

Heartbeet Lifesharing Newsletter

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UPDATE

Good News!! It has been a successful winter. Our vacation program has welcomed back old friends as well as expanding to meet new ones. Our holiday season was filled with visits from Natasha Lorick from Tri-form, Mimi Rovner from Beaver Run Special School, Molly Coackly from Maine, Jerome Vermette from L'Amitient (Canada), and Charles Tygiel from California. We fully enjoyed our new vacationers, Ed Patyk and Gabrielle Beratan from Kimberton Hills, and Stefan Savio from Cadmus. We established a new farm program for children of all ages, that has already been utilized by five school groups. An extension to what we have been offering is a social service practicum for high school students, which was utilized by both Lake Champlain and Kimberton Waldorf Schools.



Other highlights of this winter were our involvement with the Special Olympics, participating in cooking the local community lunch, and being part of an art exhibition through our local art program, G.R.A.C.E. Heartbeet is going strong, filled with the energy of a young initiative.

Renovations

We offer gratitude to the many individuals and foundations that made it possible for us to complete the renovations of the downstairs sunroom. We enjoyed working together on this project, and give warm thanks to the people who donated their time and materials. We now have a craft space, coworker bedroom, loft and wheelchair accessible bathroom.

The work started in November. It was a big job. All the walls had to be redone, the rooms framed, a slab poured for the radiant floor heating, new windows and a sliding door installed. It is now a beautiful space in full use. Thank you all for the gifts that made it possible.

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Thanks to a generous donation from a friend of Heartbeet, we are able to move forward with the improvements



and painting of the barn. The carpentry / structural projects are almost finished, and we expect to be ready to build the post and beam side shed for machinery this fall. We welcome all our extended community members to visit and see the wonderful improvements.



Social Services Practicum

by Andrew Echlin

(11th grader, Kimberton Waldorf School)



I spent an enjoyable week in Vermont where I worked and helped out in a community household where everyone was happy and swept up in springtime. The house community was made of individuals with diversified needs, co-workers and a core carrying family. I was ever so unhappy when it came time to leave the farm, where I spent the days doing hard work, eating well and getting to know a wonderful community of people.

Being the youngest child, my house is now empty of older siblings, so there are only my parents and cats for company. At Heartbeat, the people whom I ate dinner with, worked and played with were a welcome change to the unavoidable monotony of friends and family. It was a chance as well for me to befriend people with developmental disabilities, which is rare.

Playing basketball was definitely a highlight for the week. Hannah Schwartz, the co-director of Heartbeat, was the coach of the team that was mixed high school players and people with developmental disabilities from Hardwick and the surrounding area. The game focused far more on the team effort and empowering the players than any other sport I had previously played. I worked hard to play well while still involving the other players, as did each other team participant. I was impressed and enlightened by the skill / performance of some of the special players. Through my lack of exposure to individuals with special needs I would never have guessed the skill of some of the players. On the Saturday before we left they participated in a Special Olympic, state wide tournament, and both divisions of the Hardwick team placed. Everyone was overjoyed.

The Social Service Practicum for me was a long-awaited change of daily rhythm. To be able to do things that needed to be done was a nice change to the sitting necessary for classroom learning. I really felt like I was making a difference and that had its own gratification. The time we had off was mostly spent with the kids and housemates, being social, playing, or reading stories. I think that they enjoyed our company as much as we did theirs.

It wasn't until after we were on the train and heading home that I realized how good a time I'd had. It will remain a warm memory for years to come.

Fall and Winter Festivals

*Andrew
Echlin*

Vermont winters are long and cold, this one being no exception. We experienced record lows and lots of snow. Despite the cold, ice, snow and short days and long nights the festival and cultural events of this season provided us with an experience of inner warmth and light.

Michealmas:

Heartbeet had the opportunity to host the regional Michealmas festival. Families gathered together on a beautiful fall day, filling Heartbeet with celebration and appreciation for the gifts of the land. We all enjoyed apple pressing, pony rides, corn grinding, kite making, nature chains, making flower garlands for the tables and horses, and sculpting dragon bread. As we gathered together to sing the children were amazed to find that far off on the hill side a dragon appeared along with a Knight that did battle before us. It was a magical event filled with family, friends and food. As the sun set over the fall colored forest, the day closed with a phenomenal array of food (pot-luck style), laughter and



song. Thanks to Heartbeet's beautiful setting this event was able to take place, offering a warm and accepting sense of community for all members of Heartbeet as well as those from the surrounding area.



Thanksgiving:

We had a lot to be thankful for this year. As we sat down to an extended family meal, twenty of us feasted on the incredible harvest of our garden and farm. We enjoyed a home grown meal, including the twenty two pound turkey that offered us an i-all-you-can-eat meal. We closed our

day with a circle of thanks where each member was able to reflect on all the things that we have to be grateful for. As winter set in and snow covered the ground the warmth of community filled us with gratitude.



Hanukkah and Christmas:

With Hanukkah and Christmas so close together this year life became one big festival of light. We began educating ourselves, as a community, in regards to the Jewish holidays. With the help of a local friend and board member, Lin Leah, we started the new tradition of lighting one candle of the Menorah for every night of Hanukkah, telling stories from the tradition and bring the light of this festival to touch us. We all felt the purity of this experience and know that it will continue to reminding us that miracles do happen for those with courage to believe.

Advent and Christmas also blessed us with a sense of community and purpose. We enjoyed participating in a garden of light created by a group of home schooling families,



within the Waldorf traditions. With incredible reverence all of us at Heartbeet had the chance to walk through this beautiful experience. Afterwards we enjoyed a community pot-luck with dancing and singing.

On Christmas Eve, at midnight, Heartbeet opened its doors to welcome thirty extended community members to its second year of a barn sing-a-long and Christmas reading. In a beautifully decorated barn, greens hanging from every corner, we gathered for a choral sing and hot-cider; it was a wonderful way to welcome Christmas into our hearts. Christmas day brought gifts and treats for all.

A Note From a Vacationer

I am Jerome Vermette, the Chilean White Bear. I love Heartbeet in Vermont in the United States of America. It is my fourth year coming and I want to keep coming because I like it at Heartbeet Hotel. I like to stay in another country and to visit Burlington and Montpelier and Stowe and Morrisville. I like to have my art weeks at Heartbeet developing my wood working and Heartbeet sign making and furniture stripping and the famous statue that I got a prize for from Maple Leaf Farm in Craftsbury. I hope to continue to do the art weeks in Vermont and I do declare that two weeks is not long enough but three is better. It is pretty at Heartbeet and I look forward to meeting more new friends and pen pals.



Third Grade Farm Program

What a joy it was for all of us at Heartbeet to invite 11 second and third grade students, from the Wellspring Waldorf School, to experience the fullness of farm and community life. They came for three days, which provided time for each child to experience farming, land work and plenty of fun in the woods and fields. The children were broken up into three groups: farm, cooking, and free play. The farming group was expected to be up and ready for chores at 6:00 a.m., along with the cooking crew that was up preparing breakfast, the third crew had the luck of sleeping in. The groups switched for the evening chores to give a rounded experience to the children and ample time with the animals. The Heartbeet residence had the opportunity to be in leadership positions, showing the children how to work with animals and guiding them in house chores and cooking.

Jerome Vermette



There were many tasks to be accomplished during the three days. Lilacs were dug and potted, stones were gathered from a river bed to landscape the barn, the herb garden was weeded, and work was done in barn clean up

and hauling buckets of grain to fill the main bin in the barn. We took nature hikes, played games and had a wonderful cook out. It was inspiring to see how engaged the children were in both the farm and land work. Working with the animals during chores was by far the highlight of the children's experience. We had to have a drawing to keep the children from fighting over who was going to do the last chore on the morning before they left. Over all it was an amazingly successful experience on both sides and we both are looking forward to a return visit in the early fall.