

# Lifeside Farms Spring Newsletter

## April 2016

### Care Farm Program Wins National Award

Lifeside Farms has been selected by Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging as one of two national winners of the **Promising Practices Award**, which highlights organizations that are moving away from conventional practices by developing and implementing new and innovative approaches in aging well or long-term care and senior living communities.

Richard Opper, Director of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, says: "I have visited their sites and am extremely impressed with how they use one of Montana's greatest assets – its rural nature – to address one of its growing problems – isolation and lack of purpose among its aging population."



University of Montana's Associate Professor Keith Anderson, currently researching the Lifeside Farms program, adds: "Community-based, person-centered models of care are critically important for people with disabilities and their family members; especially in the coming years. The innovative care farm program that Maarten and his team (including the gifted and generous farmers) have developed in the Flathead Valley provides opportunities for meaningful activities, socialization, inclusion, and enhanced quality of life. The care farm program also provides much-needed respite for family caregivers."

We are honored with this recognition and excited to continue serving the Flathead Valley!

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### 3rd Annual Care Farm Challenge

We are excited to be making plans for the 3rd Annual Care Farm Challenge at Centennial Farm. The Care Farm Challenge is an obstacle course race styled after the Spartan Race. We had a blast last year, and can't wait to have you all back again for more fun. In the past two years we have been honored to host the Special Olympics teams of the Flathead Valley, individuals who are served by Special Friends



Advocacy group in Kalispell, residents of the Lighthouse Christian Home in Somers, and individuals who are served by the Care Farm Program. The event is free and open to anyone with special needs or a developmental disability with an interest in friendly competition in the beautiful outdoors. This year we are looking forward to an expanded course, more participants, and as always, a great barbecue for everyone. The race will be on **Saturday, July 30<sup>th</sup>** at Centennial Farm in West Valley. Registration forms and details about the race are available through our website. Check out more information about the Care Farm Challenge [HERE](#) or get in touch with Maarten or Rachel with questions.

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### Give Local Flathead Fundraiser

Last year's fundraising event was an incredible success. We are very proud to be among the numerous non profit organizations in the Flathead serving our community. To ensure that we can keep the Care Farm Challenge free, while providing a fun and safe event, we will again be participating in the Give Local Flathead fundraising event on **May 3**. Give Local Flathead is a powerful 24-hour, online giving event to generate awareness and raise funds for important causes right in our own backyard. On May 3rd, take a moment to go to [GiveLocalFlathead.org](http://GiveLocalFlathead.org)

and search for the Care Farm Program to help support our race. Any amount is greatly appreciated, it's super easy to do, and of course all donations are tax deductible. These donations will help with course construction, prizes for participants, and a free BBQ afterward for all participants and spectators.

If you can't give money, we can always use help in the form of volunteers or in kind donations for the barbecue. If you'd like to give your time on or before race day, we can find a place for you to help out.

Thank you to everyone who supported us last year, and thanks in advance for helping this year to be even greater!



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## New programs for people with Mental Health challenges; SDMI

For a while now, we have been looking for ways to serve people who live with mental health challenges. This year the State of Montana has opened up the so called Waiver program for **Seriously Disabling Mental Health Illnesses** (SDMI) in Flathead, Sanders and Lake county. This program will fund services that help people in this category lead more full and integrated lives in the community. We were thrilled to hear that the Care Farm Program meets the requirements for some of the services under this program and the first referral is already coming to the program. We are not new to Mental Health challenges for participants in our program, as those challenges often come with others health challenges, but we are excited to now have a new and specific program to serve participants in this field.

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## Art and Soul Expressive Art Classes

We are offering monthly expressive arts class for people with developmental disabilities. Each month we create a different piece of art that participants can take home. We use different materials and mediums, focusing on texture, color, shape and the changing seasons.

Class is held in the Kalispell **KM building**, in the office space of the Center for Restorative Youth Justice (CRYJ), which can be accessed from the parking lot on the south side of the building, just off 3rd St. E. We have



raised our class rate slightly, to **15 dollars per session**, to ensure costs are covered for staff time and material fees, working to make this class a sustainable program. Class is held on the **third Friday of each month from 2-3 PM**.

All levels of ability are welcome. Class is led by expressive arts educator Souheir Rawlings along with some extra helping hands to offer assistance where needed. If any interested individuals are looking for more information, please contact Ida Fischer (212-7684 or [ifischer@aplushc.com](mailto:ifischer@aplushc.com))

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## **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR): bridging the gaps to employment**

It was always our dream to provide services that maximize our participants' independence and opportunities to share their gifts and talents with the community. Many of our participants dream of finding a job their own. Together with Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind services (VR) we spent several months designing new services to help people develop job skills and find jobs in exciting new ways. We have developed an extensive Job Readiness assessment program on our farms and are working on several other ideas to provide learning, growing and working opportunities for all that want it. Gaining the status of a Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) gives us great new avenues to get creative and complement the services that are available in the Flathead. We will keep you updated on new developments in the next newsletter. Please call or email us if you have any questions or ideas.

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## **Children's services in collaboration with the Child Development Center (CDC)**

We are excited to let you know that we are now also set up to serve children and youth with developmental disabilities. In collaboration with the Child Development Center (CDC) we are offering placements for day programs, skill building and respite through the Autism and DD (0208) waiver program. In a future newsletter we will make sure to share some stories of some of these wonderful new participants.

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## **Serving those who served: Our veterans program**

We are approved by the Veterans Affairs (VA) to offer respite programs for Veterans who would like to get out to spend time on a farm. 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.



## **Care Farm Documentary**

Sanne Hijlkema from the Netherlands was inspired by the Care Farm Program when she spent a Summer in the Flathead two years ago. She shot footage for a documentary that features many of our farmers and clients. Recently she successfully raised \$3,500 through crowd funding to cover final production costs. A local viewing is slated to take place this Summer, but in the meantime check out her facebook page to see the preview: <https://www.facebook.com/carefarmdocumentary/?fref=>

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## **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.



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Lifeside Farms Staff  
Maarten Fischer and Rachel Grant