



2019 Annual Review

Keep Farming. Feed People. Build Community.

Photo Credit: Walker Studios LLC.

Massaro Community Farm is thrilled that Farm Manager Steve Munno was named *Connecticut's 2019 Outstanding Young Farmer* by the CT Agricultural Information Council. This award recognizes outstanding achievements in agriculture as well as community involvement. For the past decade, Steve has been exemplary in both realms.



Farm Manager, Steve Munno

In 2009, Steve accepted the challenge to transform this dormant dairy farm, generously donated to the Town of Woodbridge by the Massaro family, into a vegetable farm. Everything needed to be done in short order: he must get to know the land, prepare a crop plan, acquire equipment, hire staff, sell subscriptions to our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, and build relationships throughout the state. Remarkably, by mid-June of 2010, we were growing crops on four acres of field, distributing the first harvest to 125 Pioneer CSA subscribers, and donating fresh produce to hunger relief organizations. Over the last 10 years,

Steve has improved infrastructure, implemented conservation measures, and reclaimed fallow fields. We now cultivate more than 10 acres, provide produce for 240 CSA subscribers, and sell to local restaurants and at farmer's markets. And, of course, we donate at least 10% of our harvest to hunger relief organizations. Produce donations average 6,200 pounds each year, or enough to prepare 5,166 meals.

In addition to managing the farm, Steve is mentoring the next generation of organic farmers. At least five former Massaro Farm staffers have started their own independent farms in Connecticut. Steve also leads workshops at area schools and universities. He co-founded the New CT Farmer Alliance, created in 2011 to support new farmers across the state. Steve is currently Board President of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut (CT NOFA).

We congratulate Steve on his achievement, and thank him for ten years of outstanding leadership here at Massaro Community Farm!



"Thank you and all of the farmers and staff for everything that you do. We are so thankful to have participated in and experienced such an amazing farm. Thank you."

- Michelle and Bob Ross, CSA subscribers

KEEP FARMING

Executive Director/Board Message

On behalf of the Board of Directors and farm staff, Massaro Community Farm thanks all of YOU, the volunteers, and community of local and state partners, for your generous and steadfast support.

When we began restoring the property, the first hurdle was to form a new identity. We set out to create a community space with a mission to *keep farming, feed people and build community*. We hired Steve Munno as farm manager to deal with the daunting task of converting the farm into a diverse vegetable operation. Each year since then we have fulfilled our mission in meaningful ways. We hope you enjoy reading about our 2019 accomplishments in this report to you.

Now, we are a model of sustainable development and community engagement.

In spite of a challenging growing season, the farm will donate more than 6,000 pounds of produce to hunger relief by year end. We've also logged 1,000 volunteer hours and over 5,000 attendants in our various farm programs. As we celebrate ten years of farming, we remain true to our original vision. With your continued financial support and generous volunteer participation, we will continue to build an exemplary community farm - to enrich the soil and nurture the soul.

Caty Poole, Executive Director

Jon Gorham, President, Board of Directors

This year's projects: a new parking area and more

We made several major changes to the farm landscape in 2019. The most prominent addition was a new permeable parking area on the northeast side of the farm. This parking area allows rain or melting snow to slowly infiltrate the soil below, rather than flowing into the fields. This reduces erosion of valuable topsoil. Several years in the making, this installation creates a safer experience for farm visitors.

- We paved a parking spot by the barn entrance for disabled visitors or staff.
- We buried large boulders in the upper field to make way for hundreds of new pollinator plants.
- We resurfaced a tractor lane prone to washout.
- We cleared a patio space behind the farmhouse for our farmer's growing family.

We couldn't have completed this work without the generosity of the Haynes Group based in Seymour.

In addition, we constructed a shed for the farm's newest addition - goats! And we'll soon complete a new office and meeting space on the second floor of the barn. We wish to thank STC Design Build Development for donating the labor for the barn project.

Any changes made on the farm are only undertaken after careful consideration by our facilities committee. Let us know if you'd like to share your expertise in this area of operation.



2019 Projects



FEED PEOPLE

We remain committed to ensuring farm produce reaches food insecure neighbors by donating at least 10% of our harvest each year to hunger relief organizations. The farm has donated more than 65,000 pounds of produce since 2010.

This year, we expanded the number of agencies who received produce donations. We maintained long-standing relationships with Woodbridge Human Services and Ansonia Salvation Army. We also gave several hundred pounds of tomatoes to Spooner House in Shelton; their staff made those tomatoes into sauce for resident lunches. We took crate after crate of carrots and peppers to Loaves & Fishes, a food pantry in New Haven whose weekly food distribution serves



A sea of green: Citizens Bank volunteers helped install two new program tents this past spring.

We also made donations to other agencies, including Leeway and Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen in New Haven, and Master's Table in Ansonia.

In May, the Valley United Way granted Massaro \$20,000 to partner with St. Vincent dePaul Food Pantry in Derby in a year-long food outreach program. Farm staff use our produce for weekly nutritional cooking demonstrations, and participants take home a bag of fresh produce along with pantry staples that allow them to reproduce the healthy meal at home. This program will run through June of 2020.

We are grateful to the 127 individual volunteers who worked 1,000 hours in 2019. Nielsen Group volunteers harvested 700 quarts of strawberries this spring. Citizens Bank employees spent a day putting up all-season program tents. Individuals weeded the Learning Garden, cleared the Nature Trail, painted the goat shed, installed fencing, and cleared an entire field of tomatoes and trellising.



Volunteer Ruth Davenport and Executive Director, Caty Poole (l to r) prepare a beet carrot slaw for the food nutrition demo at Derby's St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry.



up to 350 people. We donated salad greens and tomatoes for the 200 attendees of the Sporting Clays Tournament, an annual fundraiser for New Haven's Ronald McDonald House.

"Thanks for donating food towards our office volunteer efforts at Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen. And, our family really enjoyed the dinner. Great job!"

- Frank D'Ostilio of Real Living Wareck D'Ostilio.



Dinner on the Farm

Labor Day weekend, friends of the farm gathered to celebrate the harvest at our annual *Dinner on the Farm*. In addition to marking the many successes of our first decade, we honored the donors who have established two major funds on behalf of the farm. Their generosity is deeply appreciated!



Thanks to partners and sponsors

This year's dinner also marked a new partnership between the farm and the chefs at Olmo Restaurant in New Haven. Alex Lishchynsky, Craig Hutchinson and Jason Sobecinski transformed our harvest into the delightful courses enjoyed by guests. We could not offer this spectacular farm-to-table meal without partners like them.



The Massaro Farm Legacy Fund



Paul and Judith DeCoster (center) with friends at Dinner on the Farm.

Paul and Judith DeCoster created *The Massaro Farm Legacy Fund* to protect the future of vegetable farming in Woodbridge. The DeCosters are particularly interested in supporting the farm's commitment to its food donation program. At least 10% of our harvest is given to neighbors who may not otherwise have access to organic vegetables. Paul was a founding Massaro board member and served as its secretary through 2013.

The Get Outdoors & Enjoy Nature Fund



Louisa Cunningham and Bill Kelly created *The Get Outdoors and Enjoy Nature Fund* to nurture the next generation of environmentalists. Their fund will provide opportunities for elementary school-aged children who would not otherwise be able to visit the farm and learn about nature. Louisa has been a member of the farm's education committee since 2013 and a board member since 2014.

Thank You for Your Support!

2019 Event Sponsors

Haynes Group
Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield
Eversource CT
Lock, Stock & Barrel
Southern CT State University

Jacobi, Case & Speranzini
The Kayne Family
Laticrete International
Wareck D'Ostilio
Buckley, Wynne & Parese
Coldwell Banker of Woodbridge
Hocon Gas

A-1 Toyota
Ciola Excavation
CT Orthopaedic Specialists
Beth & Alan Heller
Oxford Academy of Hair Design
Ryan & Tyma
ServPro
Visiting Angels



We encourage you to sign up for our bi-weekly email newsletter to receive current news about upcoming farm events and programming, including next year's Dinner on the Farm.



Join Team Melonheads as we ride each April in the Rock to Rock Earth Day Ride!

Keep Farming. Feed People. Build Community.

BUILD COMMUNITY

Programs are blooming at Massaro Community Farm! We began the year with a winter discussion series on food and sustainability, co-sponsored by the Woodbridge Town Library. Adult learning continued with our season of beekeeping and other outdoor classes on the farm. We deeply appreciate the long standing partnership with CT Beekeepers Association which has provided hands-on backyard honey bee management to sellout crowds since 2012.

This year, Education Director Corey Thomas worked with 18 organizations, providing farm-based education to just over 1,000 students. Among many activities, students planted and harvested vegetables, made their own snacks, dressed up to learn how plants develop, and explored life cycles in the farm woods.



Fall after school attendees build a winter shelter in the farm woods.



A group of students harvest kale and carrots on the farm.

A grant from Autism Speaks allowed us to expand our Summer Camp to include children on the autism spectrum. We purchased new sensory materials and adjusted our curriculum. These small changes allowed us to include children with varying abilities, and improved our Summer Camp for all campers.

For the second year, local high schoolers worked with our farm staff in a summer youth employment program. Thanks to support from the Werth



"Thank you for nurturing our kids to be little nature enthusiasts. Your work is invaluable".

- from Sivan Doron, parent of summer campers

Family Foundation, four youth worked for seven weeks alongside staffers to learn about our food donations, aspects of organic growing and general principles of farm management. This program strives to provide valuable job skills to young adults from surrounding communities who lack opportunities.

Finally, we introduced both rabbits and goats to the farm. The goats are adjacent to the woods where they will graze weeds and invasive plants. The rabbits live in the hutch next to the Learning Garden. Together, our livestock forms an integral part of farm education and offers families the chance to visit the farm year-round. Special thanks to volunteers from Anthem Blue Cross and Beta Mu Sigma from Southern Connecticut State University, who prepared for the new arrivals!