



## Grow the Longest Extra Row Newsletter Fall 2009



### INSIDE

**OVER 6,000 POUNDS**

Of produce donated

**LAST DELIVERY**

November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009

**PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR**

### The Longest Row

- Bill Clark

Growing the longest "Extra Row" ever raised in Rutland County is an effort that developed from one simple request. On an early April morning as I was opening my mail I came across a letter from the Rutland Area Women's Shelter. The letter was addressed to "Clark Farm" and was curious as to why they were writing to us. Upon opening it there was a single page explaining the services that they provide through out the county to various families of domestic abuse. One of their services was providing good food. Like most food shelters it always had to be good "non perishable" food. This did not allow for any fresh fruits or veggies, so necessary for young, growing children. So, at the bottom of the letter (which had been sent to some other growers as well) was a very simple one-line request. "Could you grow one extra row just for us?" They didn't ask for three or four extra rows or that they be X-number of feet long. No, it was for just one "Extra Row."

As growers, we have plenty of "headaches" and problems to deal with every day, however, this request seemed like one of the easier things that we might ever accomplish. Efforts from BROC, The Open Door Mission and The Rutland Community Cupboard had also written similar letters. It became imperative that this "extra row" would have to be the "longest extra row" ever grown in Rutland county. Hence "The Grow the Longest Extra Row" project. Unfortunately most food pantries have not been set up to handle fresh produce for lack of refrigeration. That is now changing to meet a great growing need and desire



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**THANK YOU TO ALL OUR GENEROUS FOOD DONORS!  
THIS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOU!!**



Greg Cox, one of our many generous farmers, and president of RAFFL.

### THE COMMUNITY GARDEN EFFORT

The Community Gardens in Rutland also played an important role in food access this summer. There were three plots planted this season specifically for the Grow the Longest Extra Row effort. There were drop-offs at the gardens for other community gardeners to drop off extra produce. Thanks to Steve Eddy this small initiative was made possible through his dedication to picking up the produce daily and bringing it to area social service centers. Thank you to Steve and to all participating community gardeners.



- AYERS FARM ~ BOARDMAN HILL FARM ~ BROWN'S ORCHARD ~ CERRIDWEN FARM ~
- CLARK FARM AND MAPLE COUNTRY KITCHEN ~
- DENNIS DUHAIME & CAROL TASHIE ~ DUTCHESS FARM
- FOGGY MEADOW FARM ~ GRABOWSKI FARM ~ J&S
- DAVIS FARM ~ PICTURE PERFECT FARM ~ RALPH WILLIAMS ~
- RITCHIE KNIFFIN ~ RIGHT MIND FARM ~
- RIVERSIDE FARM ~ RUTLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL ~
- SINGING CEDARS FARM ~ SMOKEY HOUSE ~
- SUNRISE HILL FARM ~ TERRE BONNE FARM ~
- NORTHWEST ELEMENTARY ~ RUTLAND INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL ~ ANONYMOUS COMMUNITY GARDENERS

**6,300 POUNDS**

The farms and gardeners listed above donated over **6,000 pounds** of produce to this summer! With their generosity we were able to bring a variety of produce to the multiple distribution sites. Below is a list of the many different kinds of produce we were able to provide. A total of 45 different varieties of fruits and veggies!

A sampling of what was donated

- Apples, Arugula, Beans, Beet Greens, Chard, Beets, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Cabbage, Beet Greens, Corn, Cucumbers, Sorrel, Eggplant, Golden Zucchini, Micro Greens, Garlic, Lettuce, Herbs, Kale, Kohlrabi, Leeks, Lettuce Mix, Eggs, Mesclum Mix, Beets, Peas, Currents, Onions, Bok Choy, Peppers, Potatoes, Radishes, Rutabaga, Scallions, Strawberries, Spinach, Zucchini, Tomatoes, Turnips, Yellow Squash



## RAFFL

The Rutland Area Farm and Food Link (RAFFL) is based in Rutland County. RAFFL's mission is to strengthen vibrant, self-reliant communities by creating an economically and environmentally sustainable regional food system. Our goal is to increase access to local foods by facilitating new markets, delivery systems, and processing infrastructure so that farms will be more economically successful and local foods will be accessible to all people in the region.

The Vermont Farmers Market operates the Winter Market in Downtown Rutland and is part of the Summer Farmers Market at Depot Park in Downtown Rutland on Saturdays as well as the Poultney Farmers Market on Thursdays.

for fresh produce.

This would take a coordinated group effort of growers and community to make it happen. As President of the Vermont Farmers Market I directed our secretary to send out letters to all our growers to consider growing extra produce for the effort.

Next I contacted Greg Cox, president of RAFFL (Rutland Area Farm and Food Link) I knew that RAFFL had the structure, the means, and the will power to make it happen. RAFFL also has the spirit and vision. RAFFL was born about five years ago from concerned growers and community leaders in Rutland county, that felt the changing and diminishing agriculture in the county needed to be turned around to benefit the citizens of the county, that Rutland county had a resource potential and that it should benefit all, if only utilized. RAFFL had just established a command center and welcomed Tara Kelly as its new director. In May and June, RAFFL put together a working system for handling fresh produce for the county food pantries with the Vermont Food bank as a back-up partner. Meadow Squier is the coordinator for the project along with a team of volunteers including Carol Tashie, Dennis Duhaime, Steve Eddy of Rutland and Eleanor Tison of Green Mountain College.

In Rutland, produce was picked up every Saturday at the downtown farmers market from 1:30 – 2:30. Home gardeners with extra produce, are bringing theirs here as well. From here the produce is taken to Thomas Dairy for cold refrigerated storage till Monday when the produce is picked up and distributed to 9 food pantries and area social service centers.

Donations were also picked up at the Poultney Farmers Market every Thursday 1:30-2:30. These donations are delivered to The Poultney food shelf, Fair Haven Concerned and Saltis House of Castleton.

To date this effort has brought in thousands of pounds of fresh produce (even 36 quarts of strawberries) with much more to come. This is becoming a phenomenal story of what can happen when many pitch in. It has to have made many lives better and healthier and it didn't take much to do it. I know of no farmers that had to buy or rent more land, buy any tractors, tools, or equipment, Thomas Dairy didn't have to add extra cooler space. It's been a very wet, cold summer here and yet the produce rolled in. Funny thing is all the components of this venture were right here. Under our noses and no one had ever seen it. So it's a bit amazing what came forth from just one letter and a forty-two cent stamp.

A further thought is that this is "year one" it also has to continue on going in year two, three and so on. I know this is the most worthwhile project that I've ever embarked on. If this can happen in Rutland County, VT, than it should be possible to also happen in every one of the 3,140 counties in the United States. Think of what twenty five thousand tons of fresh fruits and veggies could do for the health of so many in need across these United States.

Bill Clark



This summer RAFFL's program delivered over **5,000 pounds of produce** to low-income families in the Rutland

Region. This effort included fourteen different charities in the Rutland region. The Community Cupboard, BROCC, The Women's Shelter, Dismas House, Fair Haven Concerned, Bardwell House, The Mission, Serenity House, Grace House, Rutland County Parent Child Center, Turning Point, The West Rutland Food Shelf, The Poultney Food Shelf, Saltis House. We worked to get more, fresh, locally grown products into every household in the community. We hope to continue growing this successful program within the community for many years to come.

The growing season is coming to an end. Farmers are beginning to batten down the hatches and harvest their fall crops. Like many of the vegetables we stored and delivered over the past few months, this project is seasonal. Although we would like to provide fresh veggies year round, this is not yet possible.

**The last produce delivery for Grow The Longest Extra Row will be Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>.**

We will start delivering produce in the spring of next year. Let us know if you are interested in participating again.

Have a good winter!!



We want to thank the Vermont Community Foundation for their support of this project.

Photos credited to Kellin M. Cavanaugh, Wendy Leffel, and Meadow Squier.



**THANK YOU  
TO ALL OUR  
VOLUNTEERS!**

Barbara Fenhagen  
Carol Tashie  
Chuck Domenie  
Colleen Teevin  
Corrine Almquist  
Dennis Duhaime  
Eleanor Tison  
Jamie Ritchie  
Jon Place  
Josh Brill  
Pete Dellabra  
Rebekah Burke  
Steve Eddy  
Tara Kelly  
Wheaton Squier

If you would like to become more involved your help is always welcome! For more information about volunteering contact us at 417-7331 or go to: [www.rutlandfarmandfood.org](http://www.rutlandfarmandfood.org)

Your donation to continue this effort next year is welcomed! Donations can be sent to:  
RAFFL  
po box 561  
E. Poultney, VT 05741

# GLEANING!

A pick-up full of corn from Bill Clark's farm. Clark planted 16 rows of corn, 8 rows of potatoes and a row of cabbage for Grow the Longest Extra Row. A group of volunteers picked 105 lbs of cabbage, 670 lbs of corn, and 168 lbs of potatoes. Some of the corn and cabbage was brought to Green Mountain College. Eleanor Tison's food preservation class froze the corn and made sauerkraut out of the cabbage. This will be brought to charities in December as a reminder of the project and the wonderful veggies available. Similar gleans were done at Foggy Meadow Farm and Boardman Hill farm. These gleans were not of crops specific to the Grow the Longest Extra Row project but were rows of produce that the farmers were going to turn under to start a new crop. From these fields we picked, 778 lbs of Squash, 494 lbs of Zucchini, and 102 lbs of beans. Instead of this produce becoming worm food or compost we have been able to feed hundreds of people in Rutland County.



Eleanor Tison and her students processing corn from the Clark Farm.



Our sign letting community member know when and where to drop off extra produce



A full load leaving Thomas Dairy

Sue Basset the coordinator for the Rutland Community Cupboard holds a basket full of produce and a dozen eggs from Ayers farm. The Rutland Community Cupboard serves over 500 families a month and gives out approximately 15,000 food items.

A huge thank you to **Thomas Dairy** for donating the use of their cooler space! With their support we were able to store large amounts of produce without worrying about it spoiling before we delivered it on Monday.

We would like to thank Williams Hardware in Poultney and Noble Ace Hardware in Rutland for their generous donations of 20-gallon Tupperware tubs. Seven tubs were donated in total allowing us to safely store the produce as well as have sturdy boxes to move heavy produce around. Thank you!

A Thomas Dairy employee speaks with a Volunteer after a Saturday drop off. The totes donated are stacked on the pallet and stored in the cooler in the background.



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Fall 2009

### **RAFFL**

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### **[Recipient]**

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