

Living Energy Farm

February - March - April 2015 Newsletter

Thank You!

In response to our last newsletter request for support, we have received over \$4,000 in donations to the Living Energy Farm Education Fund. We very much appreciate your support! If you can still help, please do. We are going to need every penny we can get this year as we try to bring the project to full operational status. We appreciate your support so much that we are throwing a party for you --- in our first completed building, made to run without fossil fuel -- our new kitchen!!!



Solar heating system for the kitchen- it works great!

Come on out for our Kitchen Grand Opening

On Sat, May 30th we will have an open house and party to celebrate the completion of our new kitchen. The open house will be 1-4pm and include tours of the kitchen and all of LEF. The party begins at 4pm. There will be treats, games for kids and adults, and acoustic music. Please park up front, there will be a hay ride to the back every half hour from 1-4pm. LEF is located at 1022 Bibb Store Road, Louisa VA, 23093.



Tonka's field, just planted

Tonka's Field

Growing seeds takes quite a bit of hand work, but not too much land- before this year, we have been running our entire operation on only a couple of plowed acres. But this year, we realized that we would need to increase our seed production to meet the cash flow needs of the community. We also want to build our capacity to grow our own food. Looking at these needs, it became clear that we needed a few more acres of farmable land. So we cleared a few more acres this spring using our own meager equipment and hand labor.

Then, few weeks ago, one of our volunteers brought along a sweet old dog named Tonka. He was very big and very friendly, but not in good health. Sadly, Tonka died last week while at LEF. He was laid to rest next to the new field, so we are calling the field Tonka's field in his honor. This year, Tonka's field will grow cucumbers, melons, squash, and tomatoes. May his spirit happily roam the field, chasing after sticks that the stick-pickers left behind.

Interns for 2015

Every year, our interns make it possible to run the farm and keep building our community. We've attracted some fun, dedicated, hardworking people over the years, and this year is no exception.



Rue on the tractor

Rue is only 19 years old, a fact which surprises most people who meet her. She is extremely talented and capable for her age. With our farm manager toting around a baby this year, we needed some new tractor drivers, and Rue has stepped up to the task. She also put her artistic eye to designing the aesthetics for our new kitchen.

Linda's age is also surprising to most people- she is 70 years old, but has more energy than most 20 year olds. Linda has taken on managing our kitchen gardens, and her many years of gardening experience has been invaluable in keeping our kitchens stocked with tasty vegetables.

Spruce is a local guy who came to us last fall, hoping to learn about community in order to start his

own one day. He has been learning new skills, such as woodworking, and putting them to use by building us sheds and improving our infrastructure.

Michael has traveled the world working for and designing sustainable communities. We appreciate his innovative approach to community issues, and his organizational energy has been a big help to our chaotic farm. Buck showed up with tools and skills in-hand, and has been a big help working on our solar hot water systems.



Spruce and Linda

Fruity Workshops

This spring we held our first annual orchard planning workshop, and our fourth annual fruit propagation workshop. As usual, our fruit workshops were very popular. In particular, our orchard planning workshop was a huge success. Alexis taught the workshop along with Michael McConkey from Edible Landscaping. Michael has rubbed elbows with lots of interesting characters who grow and breed fruit trees, lots of "old timers" from all over. It was a great pleasure to learn about plants that grow without chemicals, and about the dedicated individuals who have bred them and made it possible for the rest of us to grow them. The world of disease resistant fruit trees has relied mostly on such dedicated individuals, as limited agricultural research funds almost always go into more profitable crops (corn, beef, etc). Folks drove from as far away as Missouri to come to the workshop. It was a great day full of information and fun about fruit. Stay tuned, we hope to do another next year.

Upcoming Workshops

Note, the locations of these workshops varies, please note location accompanying workshop description. Please RSVP for ALL workshops to livingenergyfarm@gmail.com Participants coming to

the LEF farm, 1022 Bibb Store Road, should note that you will need to walk one-half mile on a dirt road. If you are mobility limited, please contact us so we can make special arrangements. We can also be reached at 540-205-0433, but email is preferred.

We've got some exciting workshops lined up for the spring and summer. On June 6th, 1-4pm, we will offer a workshop on **Building and Maintaining Composting Toilets** at Living Energy Farm, 1022 Bibb Store Rd, Louisa. This workshop will take place in our new kitchen and adjoining composting toilet. Alexis and Valerie will co-teach this workshop. They have a combined 30 years of experience building and maintaining many kinds of composting toilets. The workshop will cover the pros and cons of different designs, and include a "hands on" (but not too hands on) tour of the toilet systems at LEF. Suggested donation for this workshop is \$25.

On June 20th, 1 - 4 PM, we will have a workshop about **Solar Hot Water System Design and Construction**, led by Alexis Zeigler. You will learn how simple solar batch collectors and flat plate solar hot water systems are built. You will be able to see in detail how our various hot water systems are built at LEF. We will offer hands-on plumbing instruction as time allows. Suggested donation for this workshop is \$25. The workshop is at LEF at 1022 Bibb Store Road, Louisa VA, 23093.

On July 18 - 19, 9 AM to 5 PM, we are offering a two day workshop **Scythe Making and Basic Woodworking**. This workshop will be taught by master woodworker Purl Samoheyl from our sister community of Twin Oaks. Participants will learn basic woodworking techniques using hand tools and put these skills to use building a scythe handle. The skills you will gain will be useful making many other kinds of wooden tools and furniture. Cost of the workshop is \$50-100 (sliding scale) and covers the cost of materials. We have known Purl for many years, and we have benefited greatly from watching him become a master woodworker. He makes exquisite furniture and wooden tools, using largely hand tools. Note this workshop is at Magnolia House, 217 Fredericksburg Ave, Louisa VA, 23093 (Not at the LEF farm).

LEaF No-Spray Nursery

In order to diversify our agricultural income sources, we are starting up a new nursery business selling fruit trees. We have a few pears, sour cherries, and applesauce trees for sale at this time. See <http://livingenergyfarm.org/nursery>

Commonwealth Seeds

Got that garden in yet? Don't forget about our new seed company, Commonwealth Seed Growers. Our new catalog is out! See <http://commonwealthseeds.com/>

Living Energy Farm is a project to build a demonstration farm, community, and education center in Louisa County that uses no fossil fuels. For more information see our website www.livingenergyfarm.org, or contact us at livingenergyfarm@gmail.com. Donations to the Living Energy Farm Education Fund are tax deductible.