

# COMMON GROUND FARM

A Community Farm Project in the Hudson Valley

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

**EDUCATION**

**FOOD JUSTICE**

**COMMUNITY**

**SUSTAINABLE  
AGRICULTURE**



Common Ground Farm's mission is to serve our community as a model for food justice and education for people of all ages and incomes.

[www.commongroundfarm.org](http://www.commongroundfarm.org) / [admin@commongroundfarm.org](mailto:admin@commongroundfarm.org)



*“Common Ground Farm is a living, breathing example of how small-scale, sustainable farms serve the local community. Through food pantries, soup kitchens, school field trips, classrooms, summer camp groups, farmers markets, restaurant outlets, and our flagship mobile farmers market, we feed thousands of people each year and fight to ensure that the local food system serves everyone in the community, regardless of income. I am extremely proud to lead this team of committed young farmers, food activists, and educators.”*

*- Susan Paykin, Farm Manager*

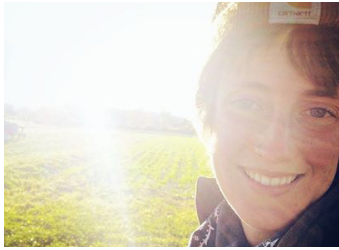
Susan was highlighted in *Modern Farmer*, a national magazine focused on new food and farming movements.

- Read more at [modernfarmer.com](http://modernfarmer.com)



# STAFF & BOARD

*the staff, board, and volunteers of Common Ground Farm*



## **Susan Paykin** *Farm Manager*

Susan oversees Common Ground Farm's land, crop production, distribution, farm crew, food justice programs, and farm partnerships. She is committed to reforming the modern food system through sustainable agriculture

and working to ensure all people have access to healthful foods.

Susan joined Common Ground in 2015 after spending three seasons working and learning on farms in New York and Italy. She completed the farm apprenticeship at Glynwood in Cold Spring, NY, where she received training and experience in vegetable production, farm planning, and financial management. Prior to farming, Susan worked on social and environmental justice public policy issues at a Washington, D.C. non-profit. She holds a B.A. from Brandeis University.



## **Sember Weinman** *Education Director*

Sember oversees educational programs, including Preschool on the Farm, Farm Camp, adult workshops, and Farm to School programming. Sember grew up in Denver, CO, and went to Oberlin College, where she double majored in

Environmental Studies and Art. She later moved to New York City to pursue an MFA at Pratt Institute. Out of school, she worked as an art teacher in the South Bronx, and then as Education Coordinator at Lehman College Art Gallery. Sember moved with her family to Beacon in 2011 and was thrilled to become Common Ground Farm's Education Director where she could directly influence positive food choices in kids, in addition to helping people of all ages foster connections to the earth and become more self sufficient.



## **Kundi Glasson** *Administrative Manager & Director Of Events*

Kundi joined Common Ground in 2016 as Administrative Manager. Kundi has lived and worked in the Hudson Valley for over a decade, and is dedicated to helping others through her multifaceted background. Over the last two years she has supported Common Ground Farm as volunteer Chair of Events, as well as working locally as a licensed real estate sales person for Gate House Realty. She has recently volunteered for the Beacon Soup Kitchen, and was also the former President of Wee Play Community Project. She is an active runner and hiker, and can occasionally be found on trails, in swimming holes, and at local farms enjoying the best food this region has to offer.

## 2015 FARM CREW



## **Sarah Simon** *Farmers Market Manager*

In 2016, Common Ground will be taking on management of the Beacon Farmers' Market, with Sarah Simon adding the role of market manager to her work on the farm. Sarah is happy to continue at Common Ground for a second season in the field, and excited for the new opportunity to manage the Beacon Farmers' Market. After studying literature and dance in college and teaching for a year, she followed her heart to a vegetable farm in Maine, and after that first season was drawn to Beacon by the mission and values of Common Ground. She has loved being part of this wonderful town and organization, and looks forward to building up the market as a place of vibrant local commerce and community in the upcoming year. She also enjoys drinking coffee, reading, and exploring nearby hikes and lakes. Sarah holds a B.A. from Princeton University.

## **Erika Brenner** *Assistant Farmer*

Erika Brenner is an experienced farmer with a diverse farming background. She is committed to food justice and building a more equitable food system. Her favorite squash is the kabocha.

## **Jessica Shay** *Farm Apprentice*



### FARM CAMP STAFF

Noam Yaffe, *On-Site Director*  
Christine Gavin, *Head Instructor*  
Alyssa Britton, *Instructor*  
Allison Toepp, *Instructor*  
Caitlin Derry, *Instructor*  
Sequoyah Amador, *Counselor*  
Jenna Finger, *Counselor*  
Sophia Ptacek, *Counselor*  
Arielle Gironza, *Counselor*

### BOARD of DIRECTORS

Ben Giardullo, *President*  
Stephanie Fisher-Meyer, *Vice President*  
Rachel Saunders, *Secretary*  
Melanie Sherony, *Treasurer*  
Doug Ornstein  
Kristen Cronin  
Paul Ellis  
Stacy Dedring

### CHEFS

Katie Key  
Evelyn Garcia



Farm Apprentice Erika Brenner washes radishes for delivery to a local food pantry.

## SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Common Ground Farm had a banner year, donating more than 6,000 lbs. of fresh, organically grown produce to local soup kitchens and food pantries, equaling approximately 5,000 meals to families in need virtually all living within 20 miles of the farm.

The farm crew remains committed to sustainable agriculture, following organic growing practices in pursuit of long-term soil health and preservation. The farm grew 3 acres of diversified vegetables with a full-time crew of three (farm manager and two seasonal apprentices) and one part-time summer apprentice. Most field work is done by hand, ensuring quality outcomes to our food pantry and market customers, as well as comprehensive hands-on training for the farm apprentices and volunteers of all ages.



Farm Apprentice Sarah Simon delivers a fresh harvest of greens and herbs to the Salvation Army Soup Kitchen in Beacon.

## FOOD DONATIONS

The farm continued relationships with the St. Andrew's Food Pantry, Fishkill Food Pantry, and the Salvation Army Beacon Soup Kitchen, and established new partnerships with the Zion Episcopal Church, New Vision Church of Deliverance, and Eat Local NY / Westchester Food Pantry.

The farm's weekly production and distribution schedule revolves around harvest & delivering fresh produce to each of these venues throughout the growing season. In 2015, the farm was able to expand its growing and distribution season by two months by hiring a year-round farm manager and growing more storage crops and winter greens. In 2016, we plan to construct a new high tunnel on the farm to expand winter production even longer, growing cold-hardy greens in a passive-solar heated structure.

*In 2015, we regularly donated fresh produce to the following institutions:*

Beacon Salvation Army Soup Kitchen - Fishkill Food Pantry - Zion Episcopal Church Food Pantry  
St. Andrew's/St. Luke's Food Pantry - New Vision Church of Deliverance Food Distribution

# GREEN TEENS

In addition to direct donations to food pantries and soup kitchens, a central program of the farm's food justice mission is the Common Greens Mobile Market in the City of Beacon.

The Common Greens Mobile Market, now in its seventh season, is a partnership between the Green Teen Community Gardening Program of Cornell Cooperative Extension and Common Ground Farm. The Mobile Market delivers fresh produce, grown at the farm and in the Green Teen community gardens, to low-income neighborhoods in the City of Beacon. All produce is priced affordably, at least 50% cheaper than market retail value. This year, the Mobile Market expanded by adding a new weekly stop at the First Presbyterian Church in Beacon, in addition to the Community Health Center as well as the Beacon Housing Authority Senior Center, reaching over 400 customers throughout the market season.

This year the Mobile Market offered fresh fruit for the first time by partnering with a local fruit farm. We also launched the 'Greens for Greens' Program, a coupon that doubles the value of a customer's food assistance benefits (SNAP, FMNP, WIC) used to purchase produce at the market. For every \$4 spent, the customer received a \$4 coupon for more fruits or vegetables at the stand. With fifty percent of all market revenue coming from food assistance, the success of the Greens for Greens program demonstrates that those individuals and families receiving food assistance are eager for more ways of accessing fresh, healthy foods, and we plan to expand the Greens for Greens program next season with additional funding.

The Mobile Market also serves as job skills training platforms for the youth in the Green Teen Program. The teens are trained by our farmers in market retail display and set up, customer service, and financial transactions, and are given additional responsibility throughout the season in regard to managing the market stops. Working closely with the Green Teen program staff, we have developed a market, retail, and agricultural skills training curriculum that includes teens working with our staff on the farm, in addition to our regular weekly stand at the larger and more diverse Beacon Farmers Market.



The Common Greens Mobile Market travels to low-income neighborhoods in Beacon in its iconic repurposed green school bus.



CGF Farm Staff share lunch with Green Teens after spending the morning volunteering on the farm.



Farm Manager Susan Paykin with Green Teens during a market skills training workshop.





## FARM & COMMUNITY

We were thrilled to return to the Beacon Farmers Market as one of the market's flagship vendors, offering a new "Market Card" Program and attending the market for 4 weeks longer than last season. We were the only vendor at the Beacon Market to accept payment in all food assistance coupons offered in New York State. Looking ahead to 2016, we are thrilled to be bringing our mission of food justice and education to the Beacon Farmers Market as the new managing organization.

A hands-on, engaging experience for children and adults of all ages, our U-Pick Program represents the best of our work in both food access and education. Over the past year we have successfully grown our U-Pick Program to over 30 members coming to the farm for 12 weeks over the summer to harvest their own share of vegetables. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback in end-of-season surveys from our members, who appreciated the educational experience of coming to the farm, talking to farmers, and reading our signage and weekly emails with information about the crops, how they grow and how to harvest them. We were also able to offer a U-Pick share to our Farm Camp scholarship recipients, ensuring that these campers receive both a meaningful educational experience on the farm and fresh vegetables to take home to cook and eat with their families.

The farm collaborated closely with the education programs, leading field tours for visiting school groups as well as weekly activities with Farm Camp. Children in these programs were able to directly experience the farm by coming out into the fields to harvest, then preparing a snack made with the vegetable they just picked. In the coming year we plan to collaborate with local schools to serve farm-fresh produce into the school cafeterias.



Students visit the farm and harvest radishes directly from the field.



A Farm Camp scholarship recipient picks cherry tomatoes as part of her family's U-Pick share.



## FARM TO SCHOOL

Common Ground Farm partners with the Beacon City School District to provide high quality food-based educational programming that encourages and enables children to make healthy choices. In 2015 our Farm to School programming expanded to include multiple points of contact both in the school and at the farm for students of JV Forrestal and South Avenue Elementary, the two schools in Beacon with the highest percentages of students receiving free and reduced-price lunches.

Common Ground Farm provided Chef in the Classroom visits for 20 classes at South Avenue and JV Forrestal Elementary, totalling 500 points of contact with students. Chef in the Classroom engages students to participate in making a dish together with a professional chef, using vegetables that are featured both in the cafeteria offerings and during garden time with our partner organization, Hudson Valley Seed.

Teacher surveys show us that this program really makes a difference. When asked: Do you think the chef visit created a behavior change among your students? One teacher replied "Yes, Wow! Even some picky eaters tried it!" another teacher wrote, "The chef was great with the children. All the students were engaged and involved. All the students tried the dish."

Before and after: Prior to the cooking demos in seven South Avenue classes, only 33% of Kindergarteners and First graders were able to correctly identify spinach, and only 42% of the children said that they liked the vegetable. But after preparing the dish together, 91% of the students tried it and 78% said that they liked it.

## SCHOOL VISITS

In 2015, we hosted 27 classes from the Beacon City School District, Cold Spring, and several local private schools at the farm, totalling 590 student visits.

Each of these visits include a field tour, where the students interact with our farmers, learn about the seasonal work going on at the farm, and harvest a vegetable. The students take their harvest to the classroom, where they participate in making a dish using the crop that they just harvested. The students also visit the barn, where they interact with the animals and learn how animals function on a farm and what they provide for us. Many classes also opt for a fourth curriculum-linked activity, which includes studying ladybugs or earthworms close-up, building scare-crows, or visiting the pond to learn about animal life cycles and food webs.

Teacher surveys indicate that the program is valuable to both teachers and their students: "I think harvesting the kale and making the salad made the 'farm to table' experience more real for the children." and "Loved the trip so much I went home and signed my daughter up for your 3-4 Animals camp this summer!"



Farm to School: Chef Katie teaches students about herbs



Farm to School Farm Visit: JV Forrestal students on their way to harvest broccoli raab



Overall, in 2015 Common Ground Farm made 1090 points of contact with school children through our Farm to School Programs. For the 2016 school year, we plan to extend programming to all four Beacon elementary schools, increase pre-K programming, and develop a 5th grade legacy project.



Outdoor Skills Campers foraging wineberries to make into jam

## FARM CAMP

In 2015 Farm Camp was offered for six weeks, providing experiential nature and food based learning for 289 children. This summer camp is an opportunity for children between the ages of 3 and 12 to explore our relationship to food and to nature through hands-on experiments, movement, games, and art. Each week of camp offers a new theme. In 2015 weekly themes included Animals, Elements, Habitats, Outdoor Skills, Farmers, Good Food, and Nature and Art. Each day has a structured morning, where campers explore thematic ideas through a variety of approaches. After lunch, the campers are offered “choice time”, where they get to choose between three or four different activities.

In 2015 we received a Dyson Foundation scholarship grant, which allowed us to provide full scholarships to 27 campers who wouldn't be able to afford camp otherwise. The scholarships included meals, before and after care, a travel stipend, and U-pick vegetables. The Scholarship Program was incredibly beneficial to the participants, their parents, and to the whole camp community. One parent wrote: “I am thankful and humbled having been a participant as I have been in tremendous hardships. This helped us both.” Another parent wrote: “The Scholarship Program is a godsend, without it we wouldn't have been able to experience camp this year.”

In 2016, we plan to extend the scholarship offerings. We will also pilot a Counselor-in-Training Program, to provide opportunities to youth between ages 13 and 17, extend before and after care to all campers, and increase the number of weeks of summer camp available.



Farm Camper visiting with the sheep during Animals week



Campers participating in U-Pick Program





# FARM WORKSHOPS

*Common Ground Farm offers a variety of workshops, both one time DIY events for adults and ongoing programs for children.*

## Preschool On The Farm

Preschool On The Farm is a one-hour program for toddlers ages 2 to 4 and their parents or caregivers. Each week explores a different theme through movement, story telling, hands-on and sensory exploration, and art. This program offers young children opportunities to do things for themselves, interact with nature, and try fresh food. In 2015 preschool on the farm received 223 visits with young children.

## Young Homesteaders

Young Homesteaders is a six-session after-school workshop series for children ages 5 to 12 that engages children in self-sufficiency and life skills that are relevant to the changing seasons. Participants learn how to save seeds, make cheese, bake bread and work with wool over the course of the program. This series provided 44 points of contact for participating children.

## Adult and Family Workshops and Programs:

We received 215 visits through our adult and family workshops and programs in 2015. These programs are offered to local community members who want to learn the skills needed to provide for or make things for themselves. In 2015, adult programs included Introduction to Beekeeping, How to Keep Backyard Chickens, Gardening 101, and Beneficial Weeds. Family Workshops included a Gourd Workshop and a Holiday Felting Workshop. We also offer birthday parties, where children visit with the barn animals, make a craft, visit the pond, or do a scavenger hunt.

## Pioneer Living

is a workshop series for children ages 5 to 12, that brings the world of Laura Ingalls Wilder to life. Children engage in a variety of seasonally relevant activities that relate to a world before modern technology. Students create their own one-room house models, barter at the General Store, and design a garden that will support a family throughout the year. In 2015 Pioneer Living was offered as a four session spring workshop, both on the weekend and as a home-school program on a weekday morning. This series provided 30 points of contact.

## Wilderness Skills

Wilderness Skills is offered as a three-session weekend mini-series for children ages 7 to 12. Participants learn basic survival skills and engage in activities and experiences to become junior naturalists. Programs include hiking, woods explorations, wildlife identification, using and making tools, building shelters, fire building, and cold weather survival. This mini series provided 18 points of contact.

## Summer Cooking Demos

Common Ground Farm works in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension and KidsRKids to provide educational opportunities for both CCE's Green Teens and for young people who participate in Beacon's Free Summer Lunch Program. Each week our chef educators teach the Green Teens cooking and teaching skills. Working with the chefs, they then lead a cooking demo with children who receive a free lunch. In 2015 this program ran for five weeks, engaged a group of 7 teenagers who worked with approximately 12 children each week through this program, for a total of 95 points of contact.



We made a significant impact on our community in 2015, providing educational opportunities for people from age two into adulthood to connect with food, farming, and the natural world. Over the course of the year, our education programs touched the lives of 559 adults and 1785 children.

# 2016 BEACON FARMERS MARKET

We are going into our first season of managing the Beacon Farmers Market. These are our goals for 2016:

## 1 CREATE

To create and fulfill a new market mission of feeding and engaging the Beacon community, supporting local farms and businesses, and creating a more just food system.

## 2 GROW

Growing the size and diversity of the market from 12 to 23 weekly vendor spaces

## 3 OFFER

Accept SNAP/EBT, and offer NY Fresh Connect Checks (a 40% bonus on SNAP/EBT at farmers' markets)

## 4 EXPAND

Coordinate the expansion, distribution and acceptance of Greens for Greens 'double-up' checks at the farmers' market; these \$4 checks are a matching amount for fresh fruits/vegetables for customers using WIC/FMNP checks

## 5 OFFER

Offering weekly live music performances and free educational events

## 6 COMMUNICATE

Having the manager on-site each week to communicate with customers, facilitate vendor community, and ensure smooth market operations

## 7 IMPROVE

To improve market web communications by creating a website and Instagram account, and by updating the existing Facebook page

## 8 REBRAND

Rebrand the market with a new logo and other marketing materials; improve publicity in Beacon through posters and flyers and a Main St banner to announce the re-opening. Install permanent market signs around town.

## 9 OUTREACH

Improve outreach to low-income communities by tabling and poster at the health center and SNAP offices.

## 10 EXPAND

Re-launch the winter indoor market in a new location on Main St after a 2015 winter market hiatus



# DEVELOPMENT

## *our operating budget and grant funding*

### Income

Donations & Sponsors	\$21,951
Education Programs	\$71,353
Farm Income	\$44,732
Fundraisers	\$32,578
Grants	\$50,800
Interest Income	\$254
Rental Income	\$1,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$222,668</b>

### Expenses

Advertising	\$841
Contract Services	\$17,421
Depreciation Expense	\$2,626
Education Materials	\$5,117
Facilities	\$7,837
Fiscal Sponsorship: Fareground	\$17,756
Farm Expenses	\$16,221
Farm Sales & Transportation Expenses	\$2,694
Fundraiser Expenses	\$10,822
Insurance Expenses	\$6,283
Memberships, Training, Conferences	\$300
Office/Administrative	\$7,965
Other Expenses	\$1,471
<b>Total Payroll</b>	<b>\$112,736</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$210,090</b>
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>\$12,578</b>

# OUR DONORS & PARTNERS

*the generous community members who make our work possible*

## **\$1,000+**

Alexander Reese & Alison Spear  
Benjamin Giardullo  
Carol Marquand & Stan Freilich  
Christal Rodriguez & Jodie Staton  
Erin Matson  
Mark Jay Menting & Laura Jean Wilson  
Melanie Sherony

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Krystal Ford  
Kundi Glasson  
Meredith & Paul Laubin  
Rachel Saunders  
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William Richardson  
Yukie Schmitz

## **\$25-\$99**

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Sue Rossi  
Susan Butler  
Susan Stauber  
Todd Leonardo  
Tonya Brubaker  
Verplanck Garden Club  
Wael Hassan

## **Grants & Financial Support**

Community Foundations  
of the Hudson Valley  
Dyson Foundation  
IBM  
Obercreek Farm

## **Additional Support**

All You Knead Bakery  
Artisan Wineshop  
Army Hockey  
Barb's Butchery  
Beacon Bite  
Beacon Bread Co.  
Beacon Pantry

Beacon Pilates  
Beahive  
Blushery  
Boscobel  
Brooklyn Oyster  
Burlock Interior Design  
Chatham Brewing Co.  
Chelsea Green Publishing  
Chronogram  
Cucina  
Diana Mae Flowers  
Drink More Good  
Echo  
Ella's Bellas  
Feng Shui Design  
Fishkill Farms  
Francesco Mastalia  
Gatehouse Realty  
Glynwood  
Gold's Gym  
Harry's Hot Sandwiches  
Hawthorne Valley Farm  
Helen Zuman  
Homespun Foods  
Hudson Hills Academy  
Hudson Valley Community Acupuncture  
Hudson Valley Harvest  
Jessica Wickham  
Keith Decent  
Le Express Bistro  
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Loliware  
Marbled Meatshop  
Mercato  
Millhouse Brewing Co.  
Mohonk Mountain House  
Museum of Natural History  
Nectar Imports  
Newburgh Brewing Co.  
Nomad Yoga  
North River Hops & Brewing  
Oliver Kita  
One Nature LLC  
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Orange Pediatric  
Paul Ellis Consulting  
Peekskill Brewery  
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Randolph School  
Rethink Local  
Roosevelt Vet on Hudson  
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Serevan  
Sloop Brewing Co.  
Snowdance Farm  
Sovereign Cider  
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