



# 2020 Annual Review

Keep Farming. Feed People. Build Community.

Photo Credit: Walker Studios LLC.

*Adaptation, flexibility, creativity, resilience:* these qualities are essential on a farm. The events of 2020 demanded we tap into them in order to deliver on our mission in a moment when our community farm was needed more than ever.

When the pandemic hit in March, we responded immediately. We established safety protocols and created an online store with weekly contactless pickup outside of our barn. We offered freshly harvested greens and roots from our high tunnels, plus jars of our marinara sauce, crushed tomatoes and salsa. We partnered with local farmers and food producers who had lost sales outlets during the shutdown, connecting them with our community, and reinforcing the local supply chain. Families appreciated these offerings and farm businesses were able to stay afloat. It was an incredible community response to a crisis.

As public health restrictions continued, we adjusted our greenhouse and crop plans, tripling the



supply of spring seedlings in response to increased demand from home gardeners. Our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program also saw a surge of interest. Participation went up 20% from 2019, with over 300 families subscribing this year. Forgoing participation in farmers markets allowed us to meet increased demand and provide donations to hunger relief organizations, which was more important than ever.

A farm season is always filled with challenges, and though a pandemic was unique, Massaro was ready. We retained our core

*“ My Massaro Farm CSA was a bright spot in a sea of darkness. I looked forward to every delicious weekly assortment of produce as well as all the other wonderful local items that I was able to purchase at the Massaro Farm Shop. ”*

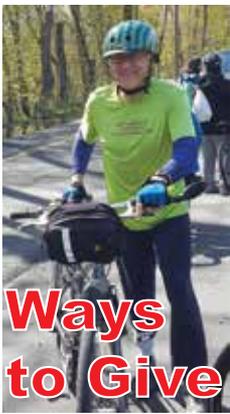
*-- Deborah Judelson*

staff, expanded hours for seasonal staff and hired additional hands during the peak summer season. Ultimately 2020 proved to be among the most productive years in our history.

Farm staffers mask up for safety.



**FARMING**  
*in a pandemic*



There are several ways you can support the future of Massaro Community Farm.

- **Individuals** - make a cash contribution in an amount that feels comfortable for you. No gift is too small to support our mission.
- **Businesses** - show the community you care with a mission-based sponsorship. Establish a meaningful connection between your employees and farm initiatives on hunger relief, education and sustainability.
- **Legacy Giving** - contribute to one of our existing endowment funds or create one of your own. The farm's three existing funds support organic farming, outdoor education and sustainability.

Donate with a credit card via Paypal or make your check payable to **Massaro Community Farm**.

Details on mission-based sponsorship and legacy giving can be found on our website: [MassaroFarm.org](http://MassaroFarm.org)

## SUSTAINABILITY

With a goal of moving toward carbon neutrality, we expanded our solar energy production this year. A new installation of solar panels on the farmhouse and barn increased the existing 5,000kWh photovoltaic array to a capacity of 23,000kWh.

This installation was made possible through the generosity of CGM Resources, LLC, a Hamden-based business working to increase the use of solar power across Connecticut. The expansion exceeds the farm's current power need and paves the way for more battery-powered tools and, perhaps, an EV charging station!

Following last summer's composting pilot program with Beecher Road School, the farm purchased a custom-made worm composting bin from Wiggle Room, a local

supplier of worms. This 3' x 6' bin has the capacity to handle 250 gallons of compostable material at a time. Paid for through a gift by the Greater New Haven Green Fund, the bin is located adjacent to the Learning Garden. We hope this is the beginning of larger scale composting in the near future.

Lastly, we received a cost-sharing grant from the National Resources Conservation Service for a number of projects to be completed over the next few years. Projects include installing a swale in a the large field on the north side of the

farm. This funding also provides for clearing invasive species and adding more native tree and shrub plantings.



Solar panels fill the farmhouse roof.



Wiggle Room's 250-gal capacity worm composting bin.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Even with Covid-19 protocols in place, 2020 was a year of fostering relationships at the farm.

So far this year we have donated over 7,500 pounds of organic produce to local hunger relief; donations will continue through the end of the year. We continued a grant-funded nutrition education program (begun in 2019) with **St. Vincent de Paul Food Bank** in Derby.

Each week from January through March, 12 participants gathered for a vegetarian cooking lesson and received ingredients to reproduce recipes at home. At the program's conclusion, participants reported eating more vegetables and a willingness to use vegetables they previously wouldn't have purchased.

Neighbors gave their time to help care for our farm rabbits, chickens and goats. This provides a valuable learning experience, teaching animal care skills and responsibility to future farmers.

Funds from **The Werth Family Foundation** allowed us to hire seven local high school students to support the farm staff during peak summer months. These students performed essential work,

assisting staff with daily harvesting, planting and weeding.

Maddie Orosz sets goats up to graze along the fenceline.



Volunteers load crates of produce up for CT Food Bank.



Audra Weisel leads nutrition education.

In addition, three **Nonnewaug High School** students joined us to complete their required Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) hours. SAE students

helped develop and implement a schedule for rotating goats along the deer fence to keep overgrowth and invasive species at bay.

Scientific research to improve organic farming practices continued at the farm in 2020. Researchers from **UCONN** and **University of Rhode Island** began a two-year study tracking fertility, moisture and temperature in the soil. Additionally, entomologist **Kim Stoner** published an article on pollination of squash plants that included taking bee counts at Massaro between 2012-2015.

*"I learned so much about growing food from the farm staff, which was great because I completely missed that unit when our school shut down in March."*

*-- Maddie Orosz, Nonnewaug student*

# Farm Events

The coronavirus required us to be nimble and transform our usual in-person farm events into virtual events this year. For the **Rock to Rock Earth Day Bike Ride**, the Massaro Melonheads took on the challenge of riding over 2,500 miles collectively, visiting the many businesses that have supported the farm in its 10-year history. Together (and apart), team members raised over \$18,000 and earned the #1 team spot for the fifth year in a row.

**Celebrate Spring** became an online plant sale and we sold twice as many vegetable seedlings than in any of the past five years. Many of our new backyard gardeners also participated in virtual workshops on raised bed growing and composting.

**Dinner on the Farm**, our major annual fundraiser, became *Dinner from the Farm*. Instead of gathering in our fields for a family-style dinner, patrons picked up take-home meals and assembled remotely as board chair Jon Gorham and executive director Caty Poole hosted an evening of online programming, including a virtual farm tour, chef interviews and the music of Paul Winter and Theresa Thomason. This take-home version of our annual dinner enabled us to support five local catering businesses and raise over \$12,000 for hunger relief.

With a sense of 'new normal,' we did offer three in-person events this fall -- an outdoor movie screening of *Hocus Pocus*, a **Valley Shakespeare** production of *Snow White* and an outdoor concert by **The Jolly Beggars**. We all look forward to resuming our regular schedule of events on the farm as soon as possible!



Valley Shakespeare performs 2-person production of *Snow White*.



The Jolly Beggars perform to a sell-out crowd on the farm lawn.

*Thank You for Your Support!*

## *2020 Farm Sponsors*

- The Werth Family Foundation**
- Valley Community Foundation**
- Community Foundation of Greater New Haven**
- CGM Resources LLC**
- William Graustein**
- Keith Colburn**
- Valley United Way**
- Anthem CT**
- Katharine Matthies Foundation**
- Mary Evelyn Tucker & John Grim**
- Southern Connecticut State University**
- MFUNd**
- The Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation**
- Jill and Glenn MacInnes**
- Diane King**
- Greg Melville**



We encourage you to sign up for our bi-weekly email newsletter to receive current news about upcoming farm events and programming.



*Photo Credit: Walker Studios LLC.*

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## FARM PROGRAMMING

Farm activities got off to a quick start in winter 2020 with the new outdoor Explorers and School Vacation Days programs. Children joined Education Director Corey Thomas on the farm's snowy nature trails, learning survival techniques, sourcing fresh water, and creating shelters. Goat hikes were an especially popular family activity in the winter months. However, it soon became apparent that public health rules would require us to adjust farm programming to reach audiences differently. Eventually, all after school programs, field trips and summer camp were put on hold.



Winter Explorers build a shelter in the farm woods.

## Community Gardens



Scouts lead a garden cleanup in Derby.

Adult workshops including basic gardening techniques, composting, backyard poultry keeping, and wild foraging were all offered online. Our partnership with the **Connecticut Beekeeper's Association** also went virtual; we held live sessions streamed from the farm's bee yard, often for over 100 attendees. And we added education kits to our online store, encouraging parents and children to get outside and build mason bee houses, identify birds, and create root observation stations.

Even in a pandemic, volunteers contributed mightily on the farm. This year Massaro Farm took over the maintenance of 13 community gardens throughout the Valley. Volunteers planted vegetable seedlings, maintained a watering schedule during a dry year and harvested vegetables for food donation.



We are especially grateful to the **Regional Water Authority** for a new water spigot in Ansonia's Beaver Brook garden. Special thanks to **Chapel Haven** and **Amity High School** for providing steadfast support on the farm and in the gardens, which also aids in job training and life skills development for the volunteers.

This fall, we brought back the outdoor Explorers program and created virtual field trips to accommodate home school groups and teachers. We thank the **Valley Community Foundation** for funding new technology allowing us to stay connected with our audiences remotely.