

# Lifeside Farms Spring Newsletter

## April 2017

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### Ravenridge Farm joins the Care Farm Family!



We are excited to welcome Ravenridge Farm to our community of Care Farmers here in the valley! Located in Kalispell, Ravenridge Farm has been a long time presence as a CSA provider and farmer's market participant. Last winter, longtime employees and all around awesome people, Nathan and Cassidy, took over the mixed farming operation and have decided to branch out into "green care" as well. Nathan has experience in working with at risk youth and people with disabilities in the outdoors and Cassidy has worked with kids and is excited to give back to the community in this way. Both are excited to combine their background with their passion for farming and providing fresh and healthy food. They are growing food on 3 acres that include caterpillar tunnels and a high tunnel. And all that with help from their farm dog, Willa. They will begin working with Care Farm participants in May. Check out their website: <http://www.growravenridge.com>.

*We look forward to working with you Nathan and Cassidy!*

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### New Summer Vocational Program

Ever since the Care Farm Program started in the Flathead Valley, we have dreamed of ways to provide smoother transitions for special needs youth as they move from high school to adult life in the community. We have received many requests from youth, parents and schools asking for new and innovative ways to give students work based learning opportunities. This year we are realizing this dream with a summer program that will give high school students with special needs the chance to continue building job skills through the summer, keeping up the momentum of the vocational training they receive during the school year.

Starting this year we will be building and operating our job skills programs in collaboration with the **District 5 Central Kitchen** and the **Center for Restorative Youth Justice (CRYJ)**. Inspired by success stories from other states and by a partnership with the youth focused programs of CRYJ, we will expand a small urban farm located at the Kalispell Middle School which will be operated by youth and program participants. In addition to the farm itself, there will be a weekly farm stand with fresh garden produce and several community dinners planned and implemented by youth with support from the Care Farm Program, CRYJ and members of the community. By participating in this program, each student will be exposed to a wide variety of work experiences including the growth and harvest of food through the summer and into fall, selling produce at the farm stand, and all aspects of food service from harvest and preparation to waiting tables and interacting with the public. Students will also learn how to build a resume and through several workshops will have opportunities to work on interview and interpersonal skills vital to successful employment. We are so excited to offer this new program to the high school students of the Flathead Valley, and look forward to seeing the garden grow!

If you are interested in this program for you or others, please let us know.

For more information or to volunteer contact Rachel Grant at [rgrant@aplushc.com](mailto:rgrant@aplushc.com) or 406 471 1613.

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## Fourth Annual Care Farm Challenge



It's hard to believe that we are already celebrating the fourth year of the Care Farm Challenge. We are so proud and excited to be hosting our farm style obstacle course race for yet another year. Each summer, on the last Saturday in July, individuals with special needs from all over the valley gather at Centennial Farm to test their skills on over 20 obstacles including creek crossings, spear throwing, a giant zip line and other undisclosed challenges. Care Farm Program participants work for months every spring to create new and exciting obstacles for the athletes to conquer. In years past 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. Please join us this summer on **Saturday July 29th** from 10 AM to 1 PM to brave the course, cheer on the runners, and enjoy a delicious barbecue after the race. This event is free for all participants and open to the public. For all the details on this year's race, access to registration forms or to volunteer, please see our website; [www.montanacarefarming.com/events](http://www.montanacarefarming.com/events), or call Rachel Grant (406 471 1613) with any questions.

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## Our annual fundraiser for the Care Farm Challenge on May 4<sup>th</sup>

As mentioned above, the Care Farm Challenge is a free event with lunch, prizes and take home gifts for all who attend. Our costs are not great, but we depend upon our giving community to help make sure that we can keep this event open and free. This year we are once again participating in the 24 hour giving campaign, **Flathead Gives (formerly called GiveLocal)**. This event is designed to support non profit organizations in the Flathead Valley with a full day of online gift giving. **From 6PM on May 4th to 6PM on May 5th**, find the Care Farm Challenge at [www.givegab.com/nonprofits/care-farm-challenge](http://www.givegab.com/nonprofits/care-farm-challenge) and please give what you can to help us reach our goal this year. Your donations pay for course construction, food, and awards for the athletes who come to participate. We thank you for your support in years past, and in advance for this year's event!

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## New URL: [www.montanacarefarming.com](http://www.montanacarefarming.com)

When we started our website, we were not sure where our program would go and started with a modest URL. Since that simple start, we have found our program expanding and people from all over the world visiting our site so we decided to simplify our web address. Our website is the same, but the address has slightly changed. Please find us at [www.montanacarefarming.com](http://www.montanacarefarming.com). If you haven't been there for a while, please make sure you pay us a visit. We keep adding useful links and information and the Care Farm challenge is now on the calendar. If you are searching in vain for anything on our site, we would love to hear your suggestions for additional links or program information.

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## Our Outreach: Spreading the Word

One thing we do not often talk about is our outreach. People from all over the US, Canada and the UK find us on the web and make contact to hear more about our program. We receive requests for visits to our local farms, invitations to visit similar farms elsewhere, or invitations to speak at or attend conferences. We receive emails and calls at least twice per month. Unfortunately, we cannot often travel to others, but it is still exciting to assist the many wonderful initiatives and support the ideas that are forming a movement. For example, just this month the documentary, "[The Country Side of Care](#)", (mentioned in previous newsletters) was shown in Missoula, India, Canada and South Carolina. Consequently, Maarten ended up chatting with initiates from those same areas as well as New York, Minnesota and Florida. Aside from that, University of Montana Professor, Keith Anderson, presented his research on our program at the annual Montana Gerontology Conference. This research was recently published in Home Health Services Quarterly, and you can read the full article here: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01621424.2017.1291390>). We were also approved to co-present this year at the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics World Congress in San Francisco and in addition, have had two groups of students studying geriatric mental health use our program as case studies. It is inspiring that some days are spent providing feedback to these ambitious programs seeking

the renovation of health care across the nation. We consider ourselves fortunate to be able to contribute to the emancipation of people with disabilities and health related challenges, and are grateful for the support provided by Kris Carlson and A Plus Health Care as we make this part of our work.

## Volunteer Opportunities

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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.

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Thank you for your input and for your continued support our program!

Lifeside Farms Staff

Rachel Grant, Ida Fischer, Stacy Shull and Maarten Fischer