hand and Norman Strong slept upstairs) turned into a library/office/bathroom and upstairs apartment totally off the grid!

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 and it is hoped that funds and grant money can be obtained to make as much of the property accessible as possible.

-Believe you can and you are halfway there- Theodore Roosevelt

#### **Board Members**

The Board of Directors is looking for individuals who feel strongly about our work, to serve with the members of the Board on the 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 committees, please call or email info@strongfarm.org for more details.

Board of Directors 2019-20

- President: Brian Motola
- Vice President: Wendy Wanchak
- Treasurer: Claudia Steele
- Secretary: Nancy Strong
- Board members at large:
  - Michael Nelson
  - William Nicholson
  - Ellen Marmer
  - Carl Schaefer

Executive Director – Mary Millican

Steering Committee:

- Richard Steele
- Claudia Steele
- Roger Mooney
- Alexis Carmicheal
- Lynn Johnson
- Loyd Johnson
- Ellie Swan
- Lisa Moody
- Victoria Alexandra
- Theona Wheelock
- Katie R. Napolitan

(Always looking for members!)

-A Board can be harmonized through leadership, humility, insightful business understanding, a trustful culture and learning agility- Pearl Zhu

#### **Financial Statement:**

We always thank all who support the farm by generously giving their time and financial support. We would not be where we are today without all the support in so many ways. This year we were honored to be awarded income from many special sources: The 100 Women Who Care of North Central CT, the 1772 Foundation matching grant to get the barn siding repaired and painted, Center Road School Pollinator Grant from Pratt & Whitney and most of all, the anonymous donor matching all income to the farm this year equaling \$74,009.

Statement of Financial Position

#### As of June 30, 2019 Jun 30, 19 Jun 30, 18 % Change \$ Change ASSETS **Current Assets** Checking/Savings 1,813.80 **Paypal Strong Family Farm** 448.48 1.365.32 304.4% 54.90 109.3% Petty Cash 114.90 60.00 **United Bank** 36,722.67 56,291.13 -19,568.46 -34.8% **Total Checking/Savings** 38,651.37 56,794.51 -18,143.14-32.0% Accounts Receivable 11000 · Accounts Receivable -142.38-100.0% 0.00 -142.38**Total Accounts Receivable** -142.38 0.00 -142.38 -100.0% Other Current Assets 12000 · Undeposited Funds -20.28 0.00 -20.28 -100.0% 12100 · Inventory Asset 552.02 552.02 0.00 0.0% **Total Other Current Assets** 531.74 552.02 -20.28 -3.7% 39,040.73 57,346.53 -31.9% **Total Current Assets** -18,305.80 TOTAL ASSETS 39,040.73 57,346.53 -18,305.80-31.9% **LIABILITIES & EQUITY** Liabilities **Current Liabilities** Accounts Payable 20000 · Accounts Payable 1.32 -40.00 41.32 103.3% **Total Accounts Payable** 1.32 -40.00 41.32 103.3% **Other Current Liabilities** 24100 · Payroll Taxes 864.01 45.40 818.61 1,803.1% 45.40 818.61 **Total Other Current Liabilities** 864.01 1,803.1% **Total Current Liabilities** 865.33 5.40 859.93 15,924.6% **Total Liabilities** 5.40 15,924.6% 865.33 859.93 Equity 30000 · Opening Balance Equity 39,295.66 39,795.66 -500.00 -1.3% 32000 · Retained Earnings 17,545.47 37,895.73 -20,350.26 -53.7% Net Income -18,665.73 -20,350.26 1,684.53 8.3% -33.4% **Total Equity** 38,175.40 57,341.13 -19,165.73 **TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY** 39.040.73 57,346.53 -18.305.80-31.9%

\*note - outstanding Dept. of Ag. Viability Grant of \$29,000

#### Members

Beth Quinby Andresen\* George & Joan Apel Fred & Cheri Artz Tom & Donna Barnas Mariellen Baxter Charlotte Benson Amy Blaze Carol Brennen Laurie & Duffy Brookes Linda Brown Paul Brown Shirley Bryant Carol & Ronald Burke\* Barbara Campbell Tom Carmicheal William Castle family Carol Chappel Tony & Nancy Choma Linda Clark Richard & Julie Clav\* Tom Connelly Mary DalPorto Dottie Davies Lindsay Dunlap Nancy Taylor Dunn Kate & Alex Fowler Marv Gelezunas Gordon Gibson **Ginny Gingras** Daryl and Eric Gottier Barbara Greenleaf David Gutzmer William & Diane Gutzmer Susan Ham Judy Hany Phil & Cindy Hays Cheryl Hazen Virginia Hickton Barbara Hinsdale

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\*Blue Ribbon Life Members



#### Special Thanks to our faithful SFF Volunteers!

All the BOD & Steering Committee Michalina Pietras, CPA Joshua Eagan, VP & Center Road School Families Jane Seymour CT DEEP Cathy Testa - Container Crazy CT Laurie Sanchez and her special chickens Judy Hany - Chicken Promotion & Supporter Kris Viens and family & Girl Scout Troop Dave, Bill and Diane Gutzmer 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** Dan Gallagher, Garden Program Coordinator Bill Daugherty, Builder Robert Hurd, Architect All at CT Dept. of Agriculture SFF Proof Readers Quinn Eurich - Marketing specialist Barbara Jubinville - Garden Advisor Walt Moody - Walt's Bees Jessica Donovan – AgEd Bee Keeper Corissa Horton - AgEd Bat Keeper Josh Virkler – LuAnn's Bakery David Murphy - dahlia man Clucky T. Rooster Shawna Cote Roger Barker **Chris Sickler** Tom Barnas - painter extraordinaire Richard and Claudia Steele Frank Niederwerfer & Civil War re-enactors Sally, Derek, Ann and Kurt Johnson Lovd Johnson, Plumber/Gardener, and Lynn Katie Riordan Napolitan RHS AgEd former/present SFF students & parents Green Meadow Lawn Care Ruchin & Associates Dan Brown State Farm Insurance 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 - Adam **Driggs Hill Farm** Smyth's Trinity Farm The Farmer's Cow Schaub Family Farm

#### Farm Photographers

Dan Villeneuve Andre Garant Community Voice Channel

### Thanks to all our 6<sup>th</sup> Annual 5K Chicken Run Sponsors and ALL the many helpers!











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AND A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL OTHERS WHO HELPED MAKE OUR YEAR A SUCCESS!!!

