

Lifeside Farms Fall Newsletter

November 2014

Lifeside Farms is a growing group of outdoor based therapeutic day programs in Montana, USA. Enjoy our periodic newsletter!

First Annual Care Farm Challenge



In July we held our first annual Care Farm Challenge, an obstacle race styled after the Spartan Race, but adapted for the terrain of the farm. Les Keller at Centennial Farm hosted this “first of many” races. Les and the Care Farm participants who work at his farm spent months masterminding and creating the course which held about 15 different obstacles, requiring athletes to complete creek crossings, throw spears, climb, swing, and navigate their way through a maze to reach the finish line. The race was a stunning success with nearly 50 participants, all of whom finished in fine style and were awarded

hand crafted medals and community donated prizes including event hats and water bottles. After the race, a barbecue was enjoyed by athletes, family and friends who came to support and cheer.

There were nearly 20 local donors who contributed in various capacities to make this race free for all participants, and a whole slew of volunteers who helped to pull it off. Thanks to everyone!



We can't wait to invite everyone back next year for the second annual Care Farm Challenge. There are always opportunities to participate and to volunteer. Come one, come all! Everyone is welcome to take part.



Our Newest Farm

We are very excited to welcome our newest farm to the program. Linda Guest at Black Hat Ranch is the latest addition to our team of 9 farms. Specializing in goats and rabbits, Linda's little ranch is chock full of critters, including goats for milking as well as goats for meat, and about two hundred rabbits of different breeds. She also houses a whole mess of birds; turkeys, geese, and every kind of chicken you could imagine. Add in the resident cats, dogs, and horses and you've got a full farm. Along with the daily routines of feeding and watering the animals, there are other interesting jobs to be done, like milking the goats and packaging the milk for sale. Located near Lone Pine State Park, the Black Hat Ranch looks up at the gorgeous rock face towering above, and you may catch a glimpse of her goats as they graze in the fields along the highway.



Linda's first Care Farm participant is a young man named Andrew Williams. Andrew has been honing his work skills by working on Linda's and other farms here in the valley on and off over the past year and a half. He is a hard worker with a special affinity for animals. Andrew has been a great help at Linda's farm, taking good care of the



critters and learning the process of goat milk production. Linda and Andrew have been a great fit, learning from each other, and having lots of fun in the process.

Immanuel Lutheran Partnership

The Care Farm Program has formed a partnership with Immanuel Lutheran and Buffalo Hill Terrace living communities to allow residents from both homes to participate in the program. Seniors from both Buffalo Hills and Immanuel Lutheran have been able to attend the Lighthouse Christian home farm once per week since the spring, and will continue to attend through the winter. This partnership has allowed residents with dementia and those with physical limitations to get out of their regular environment and to spend time helping with farm chores, taking walks, and socializing with the Lighthouse residents, who are mostly younger folks with developmental disabilities. The generational mix has been a wonderful experience for residents of



both homes. Seniors from Immanuel Lutheran communities have become as part of the Lighthouse family, eagerly awaited by residents each week. The partnership was supported by a donation from the Hetzel Foundation.



Serving those who served: Our veterans program

We are excited to announce that we are now approved by the Veterans Affairs (VA) to offer respite programs for Veterans who would like to get out to spend time on a farm. Our farmers and we feel honored to be able to provide a place of respite for our veterans and their loved ones. This aspect of our program is just beginning, so if you or someone you know is interested in veteran's services, please

let us know.

The Lifeside Farms program in Washington DC

Lisa Sheppard and Maartin Fischer (representatives from the Flathead Agency on Aging and our own Care Farm Program) were surprised to receive an invitation to join three universities from Europe at a conference in Washington DC to speak about the impacts of Green Care programs on seniors and people living with dementia. This conference on aging is one of the biggest in the world, making it almost surreal to be showcased on such a platform. But it was also great fun. People loved the common sense, holistic approach that our program takes toward improving physical fitness, socialization, self esteem, mental health and above all, a sense of purpose. Calling green care programs like ours “hidden programs” was an interesting way to describe the way our philosophies align so neatly with daily life in the outdoors or on a farm. The other presenters had wonderful research and examples from similar programs overseas. Some of these were small, residential care facilities on farms for people aging with dementia and outdoor adventure programs for people living with dementia. We were inspired by a program in Scotland that takes seniors on adventures like rafting! Coming away from this conference, we are confident that Green Care programs really are on the vanguard of a movement that looks at new and creative ways to prevent and slow down many health issues.



Volunteer Opportunities

We are always looking for volunteers to help facilitate our Care Farm activities. We typically need help transporting participants to and from the farm. Volunteers have the option to stay at the farm and take part in the activities (including lunch), or they can drop participants off and pick them up again at the end of the day. There are other volunteer opportunities as well, like helping out at the farm with our participants, and with special activities like the Care Farm Challenge, so if you or someone you know are interested, please get in touch so we can coordinate with you.



Let us know what you think

We'd love to hear your feedback. Please let us know what you thought about this newsletter, and suggestions for other topics of interest. We can be reached at Aplus Health Care at 752-3697 ext. 2004, or email any comments to mfischer@aplushc.com.

Thank you all for supporting our program!

Lifeside Farms Staff
Maarten Fischer and Rachel Grant

