



# WELL FED

**Newsletter for Wellspring Farm CSA**

January 2006

Volume 4 Number 1

## Farmer's Report: Looking Back, Looking Forward

Snow is flying here and the farm is tucked in underneath its white, fluffy down blanket. The greenhouse tables are empty, laying in wait for spring's first trays of green seedlings. It is hibernation time for critters and soil alike. Not so for vegetable farmers. The start of the new year marks the return of the light, and the beginning of next season's crop plan. Seed catalogs cover my desk and numbers begin to dance in my dreams. How many plantings of broccoli for this year? Which new varieties of hot peppers to choose? When to plant the last seeding of spinach? I consult the log books from last season, review member survey comments, talk to other growers for suggestions.

Proper planning for the future requires close examination of the past. Last year we enjoyed excellent crop yields and quality due to planning, skill, good fortune and a lot of hard work. On the flip side, I got seriously sick a few times during the season, making me realize the need to have more help when needed on the farm. Fuel and supply prices went up and up. In order to boost the farm's income, we hustled to sell produce to wholesale markets in order to meet our budget. Whew! The season came to a close. Thanks to Amanda, Parker and our star volunteer Lu, we made it over the hurdles. I gained some hard-earned knowledge, which I'm putting into action this year with the following plans:

- ◆ **Expand CSA with a Montpelier pick-up site**

In order to get our local organic produce onto more

*(con't on p.2)*



## 2005 Share Value

Your Wellspring CSA membership was an excellent economic value in 2005. **Both share sizes received a 35% discount off organic retail prices.** In other words, you received 35% more produce for your money. Full shares received a bonus of \$175 worth of produce and small shares received \$115 of free produce. In addition to delivering a hefty discount off retail prices, we provided the freshest, tastiest, high quality produce & a community experience to boot.

This season's discount was much higher than our 10-15% discount goal due to exceptional weather, skilled staff and good planning. Every year we aim to exceed the purchase price for several reasons. First, members make a special trip to buy direct from the farm, & this has value to us. Second, you give up some choice about what you get as a CSA member. Third, if you miss a pick up once in awhile, you are still receiving good value for your membership fee. Fourth, planning excess crops ensures that we can provide you with good selection & value.

*(con't on back page)*

tables with the least amount of complexity, I'm reducing our wholesale accounts in favor of increasing our CSA membership. I'm excited to announce that **we are adding a Montpelier pick-up site** on Thursdays. This site is limited to 30 shareholders on a first-come, first-served basis. Members may now choose to either pick up at the farm or to pick up in Montpelier for the season. Watch for our spring newsletter for more information.

◆ **Bring share price in line with share value**

Since 2003 our prices have remained the same, while the cost of fuel, seeds, labor — hey, you name it! — has increased. In order for the farm to be financially sustainable, our share prices must keep pace with inflation. In 2006, full shares will be \$545 and small shares will be \$360. This is \$2-\$3 more per week for your share. The added revenue will go toward additional staff and will help us get closer to our goal of paying a livable wage. We will continue to offer excellent value for your money: **10-15% discount off organic retail prices, and the same bonuses as always — pick-your-own, Harvest Fest, farm newsletters, recipes, and the freshest produce around — things you don't get at the store.** We are committed to making shares accessible to everyone via subsidized shares, flexible payment plans and working memberships (see p. 3 for more). For those who are able, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to support our subsidized shares.

◆ **Hire more labor & offer working memberships**

Over the past three years, our sales have increased by 100 percent, yet staffing has remained constant. The extra work has been absorbed by investing in more equipment, and by working faster and harder, sometimes to the point of exhaustion. Farmers get ill like everyone else, and the show must go on. In order to make the farm more physically sustainable, I am increasing hired labor and offering **three working memberships**. The latter is an exciting development which will put more member hands in our soil (see page 3 for more information).

Thank you for supporting your local farms. **You are making a difference.**

## Sharing the Harvest



Wellspring Farm is proud and grateful to have provided about \$10,000 worth of produce in 2005 to low-income residents of central Vermont, due to two vibrant programs organized separately by Food Works' of Montpelier and the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA). Thanks to all of our members for supporting our farm, and thus contributing to a local, healthy food source for our entire community.

## Survey Says...

Overall, our members told us that the quality & taste of our produce was excellent, and that our efforts to create a community farm are appreciated. **"Overall presentation & organization was outstanding. You took a lot of care and it showed."** **"Loved the flowers!"** **"Great flavor & quality."** **"Enjoyed trying veggies I never would've grown myself."**

Fifty percent of members completed our annual survey. The majority indicated that the variety, choices & cost were "just right." There was some variation in satisfaction with the amount of produce, which may be related to the share size selected. Indeed, it is challenging to make hard & fast rules for the number of people a share feeds. *In general*, a small feeds 2 adults & a full feeds more. But we also have satisfied single members who purchase full shares year after year because they enjoy freezing for winter & some families with kids choose a small share since they aren't avid cooks.

We are glad to learn that you value our weekly newsletter & website, & that many are interested in a working membership (see pg. 3 for more). Half expressed interest in carpooling shares. Next year we will distribute a voluntary contact list to facilitate carpooling. We are also **adding a Montpelier site option** to reduce driving & expand membership. Twenty-five percent of small shareholders would like more quantity from the roots mix-n-match table, & we'll adjust accordingly.

Thank you for your feedback & support! We look forward to 2006 with your continued involvement.



## 2006 Wellspring CSA Membership Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Full Share \$545  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Small Share \$360  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Winter Share (mixed storage crops) \$ 60  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Montpelier Site Delivery Fee \$ 25  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Donation to support low-income shares \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Due \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Call or see website for info on subsidized shares  
& working memberships**

Payment Options

\_\_\_\_\_ In full. Appreciated to cover our early expenses.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Payment Plan. \$150 deposit by May 15. Remainder due June 15. If this is a financial hardship, please call to arrange an alternative plan.

I prefer to pick up my produce

\_\_\_\_\_ At the farm on Mondays, 4-6 PM  
 \_\_\_\_\_ At the farm on Thursdays, 4-6 PM  
 \_\_\_\_\_ In Montpelier on Thursdays, 4-6 PM (central location TBA)

Member Contract

In exchange for my membership fee Wellspring CSA will provide a weekly share of vegetables, dependent on availability, from mid-June to mid-October.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Mail form and payment to:  
**Wellspring CSA, 182 Lafria Place**  
**Marshfield, VT 05658**

**QUESTIONS? Call us at 426-3361 or email:**  
**mimi@wellspringcsa.com**

**For office use only:**

\_\_\_\_\_ date rec \_\_\_\_\_ check # \_\_\_\_\_ QB \_\_\_\_\_ receipt

\_\_\_\_\_ amt rec \_\_\_\_\_ amt due \_\_\_\_\_ roster \_\_\_\_\_ PIF

### Working Member Opportunities

Following are some important roles for the 2006 growing season. All positions require a full season commitment. Join us for healthy, hard physical labor while gaining insight into the inner workings of our farm. You must be prepared to work come rain, wind, sun & bugs (& they will *all* come!), & you are responsible for arranging a replacement if you cannot fulfill your commitment. All positions receive a barter of one full-sized share.

**Montpelier Distribution Coordinator** – Responsible for driving, set-up of produce, & assisting members at our Montpelier distribution site. Thursdays, June 22-Oct 12, 2:45-6:45 PM.

**Harvest Worker** – Join our field team to harvest, wash and pack produce for CSA shareholders. Thursdays, June 22-October 12, 8 AM – 12 PM.

**Field Worker** – Join our field team to be involved in all aspects of vegetable and flower production. Tasks may include transplanting, weeding, harvesting and greenhouse work. Wednesdays, May 31-September 20, 8 AM – 12 PM.

If you're interested in a position, please contact Mimi.

(Share Value, con't from p. 1)

How do we calculate share values? Throughout the summer, we record the weekly share contents. Then we assign a value to each item based on average prices at the Montpelier farmers' market and Hunger Mountain Co-op. Pick-your-own crops are valued at wholesale prices because you provide harvest labor. In the case of cut-your-own flowers, we discount even further because we view the flowers as a significant perk of your share. If a particular pick-your-own crop is available to you at an "unlimited" quantity, we assign it a value of zero because most members do not take advantage of these crops on a weekly basis. "Unlimited" items are another shareholder perk that allow you to freeze food or simply eat your heart out.

Our financial calculations determine the amount of produce distributed weekly, keeping our goal of a 10-15% discount over what you paid in mind. What we can't calculate are benefits like freshness, flavor, and having a hands-on farm experience. Nor do our numbers include the social aspects of being a CSA member, like NECI demos, community interaction, Harvest Fest and the satisfaction of knowing that you are supporting a family farm in your community.



Help us spread  
the word!

## Seeking Farm Apprentice

May 1 thru mid-October.

**Tasks include all aspects of vegetable production: greenhouse work, soil prep, transplanting, seeding, equipment use, weed control, harvest, pest & disease identification, distribution, carpentry. You'll do it all! Help expand our community spirit and experience vegetable-induced joy. Rustic cabin, board & stipend. World-class swimming hole on site.**

**Perfect opportunity for those considering farming as a career. Must have ability to lift 50 lbs. See website for farm info & job description.**

**\*\*\*BRAND NEW WEBSITE\*\*\*  
featuring photos, recipes, member info...  
[www.wellspringcsa.com](http://www.wellspringcsa.com)**



**WELLSRING FARM CSA**

182 Lafiria Place  
Marshfield, VT 05658  
802-426-3361  
[www.wellspringcsa.com](http://www.wellspringcsa.com)

