



Delivering Wholesome Food to our Neighbors in Need — Fall 2015 Newsletter

Dear Friends of Willing Hands,

It has been a little over three months since I joined Willing Hands as the Executive Director. Here are a few of the wonderful things I have experienced:

- A group of volunteers with smiling faces and dirty hands harvesting the last of the potatoes—amazed by what they were able to accomplish over the course of a summer.
- Farmers calling, proud to offer what they cannot sell but have worked hard to produce.
- An employee at the Coop Food Stores handing me a donation eager to let me know how important it is that they can give back to their community.
- A neighbor at Romano Circle asking if there is any more kale in the truck.

Our society does many amazing things, but unfortunately providing healthy nutritious food for everyone is not one of them. One of the paradoxes of hunger and poverty in America is that the simplest foods, fresh fruits and vegetables, are often more expensive and harder to find than their unhealthy alternatives. This is one of the reasons that our work is so critical. We are not only working to fill bellies, but also to reduce barriers to healthy eating and thus improve health.

As a privately funded non-profit, we use charitable dollars to redistribute healthy and nutritious food that would otherwise go to waste. On average, it costs Willing Hands just 35 cents to pick up and deliver a pound of donated food. We do this seven days a week, 12 months a year, year in, year out. It is hard not to be inspired by Willing Hands. In the words of a food shelf volunteer:

“Your fruit and vegetable donations brighten many lives!”

Sincerely,
Gabe Zoerheide
Executive Director



Working Hard in the Willing Hands Garden

The Numbers:

| | |
|---|--------|
| Number of stops the Willing Hands truck makes each week? | 138 |
| Number of days a year the Willing Hands truck is on the road? | 360 |
| How many times have volunteers gleaned at local farms in 2015? | 61 |
| Total number of volunteer hours in 2015? | 1,522 |
| Most pounds donated in one day? | 4312 |
| Total pounds of food grown by the Willing Hands garden in 2015? | 13,296 |



FEATURED PARTNER: UPPER VALLEY PRODUCE

Willing Hands and Upper Valley Produce have a lot in common. Both organizations work year round and concentrate on perishable nutritious food. As the only Upper Valley based wholesale distributor of fresh fruits and vegetables, Upper Valley Produce (UVP) is a critical source of food for Willing Hands. Food insecurity in the Upper Valley is a year-round problem. For this reason we stop at the new UVP warehouse facility at Olcott Park in Wilder 6 days a week, 52 weeks a year. To date in 2015, UVP has donated over 37,000 pounds to our organization.



In addition to fresh fruits and vegetables, UVP distributes and donates dairy products and local meats. Their business serves restaurants, grocery stores, institutions and large chains on a daily basis. They source meats, dairy, vegetables, and fruit from local farms in season and from the Boston wholesale market and directly from the West Coast year round.

Upper Valley Produce's partnership with Willing Hands came out of their desire to contribute to the community and to keep food that is still consumable in the food system. Long before Vermont's Universal Recycling Law mandated recycling of food waste, the company had been partnering with local farms to pick up surplus produce for pig food and compost. This ethic of thrift and supporting the local food system led to our partnership. By setting aside the best surplus produce, meats and dairy products for Willing Hands, Upper Valley Produce is able to continue to reduce its disposal costs, keep food out of the waste stream and support our neighbors in need. We greatly appreciate Upper Valley Produce for all they do for the Upper Valley.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2016 — WE CAN USE YOUR HELP

2015 is going strong, and we are already thinking about next year. Here is a snapshot of our plans and how you can participate.

- **More Regular Gleanings**— We have a wonderful and deep partnership with Janet and Tim Taylor of CROSSROAD FARM with gleanings once or twice a week throughout the growing season. Thank you Janet and Tim! In 2016, we would love to expand this model with regular weekly gleanings at additional farms. If you have a farm, or know of a farm that is interested, let us know.
- **More Volunteer Opportunities** — Our volunteer support has been tremendous, but we know there are many more people interested in helping. Next year we plan to offer additional gardening and gleaning opportunities to individuals and groups. Don't hesitate to let us know if you are interested.
- **More Food 12 Months a Year** — Hunger is a year-round problem, so we work hard to keep a consistent supply of food for our recipients. In the early part of 2016, we anticipate that we will need additional food donations to avoid having to scale back our deliveries. We are seeking grocery stores, food wholesalers and farms in the greater Upper Valley who can donate food during the low period of January through May.



- **Preserving More of the Harvest** — As this fall's apple crop shows, there is an incredible abundance of locally-grown food in the fall. Our challenge is to gather and preserve it so we can distribute it throughout the leaner months. In 2016, we hope to be able to increase our storage and light-processing infrastructure to take advantage of this abundance.

Blueberries

... Blueberries as big as the end of your thumb,
Real sky-blue, and heavy, and ready to drum
In the cavernous pail of the first one to come!
And all ripe together, not some of them green
And some of them ripe! You ought to have seen!
Excerpt from poem by Robert Frost



An EXTRAordinary gift

Whether you call them a “super-food” or “super delicious”, blueberries are definitely a highlight of summer, whether in a killer blueberry pie or eaten fresh, fat and juicy from the bush. For some of our neighbors in the Upper Valley the cost of even a pint of fresh blueberries is prohibitive. But this summer, 1200+ pounds (more than half a ton!!!) were gleaned by Willing Hands volunteers and delivered to our 50+ service organizations supporting about 3000 people per week.

In 1961, Elizabeth Backofen and her husband moved to East Plainfield, NH where they planted Christmas trees, an apple orchard and 200 blueberry bushes. For years (or decades) Hill Farm was a favorite of many families who enjoyed the opportunity to “pick-your-own” in an idyllic, pastoral, hillside setting.

This year, at 91, Mrs. Backofen did not want to manage the pick-your-own business, but she did not want the blueberries to go to waste. Willing Hands was the perfect solution! Her generosity was rewarded three-fold: an opportunity for her to forge new friendships with WH volunteers (and teach them the “right” way to pick blueberries!), a chance for her to share remarkable stories about 50 years at Hill Farm, and, **most** importantly, an unqualified assurance that her donation made a difference in our local community.



Mrs. Backofen with
Gleaner Extraordinaire Milt Frye



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Lebanon, NH 03766
802-698-0265

Yes, I want to help Willing Hands deliver donations of healthy food!

Enclosed is my tax deductible contribution of \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

- I'm interested in volunteering to help Willing Hands with:
___ The Farm Garden ___ Gleaning ___ Nutrition Education ___ Committee Work
- Please contact me at this phone number: _____ or this email address: _____



**THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!
OVER 1500 HOURS
VOLUNTEERED SO FAR IN 2015**

Peg Ackerson
Chipper Ashley
Terri Ashley
Sharry Baker
Melissa Barber
Margaret Bragg
Gina Brown
Scott Brown
Michael Burke
Sarah Burke
Cat Buxton
Debbie Carter
Patti Cerra
Yunghi Choi
Andrea Colgan
Karen Coombs
Aurora Coon
Betsy Drinkwater
Betsy Eaton
Betsy Eccles
Sandy Edmonds
Elizabeth Fineberg
Phyllis Fox
Carolyn Frye

Krysta Frye
Milt Frye
Peter Gamble
Bob Greenberg
Jane Greenberg
Bob Hagen
Mike Hall
Pril Hall
Christopher Hansen
Kim Holzberger
Birgit Humpert
Ella Humpert
Nesreen Itan/Ali & Omar
Bill Josler
Jyoti Graber
Ginny Kiely
Kerry Landers
Bartlett Leber
Marc Lefebvre
Sarah Levin
Jack Lyons
Jean MacDonald
Margot Maddock

Jim Magnell
Phebe McCosker
Pat McGovern
Sherry Merrick
Jo Miranda
Bobbie Mudge
Andrea Munson
Diana Munson
Amanda, Lulu, & Perrin Myerson
Stephen Nodder
Rosita Olson
Kim Perez
Lizann Peyton
Nancy Philips
Maureen Ripple
Drew Rockwell
Lars Sandvik
Katarina Sirka
Gina Sonne
Barbara Stern
Skip Sturman
Cindy Swart
Michael Townsend

Jim Tobin
Jay Van Arman
Cory Waletzko
Susan Warner

Volunteer Groups
Celdara
Chi Delta of Dart.
Upper Valley Young Professionals
Young Catholics
Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)

UW Day of Caring:
Barry Braksick
Lauren Breindel
Emily Grabowski
Charlie Hitchcock
Lisa Vandiver
Alice Werbel

Geisel Medical School
Ijele Adimora
Catherine Baker
Andrew Blake
Aaron Briggs
Sandy Chan
Emily Dollar
Ashley Dunkle
Alec Fisher
Georgia Griffin
TR Harris
Joyce Han
Elizabeth Hoffman
Kathleen Leinweber
Oliver Sacks

THANK YOU!



BEHIND THE SCENES

Board of Directors:

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Peter Carter - Vice President
Susan Gault - Secretary
Mark Lindberg - Treasurer
Carolyn Frye - Vol Coord.
Birgit Humpert
Terry Lyons
Pooh Sprague
Jay Van Arman
Bartlett Leber



Driving Staff:

Chuck Egner: Lead Driver
Jim McCracken
Lynn Caulkins
Iain Wallis

Operations Assistant:

Jim McCracken

Executive Director:

Gabe Zoerheide

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