

Care Farm Program News and Updates

Fall 2017

A Season of New Beginnings

There have been some major changes in the Care Farm Program this year. As you all probably are aware, the founder of the program and dear friend of the Flathead, Maarten Fischer, has returned with his family to the Netherlands to embark upon an international adventure and new work endeavors there. We have been missing them all very much, and are so grateful for the strength of the program and professional network that he has built over the years. Rachel Grant has been proud to continue carrying the Care Farm flag as program supervisor, with the dedicated support of Kris Carlson and APlus Health Care.

Knowing that there must exist curiosity, both professional and personal, regarding the Fischer family and their new adventure, we've asked Maarten to provide an update on what they have been doing and how the transition has been for them, and are happy to share his response.



“Let me start by telling you that I MISS YOU ALL. My wife and I feel good about our decision (most of the time:)) and feel very grateful, but also truly loved our life and work in Montana. As it was, we felt more like a Montana family going on an adventure in Europe than a Dutch family moving back. We moved in the beginning of August and had three weeks before work for me and school for the kids started. Our eldest started the Dutch version high school and is doing very well, and our other two are loving walking to elementary school and learning Dutch. And since we are still very much in transit and busy with all kinds of things, we are happy that Ida is able to work from home and hold down the fort for now.

My work for the Noaber Foundation is very exciting and I get to work on regional and national programs and innovations that promote people to live healthy and fulfilling lives. It brings together my background in program development, health and food which is very cool. On the other hand, the work can initially be quite abstract and I sometimes miss the direct impact on lives that I was able to have in my work for A Plus. But I will take the challenge to impact many here and hopefully find some strong new solutions for many people to have more - and more healthy/happy- years.

If you would like to stay posted about our life overseas, you can check our or subscribe to my wife's blog www.idafischer.wordpress.com. Of course I am biased, but I think she writes very wittily and brilliantly about the ups and downs of living lives in two countries. And I hope to see you all next year when we will visit during the summer.”



Maggie Parsons, Welcome to the Care Farm Team

Though she has now been with us for many months, it is our pleasure to finally and formally welcome Maggie Parsons to our team. Maggie began working with the Care Farm Program in May of this year as a job coach for clients seeking to gain vocational skills and community employment. In that role, she supports clients who have gone through job readiness training on various care farms, as they transfer the valuable skills they learned at the farm into jobs in the community. In collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation Services, our aim is to find competitive employment opportunities for every client we serve. Maggie's personal account of her time with the program is particularly uplifting.



“Time and again, I’ve been impressed with how time at the farm instills clients with valuable practical skills and, in several cases, has reshaped their attitudes about work and meaningful contribution. As of this fall, I am working with seven clients and working to grow this fledgling addition to the Care Farm program. It has been a joy to become acquainted with all who are involved with the Care Farm community, and I look forward to continued collaborations!”

Maggie has already been a great addition to our Care Farm team, bringing a full heart and dedication to each of her clients.

First Season of Summer Vocational Program

Another first for our program was the inaugural season of a summer job skills program created as a bridge for high school age students with special needs as they transition from academic programs into life as adult members of the community. In collaboration the [Trellis Project](#), a youth oriented personal development program created by the Center for Restorative Youth Justice, several students from area high schools participated in twelve weeks of job skills development at the Central Kitchen Garden in Kalispell. Over the course of the summer, CRYJ youth and our job skills students worked together with staff and volunteers to expand the garden, grow a plethora of fresh fruits and vegetables, and host several community supper clubs, meals created and served by program participants to showcase the summer's work and skills of each student. The youth also manned a donation based market stand on site two days per week offering fresh produce to the community.



Maggie Parsons offered daily support for each student, and together with CRYJ staff and many community volunteers, the pilot season of the program was an incredible success. We saw impressive personal growth as students were able to apply themselves to meaningful work and self discovery. We saw inspirational collaboration between youth of all abilities and life experiences. It was truly a blessing to be a part of such an innovative and connecting educational experience, and we hope to continue to develop and expand the program in future years.

Another Fantastic Care Farm Challenge

This July marked the Fourth Annual Care Farm Challenge. Held once more at Centennial Farm in West Valley, this summer's gathering of local athletes and community members turned out to be our biggest



yet. Close to 70 participants from all over the Flathead Valley came out to run the obstacle course race, and a great crew of volunteers and spectators supported with cheers and helping hands. And as usual, everyone enjoyed a delicious BBQ lunch. The Care Farm Program is so proud to be able to continue offering the



Challenge as a free event. Thanks to the many donors who support us through Flathead Gives, an online giving campaign for local non profit organizations, and thanks to the Flathead Community Foundation for making that



fundraiser possible for our community. We are so full of gratitude to our many sponsors and supporters. Please check out our [website](#) for pictures of this year's event and a list of those we have to thank for making this event possible each summer.



Art and Soul: Expressive Arts

We continue to offer a monthly expressive art class for individuals with developmental disabilities. Led by expressive arts educator, Souheir Rawlings, this class offers the chance for creative expression and community connection for artists with special needs. The class meets on the third Friday of each month from 2-3PM at the [Center for Restorative Youth Justice](#) in Kalispell. This class is open to any interested artist, with a cost of \$15 which includes materials, supported instruction and a piece of art to take home from each session. For more information, please contact Rachel Grant or Maggie Parsons.

Create and Connect: Empowering Artists

On Friday, November 17th, we will be honoring the participants of the Art & Soul Expressive Art Class with an art show and holiday party open to the community. This event will showcase the creations of participants over the last year and provide an opportunity for community members to meet the artists. Calendars featuring participants' artwork will be available for sale, and refreshments will be provided. Please join us from 5:30 PM on Friday to celebrate the creativity of our special artists.



When: Friday November 17th, 5:30 PM

Where: [Center for Restorative Youth Justice \(CRYJ\)](#)
29 3rd St. East, Kalispell (in the KM Building)

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 or the upcoming summer vocational program. If you or someone you know are interested, please get in touch so we can coordinate with you.



If you are interested in learning more about any of our programs, have feedback or questions on what you've read here, or would like to be removed from our mailing list, please don't hesitate to reach out! You can contact us in a variety of ways:

Website: montanacarefarming.com

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Thank you for your ongoing support and interest in the work that we do. Wishing you all the happiest of holiday seasons, light and love as we continue on into a new year.