

Strong Family Farm 2020-2021 Annual Report



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

A Word from Interim Executive Director Nancy Strong -



As we approach the end of this intense and challenging year, I want to express my deepest gratitude to the many generous donors who have continued to support our work to preserve, protect and provide our historic family farm in Vernon Center.

Thanks to all our loyal supporters like you, we have accomplished more than we imagined we might back in March last year:

- * walking paths cleared and farmland reclaimed on our now protected 51 acres of farmland
- * newly acquired Civil War era red barn stabilized and sills replaced
- * continued raised bed garden and backyard chicken programs outside with masks
- * annual 5k chicken run/walk held virtually and annual scarecrow contest bigger and better than ever
- * successful membership drive that more than doubled our membership 170+ new members!
- * record store sales of CT grown and produced items

Someone asked me what I like most about my job. There are many aspects that are fulfilling and humbling; but knowing our community (and my) family farm will forever be a farm and farm experiences shared with others is hands down the most gratifying. **There are very few investments in life that are permanent. Preserving a family farm is one.**



Our Mission

The Board of Directors have been word crafting our mission this year. The mission as adopted in 2013 is "to provide a historic agricultural learning center, where children, families, individuals and community groups can experience an authentic family farm experience." It still holds true today. Over the past years, with the help of so many of you, we have been able to PRESERVE and PROTECT the Strong farmland. So often, enthusiastic ideas for change and activities come up. That's when you need to reach back to this original mission and ask, "is this an authentic family farm experience?" This mission is the cornerstone of this organization and still holds true This is the Strong family's legacy and they are very proud that our community has stepped up and supported our mission. The Strong farm is the community's legacy for future generations to experience. We thank all of you for your continued support.

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.

But this past year has had a curve ball thrown at the Strong Farm, as has the rest of the world.



- We have entered the sixth year of our Farm Store! Currently the store is our face
 of the Farm to the community. Vernon and surrounding towns support the store
 and enjoy the Connecticut grown and made products we bring to our
 communities. We continue to add new products and expand our variety of CT
 made and grown goods. And don't forget to check out our "Vintage Estate Shop"
 while you are shopping.
- Many of our own events, the Harvest Festival, the Chicken Run, the Civil War Kids' Camp and our other events are past their initial years and provide enjoyment for attendees and activities that bring new visitors and perhaps inspire future farmers. We had to cancel these events last year, but coming up this fall we will hold our "Chicken Run" live and "on-farm" and will bring back our Harvest Fest this fall.
- Strong Farm was reunited with the two parcels that left us in prior years. As we
 continue to be good stewards of our "heritage", we are working with a farmer to
 renovate the parcel on West Road back into a farmable field and continue the
 farming on the Route 30 parcel.

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. We reap what we have sown and the Strong Family Farm is the result of what has been sown before us. We continue to sow and we see the truth of this statement in the progress made, preservation captured and the programs and events held at the Strong Family Farm! Here is to a wonderful and vibrant future.

Brian Motola, President

[&]quot;I was here thinking how much I'm enjoying the garden plot. Strong farm has been my neighbor after working at Center Rd. School for over 25 years. I have so many memories....cows ending up on the school playground, and our principal chasing them...and many more. You've done an amazing job keeping the farm up to date with today's society and culture. Your dad would be proud. Thank you for everything you do. I'm loving being a new gardener." -Beth K.

The Year in Review

First of all, how are you and your families? We hope that you are all well.

At the farm, rather than lament time lost by the pandemic, we decided to look for things which we could be grateful this year? Was there any good to come of the pandemic? Here's what we found:

- We could keep moving ahead even in a lock-down.
- You strongly supported our limited events and services.
- The farm store never saw as many new faces or as much new business.
- We kept moving together!

Looking at everything that has happened in the past year through the lens of appreciation, we are incredibly thankful that our supportive community stayed with the farm and with ever more determination than ever before. We are ready to continue to light up this historical part of Vernon.

Programs and activities from this year include:

• FARMLAND PRESERVATION: The farmland deeded to SFF last year was worked and managed over the course of the year. There are now public paths and signage in place so that walks and big views are available to the ambling public. Parts of the land continue to be tilled and worked by Hytone family farm which is part of The Farmer's Cow. This land on West Street and Route 30 will forever remain in agriculture thanks to you.



- **CHICKEN RUN 8**TH **Annual!** On your mark, get set, register for the 8th annual SFF annual 5k Chicken Run to be held, in-person this year on <u>September 5, 2021</u>. The race is always a clucking success and even if you don't' run, the farm is a fun place to be on a joyful fall Sunday morning. We are greatly appreciative of all our retuning sponsors this year who support not only the race but the farm.
- RAISED BED GARDENING Food, glorious food. You can't know true enthusiasm for vegetable gardening until you don't have to bend over to pull out weeds. Spade, eat and love what you can grow in SFF raised bed gardens! The project continues with enthusiastic and new "green-thumbers" each year. All beds were spoken for early and now tilled and loved. We thank Dan Gallagher, Master Gardener and Composter, for his continued dedication and direction to us all in the gardens. (AND for the new compost bins built out of pallets. He did this one hot day with his brother. Many thanks!)



• FARM STORE – The verdict is in Our farm store is a success! It has withstood the test of time, and marketing, and is now a community fixture. We scour the state to look for products made and grown here, with emphasis on local produce. We challenged you to help us help Connecticut farmers and entrepreneurs and you responded. It is truly wonderful to see you each week at our little treasure of a store. Please keep coming!



- **SCARECROW CONTEST** The largest group ever participated in our 8th annual contest and joined us in the award ceremony that was filmed and available to view through our website. We can't wait for the next wave of creativity. The event keeps growing with more creative entries.
- BACKYARD CHICKEN PROJECT With a small group of enthusiastic families, we held our 7th year of the backyard chicken program. We had a costume party and a short parade where they went off to our friends at Burbank Bend Farms where they are top egg layers. This March for our 8th year, wee chicks arrived in the mail, peeping fuzz balls in a cardboard box and the class filled up fast to have our Chicken Leader Alexis Carmicheal give a series of lessons, hands-on activities and introduction to all on the wonderful world of laying hens. Soon they will lay eggs, which can be purchased at the farm store.



- COMMUNITY SERVICE HOST RHS Agricultural Science Technology Education (ASTE) program students continue to volunteer on the farm. We said goodbye to Kristyne Bussiere who has been with us for 4 years and welcome Olivia MacFarland to join Jacob Niemczyk (now a Junior!) in working to do the many yearly tasks that need to be done on the farm. Kristyne mentioned that the best part of being here at the farm is that you never do the same thing every time it's something different. By the end of her senior year, she was reminding Nancy on tasks that needed to be done. We will miss her greatly.
- THE BEES We say goodbye to our RHS ASTE bee specialist Jessica Donovan, who moved out of Town and donated all her hives to the farm. Walt Moody, our Apiarist, is now retired and is almost full time beekeeping. We have Christina Martin and Taylor Nicholas step forward with interest, and Julie Clay and maybe one more interested party might join us to take care of our bees.



• **4-H MEETINGS HOST SITE** – We are so happy to still be hosting the "Hop-A-Long Gang" 4-H Club here at the farm and the group is growing with new members and rabbits. Sadly, Jen Smith-Manley is retiring as their expert leader, but Siena Rosato has stepped up to be their leader this coming year.



Fixtures on the Farm:

<u>Volunteers</u> – The work of non-profits would cease without volunteers. Nonprofits would shut down and we would much poorer culturally, historically, socially, educationally - you name it - without volunteers. From our volunteer landscapers to our instructors, weeders, cleaners, sweepers, builders, shovelers, painters, exhibitors, fetchers, haulers, lifters and other dogooders, SFF RUNS ON VOLUNTEERS! Volunteers run on a sometimes inadequate thanks but experience a sense of accomplishment and community participation. Our biggest thanks!!!

<u>The Big Yellow Barn</u> – Work is underway to finish restoration of the barn, add some new doors and get a certificate of occupancy for the hay barn section so that we can host events and rent out to small groups.

<u>The Civil War Red Barn</u> on the newly acquired property Hartford Turnpike basement was stabilized and now we are moving on to more foundation repairs, window repairs and a new roof.

<u>Memorial Orchard</u> – BEST PLUMS EVER last year in spite of the draught. The apples and pears remained on the trees to supply the bees with nectar. Each year this orchard is the staging platform for many red-winged blackbirds who come to the farm to raise their young in the tall grasses next to the wetland in the pasture. We delay mowing the field each year to allow for this event. For those of you who helped create the orchard with your memorial donations, your gift keeps on giving.

<u>Fence Post Memorials</u> – Don't forget to take a stroll and see the names of our neighbors and friends who have supported the farm by sponsoring a new fence post or rail and remembering those dear to them on memorial plaques. It is a heartwarming experience. We have only 4 more posts to be donated but many more rails available! Many thanks to this project's biggest supporter, Dan LeBlanc, who has honored so many great people and businesses in our town that shouldn't be forgotten.

A Peak into the Future:

New Programming – We are always looking for new events, series, demonstrations and activities to build on our mission. Some ideas include: a spring green-thumb festival to kick off growing season; a big bad barn sale so that the public can bring their own yard/barn sale treasures to sell in one big, happy event; an enhanced and expanded Harvest Festival; a Christmas/holiday seasonal sales program; more lecturers on historical and farm-themed topics; children's programming; hands on planting and other growing events.

<u>Commercial kitchen</u> – At the opposite end of the hay barn is an existing chicken house shed row. We envision 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.



<u>Landscaping and gardens</u> – As you will notice, the six acres of farmland are slowly being transformed into both commercially viable gardens, beautiful native wildflower, and cultivated flower landscapes. Adjacent to the memorial orchard, standing at the west end of the field, a pond could be carved and landscaped from the lowland section of the pasture to attract more native birds. Walking paths, sitting areas and livestock viewing areas are envisioned 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>Infrastructure</u> – 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 restrooms and a commercial kitchen.

<u>Museum Area</u> – We envision a Strong farm museum to be in the dairy barn. This will trace the history of the "family farm" from its beginnings in 1878 to present day. The story is similar story of all family farms, which started as a way of self-preservation and in the 1940s grew to feed all the community.

<u>Old Garage</u> – Our vision is to have the 1920s garage on the property (where the hired hand and Norman Strong slept upstairs) turned into a library/office/handicapped bathroom and upstairs apartment totally off the grid!

Board Members – 2020-21

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 2000-21

• President: Brian Motola

Vice President: Wendy Wanchak

• Treasurer: Claudia Steele

Secretary: Nancy Strong

Board members at large:

Michael Nelson

Katie Riordan Napolitan

Ellen Marmer

Carl Schaefer

Interim Executive Director – Nancy Strong

Steering Committee:

- Richard Steele
- Lori Sanchez
- Judy Olivieri
- Alexis Carmicheal
- Lynn Johnson
- Loyd Johnson
- Ellie Swan
- Lisa Moody
- Theona Wheelock
- Kris Veins
- Cecily Robinson
- Jeanette Smith
- Members of the B.O.D.



"Thank you for all your hard work retaining Vernon's rural heritage." - Joe Courtney

Financial Statement:

We always thank all who support the farm by generously giving their time and financial support. This year when most nonprofits are struggling to survive, we were honored by the support of over 170 new members who had supported the preservation of the farmland and now have shown their commitment to the continued preservation of the farm. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

12:03 PM 07/08/21 Accrual Basis

Strong Family Farm Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual

July 2020 through June 2021

		Jul '20 - Jun 21	Budget
INCOME	Public Grants (COVID Relief - SHPO)	\$1,000	\$8,000
	Individual Business Contributions	\$15,424	\$16,000
	Store Sales	\$23,061	\$20,000
	Misc Other Income	\$158	\$0
	Program Income		
	Membership Dues	\$13,892	\$7,000
	Program Service Fees	\$702	\$1,000
	Chicken Run	\$1,488	\$4,000
	Harvest Festival	\$0	\$1,000 \$0
	Garden	\$100 \$1,001	\$750
	Adopt a Chicken	\$17,182	\$13,750
	Total · Program Income Rentals	\$400	\$1,000
TOTAL	LINCOME	\$57,255	\$58,750
IUIA	_ INCOME		
Mi	nus Cost of Goods Sold	\$16,232	\$15,000
GROS	S PROFIT	\$40,993	\$43,750
EVDENCE			
EXPENSE	<u>s</u> Business Expenses - Fess	\$170	\$1,000
	Contract Services - Acct., Legal, Contracts		\$5,800
	Facilities and Equipment	•	
	Equip Rental and Maintenance	\$8,721	\$1,000
	Property Insurance	\$1,485	\$1,000
	Property Tax	\$4,652	\$1,800
	Rent, Utilities	<u>\$757</u>	\$10,000
	TOTAL Facilities and Equipment	\$15,615	\$13,800
	Operations - Mailings, subscriptions, supp	\$3,970	\$3,000 \$4,000
	Misc Expenses - Program, Ins., PR	\$1,966 \$9,385	\$9,000
	Payroll Expenses	\$369	\$600
	Conferences, Travel and Meetings	\$37,052	\$37,200
101A	L EXPENSES	ψ37,03 <u>2</u>	401,200
NET INCO	DME	<u>\$3,941</u>	<u>\$6,550</u>
		Jun '21	Jun ¹20
ASSETS	CURRENT SAVINGS/CHECKING	\$97,535	\$93,445
MODETO	PASTURE ACREAGE	\$225,970	\$225,970

WELCOME SO MANY NEW MEMBERS!!!

Our heartfelt welcome to the 170+ new members that helped up save the pastures and now have joined us as members! This year would not have been a success without you! AND thank you to our faithful returning members for your continued support, particularly in these challenging times.

We promise to keep going here at the farm and with your support it will be here for future generations to experience!

Cynthia Ferguson Pamela Abbott George & Gail Carroll Richard & Antonia Carterud Carol Formica Chery J. Abbott Katherine Fowler Vincent & Cynthia Castagno Allen Alleman Salvatore & Catherine Cerrigione Gregory Ferruolo Leslie Ames Andresen Electrical Services LLC Emily Aberle Champ Carol A. Gadbois Carol Chappel **Edward Gaines** George & Joan Apel Peter Gavarrino Phyllis Chase George & Shirley Arthur Mary Gelezunas Fred & Cherie Arzt Charles & Carol Chatterton Gordon Gibson Nancy Choma Aussakita Acres Farm Ginny Gingras Richard & Julie Clay (Life) Meghan Bard Fred Goff **Thomasina Clemons** Tom & Donna Barnas Daryl-Lynne & Eric Gottier Michael & Cindy Colombaro Cindy Barnes Barbara Greenleaf

Cindy Barnes Michael & Cindy Colombaro Baryl Eyrine & E

Carol Barry Tom Connelly Barbara Greenle

Mariellen Baxter Audrey & Joe Courtney David Grunberg

William & Diago

Don Bellingham

Charlotte Benson

Robert & Terri Cusson

Kathie & Al Cyr

Lempi Hannaford

Roger & Rachel Blais Kathie & Al Cyr Lempi Hani
The Blumers Family Rebecca Daigle Judy Hany

Kathlesel

Vincent & Peggy Bologna Mary DalPorto/Michael Fulks Karl Hasel

Richard & Carol Bowman

Judy Braese

Linda Danehy

Thomas & Nancy Davenport

Phil & Cindy Hays

Cheryl Hazen

June Bray
Carol Brennen
Laurie Brooks
Dudley DeCarish Jr.

Maureen Hevey
Virginia Hickton
William Hindes
Barbara Hinsdale

Linda and Dick Brown John & Judith DelBene Barbara Hinsdale
Paul Brown David & Janet Dexter Jean Hopkins
Shirley Bryant Brian & Mary Dimock John & Marcia Horan

Shirley Bryant Brian & Mary Dimock Solin & Marcia Floral Richard & Annette Burgess Pamela Dombek Lucille Horn Carol Burke (Life Member) Ellen Donadio Gordon Howard

John & Margaret Bycholski

Barbara Campbell

Helen Campbell

Lindsey Dunlap

Suzanne L. Dunlap

Joe & Etiennette Duplessie

Nancy & Richard Huebner

Adam & Rachel Huntley

Bob & Lorraine Hurd

Helen Campbell Joe & Etiennette Duplessie Bob & Lorraine Hurd

Donna Carnelli Michele Eddy Beverley Hyde

Charles Indexeste

Jerlyne & Christopher Caron Cynthia Fagan Charles Iadaresta
Denise & Ed Caron Tim & Lynn Fahy Karin James

Janet Jandreau Claire Janowski Kurt & Ann Johnson Lynn & Loyd Johnson Angela Johnson

Joyce Jordan / Dave Conant

Dennis & Tamara Joy Barbara & Richard Jubinville

Beth Kelloga **Beverly Kelly**

George & Margie Kelly Judy & Russel Kelly, Jr.

Devin & Melanie Keyes

Susan Knorr Kurt & Kelly Knotts John & Sara Koziol

Chris Kunz Rita Labato Peter Ladd

Ed & Louann Landsberg Robert & Suzanne Langone

Shirley Lanz Deborah Lavoie Daniel J. Leblanc Joe & Paige LeBlanc Stephen & Marsha Ledger

David & Linda Lee Ann & Bob Letendre

Ron & Maryann Levesque

Donald J. Lewie Kathleen Lewis Jean & Bruce Luddy

Lorraine & William Magnotta Susan & James Malanga George & Mary Males Steve & Candy Malinoski Paul & Pat Margelony

Mr. & Mrs. Carmine Margiotta Dr, Ellen Marmer, M.D.

Martello Painting & Wallpaper

Gloria Martocchio Sandra McNally Harriet Mead

Karen Meehan Erik Mevers

Gail Meyers & Ed Jaworski

Mary Ann Mierzwa

Gloria Miller Nancy Mocadlo

Karen Montgomery Risley

Lisa Moody

Walter and Erin Moody

Julio Morales Jr. Sylvia Morgan Beverly Morin

Kirk & Marvann Morris Meredith Moseley Brian & Penny Motola Barbara Muldoon Jan & Tony Muro David Murphy

Katie Riordan Napolitan Mike Nelson family

Marie & William Nelson Jr Ann & Rich Nevelos

Al & Marilyn Newton Wil & Julie Nicholson Family

Frank & Claire Niederwerfer Karl and Sue Niederwerfer

Merrilyn Niederwerfer Cummings Thomas & Margaret Shea

Mary Noelte

Gregory & Patricia Nye Bill & Millie Oliphant Nancy Orlowski

Dorothy & Lee Paquette Amy & Gordon Patterson

Lisa Perrone

Becky & Ross Person

Hans Petersen Bruce E. Pfalzgraf Eileen & Dick Phelps Michalina Pietras

Dennis & Karen Plevyak

Wayne & Julie Polansky Family

Glen Potter

Scott & Beth Powell

Dick & Barbara Quinby (Life) Richard Jr. & Lisa Quinby (Life) Beth Quinby Andresen (Life)

Wayne Reiske Shireen Rhoades Barbara Richmond Jaime Rizner

Dr. Amanda Rizner Chrisman

John & Kathrvn Rizzo Chris & Sue Robare

Rockville Community Alliance

Joseph H. Rodgers

Jon Roe

Jacqui & George Roraback Joanne & Winston Rose

Blanche Ross

Ruchin & Associates LLC

Carol Rudert-Lyons Marjorie Sanborn Lori Sanchez

Steven Scanlon Sr. Carl & Polly Schaefer Tom Schirmer & family Jeff & Janet Schmidt

Tina Seekins Denise Seney

Mary Shea

Al & Diane Sheridan

Paul Shimer

Chris Sickler family Ann & Tony Silvestro Ed & Carole Slattery

Herbert Slicer Charlyne Smith Theresa Sohacki Joel and Gail Sokolov Margaret Sorenson

M/M Ralph Peter Sorenson IV

Rose Spafford

Elaine & Gary Spieker Joe & Judy Spillane

Madeline & James St. Germain

Lorraine Staley
Richard & Claudia Steele
Nancy Steffens/Bob Felber
Catherine Steinnagel
Mark Stephianou
Nancy Strong (Life)
Bob & Kathy Sumislaski
Pamela Sutkaitis
Elly Swan
Tom & Lynn Sweet
John Talcott III
Sharon & Frank Tarala
Richard & Ruth Tavolieri
Nancy Talyor Dunn
Don Tenerowicz

Elizabeth Thomas

Ada Thompson
Valerie L. Thompson
Angela M. Tolisano
Stephen & Cynthia Tolman
Nancy Traut
Elizabeth & Donald Tremblay
Annmarie Tremont
Nancy & Steven Trinks
Irene Turner
Thad Valenski
Vernon Police Association
Dan Villeneuve
Beth Villodas
Lisa Viola

Ann Carolyn Waltman

Wendy Wanchak (Life)

Doreen Ward
Betty & Bill Wardrop
Nancy Weissmuller
The Westerberg Family
Theona Wheelock
Dan & Isabelle Whelton
Nancy & Tom Whitman
Scott & Mandy Wieting
Pete & Judy Wind
Michael & Phyllis Winkler
John Wraight
Joanne Wright
Bradford Wright
Lisa & Sheyland Young



"We are most grateful to you for providing us with wholesome and delicious foods over the years! Thank you. It's always a pleasure to come to the Farm, as everything is pastoral and the atmosphere is most welcoming. We so love the <u>events</u> and the <u>fence post displays</u> in the fall! Oh and the beautiful chickens are a delight to see and watch!" —Miriam & Howard

Special Thanks to our faithful SFF Volunteers during this COVID YEAR!

All the BOD & Steering Committee members Michalina Pietras, CPA Laurie Sanchez and her special chickens/books Judy Hany - Chicken Promotion & Supporter Kris Viens and family & Girl Scout Troop Carl Schaefer and crew clearing pastures Robert Arthur clearing our paths Jon Roe and Vernon Volunteers Collaborative Theona Wheelock Nancy Rowe Huebner Dan Gallagher, Garden Program Master Robert Hurd. Architect All at CT Dept. of Agriculture SFF Proof Readers Liz Bologna - Marketing specialist Judy Oliviera – Faithful Store Manager Walt Moody - Walt's Bees All SFF RHS AgEd students Chris Sickler - Volunteer Extraordinaire Tom Barnas - Painter Extraordinaire Richard and Claudia Steele Loyd Johnson, Plumber/Gardener, and Lynn Nicholas Taylor & Christina Martin Ruchin & Associates Jen & Joe & Cecily – our loyal newbies! Nick West for dedicated tractor attention (&

Our Farmer Friends

dad!)

Hop-A-Long 4-H Club RHS Ag.Ed. Department & Students Aussakita Acres Farm Burbank Bend Farm – Adam Hytone Farm The Farmer's Cow Schaub Family Farm

Farm Photographers

Dan Villeneuve
Andre Garant
Community Voice Channel
Mike Nelson and Ron Sperry and all those
who share their special photos with us!

Thanks to all our 7th Annual Virtual
Chicken Run Sponsors and The
Last Mile race organizers and those
registering to run or walk
VIRTUALLY!
YOU MADE IT HAPPEN!!







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