

Mission: “to establish and maintain a community so that people with developmental and other disabilities can reach their fullest human potential”

COMMUNITY HOMESTEAD

NEWSLETTER: SUMMER 2018

501 280th Street, Osceola, WI 54020 (715) 294-3038 www.communityhomestead.org

This edition of the newsletter is the first since our family lost its youngest member, Abraham. Many of you have shown your support to us and Community Homestead in a multitude of ways, and each meal, message, or donation has been well appreciated.

Abe was a bundle of light, and in his own toddler way he loved our community and especially certain parts of it. Beyond those for our family, most of the words he had formed were for animals around the farm. Each morning he exclaimed over the presence of chickens (ba-BAH!) in the coop beyond his high chair, and on trips to the barn he held on tight to us but was already reaching out to touch the giant cows (OW-ooo). He and our kitten exchanged harassment in equal turns (di-datzz).

Different people here also meant different things to Abraham. Some of us were met by name and with shrill excitement. Others were more intimidating, so he'd tuck his face into mom's neck. A certain friend would persistently get a gentle boop on the nose, and another was met with raspberry noises. Most everyone else, well known or stranger, Abe would grace with a great smile. He was confident, full of gregarious screeches and general goodness.

It goes without saying that we miss him terribly, and that he is a constant presence in our home, daily conversation, greater community, and inner lives.

Please send a thought his way, or meditate on the wonder and light of a child in your life.

-Chelsea Wagner



Looking through the poultry catalogue with brothers Elias and Isaac



*Above: sweet corn with typical enthusiasm
Below: out with the chickens*



Coming and Going -Christine Elmquist

Our summer swelled with new people; Christina Berg and David Kaetterhenry, both local Minnesotans, Coleman Ubl from Madison WI, Travis Shannon from St Croix Falls, David Hess, Luc Cichalski, Nicolas Dreukler all from Hibernia Waldorf School in Germany, Lillie Cummings from Chicago, and Zack Grand from New Mexico.

And we welcomed back for the summer: Jackson Bean, Makinzie Miller, Max Simpson, Doran Velaski, Will Kalmon, Clark Travnick, Marika Stoffregan, and Maya Celander

We enjoyed visitors and volunteers from Peace Lutheran Church Summer Stretch, Chicago Waldorf School, Minnesota Waldorf School, and Osceola High School Give Back Day. Also gratitude to the Golden Well of Flynn/Wagner friends and family whose love and compassion spilled into this community all summer, without boundary.

Warm Goodbyes to Coleman, David, Luc, Nicolas, David, Lillie, and Luca (our very first year long Freunde volunteer from Germany), and Maya who is back off to college!

Thank you for all you did to make our summer so lovely! Welcome new year long German volunteers Janice Heinrich and Maresa Janzing through Freunde, and Niels Krappa through IJGD. (Internationaler Jugendfreiwilligendiens All these new people keep things lively!



My Year at Community Homestead -Luca Weissenfels.

Back in Germany, I thought it could be really interesting for me to spend a year abroad. We talked in school about the advantages of a gap year abroad so when I was about done with school I decided I want to do this. I looked up an organization called “Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiner” and let them know which countries I’m interested to. After that I had to choose 5 organizations and soon I was applying to them.

I got the message from Christine Elmquist after a couple days and quickly after that we had a Skype conversation. Christine told me all about Community Homestead and, even if I didn’t understand everything at the time, I knew, “this could be the right place for me“.

I arrived on the 1st August, 2017 in the late afternoon and my house “Orion” was kinda waiting for me with Ryan, Alex, Brendan, Scott, Desirae, and Cait welcoming me. They were all super kind from the beginning and I felt really comfortable right away. After that, I got the chance to meet the other Germans, three summer volunteers and three six month volunteers, and they gave me a tour. The next day I was helping in the morning in the barn, which I really enjoyed. In the afternoon I was in the garden.

And the first thing what really surprised me what a big garden they actually have. Such a big garden means a lot of effort. Also I came straight in the harvest season. It can be really exhausting to harvest twice a week at 6am. packing at Tuesdays the CSA boxes till 7-7:30pm. I remember I was really tired after the activities and fell asleep at 9 pm every single day. At this time I didn’t really enjoy to harvest, or the regular garden work, and I found it difficult to motivate myself. Also, a big thing was the language. I really had problems to communicate and also to understand all these people.



David Kaetterhenry in the orchard

Soon it got the end of October and that means the end of harvesting. So the schedule changed and during the winter we did a lot of crafts inside like puzzle painting, felting etc. But I also enjoyed the work outside especially with the forestry crew when we cut trees, made fences, and made firewood. At this time I started to be aware why we have to do so much to do in the garden in the summer, and I started more to understand how important the garden is for us.

In March, we started the Maple Syrup Season. It was a full body workout to be honest, all these buckets to collect in the deep snow on the hill full of watery syrup, but I have to say it was always fun! I was really impressed with everyone and tried my best to be useful. Also in general it surprised me that most of the people are so independent in these activities.



Of course sometimes you need to tell them something but I didn't think before that they can do most parts by themselves. And I thought it was just a cliché that people say about people with special needs that you get this "connection" but its true. You are able to get such a big connection to everyone, to know their personality, to know them as a person, as a friend.

At the end of April the season suddenly changed back to the summer. That means almost no crafts anymore inside but more garden work. And I have to say this time I started being more motivated for the garden because I have the cold winter behind me and I looked forward to work outside when it's quite nice. In the middle of June we started harvesting and, I'm honest, I seriously started to like the harvest days! So that's one of the biggest things that surprised me about myself! I work so much harder this summer and I enjoyed it!

I also enjoyed all the trips we did Saturdays. It's always up to you if you're joining them or not. My favourite trips were the North Shore in September and my first soccer game experience in the US in June. There are a lot more we did but these are only my favorites.

All in all I'm so thankful for the community to give me this opportunity to have such a great year. To get a view in a community abroad, to know every single

person like a really good friend, to get supported if you needed help whenever it was at work or at home, and always have someone where you can rely on. And the community by itself holds so much together. Even if something really bad is happening, immediately people come together to do the planning for the next days or weeks. I also had to change the house for my last 2 months because it needed some help and I have to say first it felt really weird because after 10 month in your "home" you have to go in another house? But as soon I got there I felt already comfortable and now

I know not the house was my home, the whole community is.

A big thank you also for all of them who were so patient with me with my English. Everyone was willing to teach me new things and I was always able to ask someone to repeat or to ask for new vocabulary. This also makes it

successful to learn English for me.

I also felt comfortable all the time during this year. There weren't really days where I didn't like to be here. The only thing I could notice is that now, in my last weeks, I look forward to Germany and know I'm ready for it. I can't really say how much I changed. I feel like it's hard to see by yourself. But I think the time when I will see how much I changed is the time I'm back in Germany. I am applying to university because I want to study when I'm coming back in the social work area, and also I am getting so excited to see my family again and wonder how they will see me as a person.

For everyone who is considering doing a year I can highly recommend you this community (and I know I don't have to write this, but I want to!)

Family Reunion -Kelly McDaniel

I had a family reunion at Claire's House in Portland, Ct. Sam, Rowan and Liam, and Chris were there. And Claire's five cats. Five of them! I had a surprise, because Chris, brother Chris, came off the plane in Minneapolis and he got on the same plane as me to go to Hartford! We went to a restaurant called Lennie and Joes and another one called Fertillos and an ice cream place I can't remember the name of! We watched Star Trek and played Clue! We went to the State Capitol (they have one there like in Madison)

CSA Delivering -Tony Bodelson

Every week this summer our CSA delivers vegetables to about 250 customers. Of those, I deliver about 140 of those to 12 sites with my good friend, Dustin Carr. This is my fourth year doing deliveries, but my first year doing it with Dustin. Now that we're about half way through the summer, we've gotten into quite a rhythm.

We start around 4:30AM, packing our vans and hope to be ready to leave community by 6AM. About halfway to the cities, we stop at the gas station to fill up, and start loading on caffeine and snacks, donuts are our personal favorite. We then make our way to our first site, St Paul. Going through our sites are all very similar; find the site, drop off the boxes, clean up our returned boxes and head off to the next site. We have been making our way back to community by around 1:00PM.

This week I decided to talk to Dustin and try to figure out what our favorite parts of deliveries really were. On the drive back I asked him if he enjoyed deliveries. He immediately responded with a headnod and, "Good?! Fun!" I then asked what he enjoyed about the deliveries the most, honestly expecting to hear donuts, but to my surprise he answered with, "Music." I asked, "Really? The music?" To which he responded, "Yes! Music, dance, drum," followed by a shimmy and drumming of the dashboard. Thankfully he enjoys the music because we're listening to music for a majority of the morning.

My favorite part of deliveries has to be getting to interact with some of our customers. We don't always run into people on our deliveries, but when we do it's really nice to get to chat with some of the people who order our stuff. One of my favorite moments of deliveries happened last week at our Lowry Hill site. Lowry Hill is where, in addition to delivering to our CSA customers, we also deliver veggies for Groveland Food Shelf. Normally we just drop them off with our CSA boxes and someone comes to pick them up while we were away. This week we got to chat with Siri, the site host at Lowry Hill, and found out that the man who helps at the food shelf was on his way. We got to help load them up and send them off to be given away to those who need them. It was really nice to finally get to meet the next person in the line of getting our veggies to a good place. Overall deliveries make for a really long day, but it is really worth it, knowing we get to help out others.

Photo: Dustin, Tony and Rich Maier. at the Lowry Hill Site. Rich is picking up food to be delivered to Groveland Food Shelf and MCTC's student food shelf. We also provide for local Food shelves through a partnership with United Way and by sponsored shares. We are happy for everyone to be eating well!

Voices of the Valley -Hillary Schauls

Linda and John Iwaszko help us sing better. John plays the guitar and Linda is the director. Performances we did; Boys Next Door, The Braves Games, Relay for Life, Friestad Church, and Rhubarb Days 5k Run. We did National Anthem, True Colors, and You've Got a Friend in Me.

Lou treated us all to tickets for Annie after Boys Next Door at the Art Barn. I'd like to sing those songs for our next concert!

Linda says, stop bickering in Choir and sing more. And she is right! We be more friendlier as a choir. We've got T-shirts this year from Tim's Aunt that says, "Voices of the Valley". We all have the same ones; Bruce, Scott, Kelly, Sandy, Oscar, Jessica, Hunter, and Jackson, and John and Linda, to represent who we are, our choir.

Thank you John and Linda for helping us out!



Silver Medal at the USA Games -Steven Kicker

The games were in Seattle, WA in June. I found out back in August 2017 I was selected for the nationals after I was invited to a basketball camp in Oshkosh. They get to see you play and see how well you play with others and what your skills are.

In June, our team flew to Seattle, then on the train, and stayed in UW dorms. We got to tour the city. It is a beautiful city, just awesome. We followed the Wisconsin banner through the tunnel and out into Husky stadium. They had the Seahawks marching band playing and then all these celebrities and this stuff they were giving away. It was amazing, The Seahawks cheerleaders were there and everything was televised. The teams were color coded, walking two by two, with 40,000 fans present. It was just like the real Olympics I was in awe. Every time I stepped out on to the (Alaska Airlines Arena) court, I thought about the oath, and reminded myself, 'let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.'" It's so important. You can take that and use it in life too. I use it at work, in learning to drive, in learning anything that I am nervous about. For me it means, be patient, believe in yourself, and respect other people

The games were tough. There were a few players there over seven feet. We won silver after we played Maryland again. It was a really good game and both teams were really good. I never thought I'd be the one to be so lucky. My next goal is the World Games. I don't really know yet how that all works. It is a difficult process. But I will find out. I know I will always be involved with Special Olympics whether it's as a player or an assistant coach. I'd like to help other people get chance to do this too.



Steven helps bring back silver for Wisconsin

Bruce, Dustin and Kelly take a break in the dunes.



Hiawatha Music Festival -Kelly McDaniel

The Hiawatha Music Festival is held in Marquette, Michigan. I've been a lot. It is my eighth year. Next year will be the ninth! I go with Kim and Ari, Chloe, and Sam, and it is a different volunteer each time. This year Dusty and Bruce went too.

Kim changed the tent arrangement up a bit this year so it was Ari and Chloe in the medium tent and everyone else, Coleman, Dusty, Kim, Bruce, I, and Sam in the big family size tent. Kim said the zipper on the tent busted so she will get a new tent next time. No sense in fixing the zipper. Zippers wear out sometimes! Coleman and I were directing traffic, moving cones to the side so the horses, carts, and vehicles could get by.

It was like 85 -90 degrees and we had a little bit of rain but no thunder. It's further up north so it has different weather patterns from here.

Kim made oatmeal and it was good even though it burned a bit. Kim said, "does it still taste good Kelly?" and I said, "yes it does" because that sometimes happens when you are camping, and I don't want to make her feel bad. Ari and Chloe made burritos. Kim made pancakes, and Sam helped out, and someone else whose name I don't know.

There's different kinds of bands playing, Barunga music, and a guy with a bass guitar and a regular guitar and drums. And they played on a big keyboard. The dancing was in the grass. They have a rubber thing, like a tarp, and we all dance on that. Ann Carter, that came and called the dance here, also was there! We saw Julie and her boys there too. People sing even at night after I have gone to bed. It is nice. I like it and I go to sleep anyway.

It was a lot of fun and I liked the different band groups. I hope other people get a chance to go too because it is really fun!

Volunteering at Community Homestead -Christine Elmquist

As a community, we like people! However, the busier we get, the harder it is to remember to look up and welcome others to help. Despite this challenge we have been lucky enough to gather a group of responsible, talented, and joyful individuals who help us create community. Here are a few of their experiences!

Lynne Schauls has been involved for twenty years, “I was asked to make cookies for the very first pig roast. I made big trays of chocolate chip, peanut butter, and oatmeal cookies. BIG TRAYS! Then when I figured out what the pig roast was all about, I started to make bars.” In fact Lynne has been the Pig Roast Dessert Queen ever since, pulling her adult daughters into the huge production in the last few years. “I am training them up” she laughs.

Lynne likes to weave her community efforts into, “the flow of life”. Over the years she has made beautiful mittens, hats, booties, and dolls we can sell at the craft fairs, and spent this past summer loading up her car with project materials and toys to run a playgroup for her two granddaughters, Harper and Maci, and our two resident little boys, Isaac and Elias, on a Thursday morning. This brings nature, farm, and real friendship to all four, makes a natural connection for Harper and Maci to the community where their aunts, Janette and Hillary, live and gives Chelsea, the boys’ Mom, a chance to get some other tasks done. With summer over, Lynne is now planning with her husband Gary, “to come and process wool, something the felting group uses that takes a lot of time and manpower. That is where we come in!”

While Lynne creates her own projects, “filling in the empty spaces of things that need to be done without a lot

of direct supervision” others jump into the existing weekly activities, adding their friendship and helping hands to the groups. Jane Campbell, “assisted with needle felting” and then joined the garden as the Spring arrived. “I love the positive atmosphere and the fact that every task can be broken down into steps that allows everyone to be involved and helpful”. Another regular in the garden is Joyce Borgerding. Like Lynne and Jane, she has a family member at Community Homestead but has made her own personal connections.



Gardeners; Alex , Dustin, Brendan and Desi

“This summer I arrive around 8:00, usually Tuesdays, and often as the crew is eating breakfast after starting their day at 6:00am. As everyone assures me, socializing while

eating breakfast is as important as weeding. There might be discussions of politics, music, food, who is arriving or who is leaving, and always what activities took place last weekend, or will happen next weekend. Certain people may have favorite topics, but all who want to talk will talk. When Nadine arrives conversations slowly fade and she moves the group from the breakfast task to other tasks. We are all asked or guided to grab a knife and go with this group to harvest, follow that group to weed or work with those folks in the packing shed. There is sometimes a straggler who needs direction, so the question “Where’s Nadine?” is a common one. But there are many very competent leaders in



Brendan with “Mom Squad” Cheryl Tranquillo, Elizabeth Coffey & Janet Pederson,

the garden, so even when Nadine is gone, the garden moves on smoothly. Wherever I am, transplanting, harvesting, putting boxes together, there is conversation: how to be kind to each other, lives in transition, traveling, growing up with sports, growing up without sports, new clothes, old clothes, music, insects, favorite vegetables, vegetables never

eaten, haircuts, problems with washing machines, dialects and accents and even the topic of which vegetable patch makes for the best conversation.

All this talking may make it appear that there is little work done in the garden, but it's quite the opposite. Everyone works. There is guidance for those who might spend too much time talking or just sitting and not working and also expressions of gratitude for all the work done. There is so much to do – I imagine that some garden workers never eat lunch. And of course there are conflicts and drama as well. Someone might feel slighted or just plain tired, and so wander off for a long water break. I recall that someone once said that the major characteristic of Community Homestead members is 'hard working'. I completely agree. In one day I see so many of the people who live at Community Homestead, either at lunch, or someone stopping by to ask a question, or to collect a rider or maybe getting some vegetables for dinner. My day spent volunteering at Community Homestead is so great because of all these wonderful and different hard working people"



PigRoast Volunteers Sherry Hansen and MaryClare Huberty

Also joining the garden (and crafts in the winter) is Peggy Geskermann. Her bridge to the community was more of a "meant to be thing" involving bumping into, "a group of Community Homestead Residents at their booth showcasing CSA boxes and crafts" and then realizing her son in law had met Community Homesteaders previously, "on a weekend getaway at a Minneapolis hotel". Peggy says, "3 years later, I was hooked and started volunteering here!"

Cheryl Beardslee also bumped into Community Homestead, first meeting us at the Osceola Farmer's Market and then through a, "fledgling Tai Chi group" holding a workshop at the Community Center. Now Cheryl leads a weekly and inclusive Tai Chi class. "It has been an incredibly rich experience to work with and learn from the residents... to be connected to this group who relish life in big bites, perform with enthusiasm and teach me in every interaction to be here and now".

Maureen McElrath also teaches a class here but just for one person. "I have been volunteering at Community Homestead for about eight years now. I originally came to Community Homestead through my volunteer work with Northern Waters Literacy. They talked with me about a young woman who wanted help with reading and writing. I came out and met with Hillary, and we decided to give it a go! Since then,

about once a week Hillary and I meet and read a chapter from a book we have chosen, and Hillary completes a worksheet. After eight years, as you can imagine, we have read a lot of books, including the entire Little House on the Prairie series. Sometimes we take a break from reading and practice letter writing to Hillary's friends, of whom there are many! I really have enjoyed getting to know Hillary, and watch her progress. She takes her reading very seriously and works hard at it! I also have greatly enjoyed getting to know the other folks I regularly see when I come out.

No matter how busy they are with their tasks, they always find a minute to chat, and no matter how tough my day has been, I am invariably cheered by the warm people and the wholesome environment, not to mention the smells of fresh baked pies!"

We'd also like to recognize new volunteer Dana Turman and the many others who come for special events or volunteer their skills for projects. You wrap us in joy, warmth, humor and support, and enrich all our lives.



Welcome back Mary Elmquist!

Healing from her heart surgery with many thanks to the lifesaving staff at United Hospital, St Paul. You are the best!

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