



SOUTH HERO LAND TRUST



Asking questions is what matters

Chuck Hulse has a passion for nature. A resident of South Hero, you may have passed him on your morning commute, standing knee-deep in a pond on Landon Road, where he goes to survey for amphibians. Or maybe you've met him on one of our naturalist hikes. When it comes to natural history or conservation, there are few people more enthusiastic than Chuck. But you may be surprised to learn that Chuck is not a professional naturalist. In fact, he was dissuaded from the field at an early age, but his passion and determination kept him focused throughout his journey in life. His story tells us that it's never too late to follow your passion.

Chuck grew up in a beach town on Long Island, NY. He was always happiest outside. As a kid he "would go down to where the saltwater meets the freshwater to watch the eels come in and grab a whole handful. Nobody else knew about them, but if you went there they were as clear as day, a miracle hidden in plain sight." Chuck loved catching frogs in the pond, listening to birds, and exploring the nature around his neighborhood. These experiences were the foundation for his love of nature. He wanted to grow up to be a naturalist.

"They were as clear as day, a miracle hidden in plain sight."

~Chuck Hulse

But when Chuck told his high-school guidance counselor he wanted to be a naturalist, he was told to focus on getting a "real" job. Chuck was upset, but in college he found a passion for biochemistry, which allowed him to explore the science of the natural world. But after a life-threatening accident, he realized that he wasn't helping people while working in a lab. He decided to focus on getting a medical degree and became a doctor.

Chuck loved being a doctor and helping people get healthy. But while he could help his patients recover from illnesses on a case by case basis, he wanted to make a difference in the larger realm of human health, and improve behavior around healthy lifestyles. Partway through his career, Chuck learned about a new field of study looking at the impact of nature on human health and well-being. Research showed that not only can nature make us feel happier, spending in nature contributes to your physical well-being, including measurable impacts on reducing blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, the production of stress hormones, and more¹.

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SOUTH HERO



LAND TRUST

a non-profit organization
dedicated to protecting the
farmland, woodland, natural
and recreational areas, and
open spaces which give South
Hero its distinctive
quality of life

PO Box 455
South Hero, VT 05486
tel: (802) 372-3786
www.shlt.org

email: info@shlt.org
emily@shlt.org
guy@shlt.org

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Chuck Hulse holds up a mayflower leaf for a group of walkers along the Landon Community Trail

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How perfect! Chuck had found a way to combine his passions for nature and human health, and in addition to continuing as a clinician Chuck took a job in the Rubenstein School at UVM. For Chuck, spending time in nature had always been a curative, and he was thrilled to be a part of a field that was showing the actual medical benefits of going for walks in the woods.

After over two decades at UVM, and seeing his own children through school, he retired and returned to his childhood dream of being a naturalist. His goal: spend more time outside and motivate others to do the same. As Chuck says, “there is something beautiful that draws us to nature, and we should indulge that feeling. Not only is it good for our health, it also might help us appreciate the world around us a little bit more and work to protect it.”

After all these years, Chuck gets to be a naturalist after all, and he is hard at work following his passion. He volunteers to survey and protect rare plants, leads naturalist walks in South Hero, writes a wonderful blog about nature in the Champlain Islands, and continues to learn and develop his skills as a naturalist. He is also helping SHLT establish a Master Naturalist Program.

This can sound like quite a lot, but to Chuck, being a naturalist is not about how many birds you can name, what degrees you have, or how many years you’ve spent studying. In his words: “Asking the questions is what matters, not how many answers you have. You don’t need to be an expert to be a naturalist. Look at me, I don’t know anything!”

To Chuck, being a naturalist is not a title or an accomplishment, it’s a state of mind. It means staying curious, asking questions, and enjoying yourself in nature, even if it’s just your own backyard. “When we go for a walk, watch the leaves fall, or look at a bird in the sky, not only are doing good things for our own health, we are connecting to nature, and building community with our natural world.”

As Aldo Leopold said: “When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, PNW Research Station. 2010. Health and Wellness Benefits of Spending Time in Nature. https://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/about/programs/gsv/pdfs/health_and_wellness.pdf



Big Town Market, Small Town Feel

For South Hero resident Nicole Vaughan, going to the Wednesday market with her family is a weekly highlight. It's a place where her daughters can play; she can visit with friends; and she can pick up staples like eggs, greens, bread and cheese to feed her family. What makes the market special to her and many others is the direct connection it creates between farmers and the community. As she puts it, "we support our farming neighbors by shopping at the market, and their food feeds and supports our family in return. This reciprocity is what keeps our community strong!"

While there have been farms in the Islands for generations, before 2005 it was hard to find fresh local food in the South Hero and Grand Isle. The few farm stands that existed were small and farms relied primarily on wholesale markets. Island residents and visitors didn't have good ways to connect to local farms or pick up food grown by their neighbors. At the same time, the community recognized that places to gather, and to celebrate food

"We support our farming neighbors by shopping at the market, and their food feeds and supports our family in return."

*~Nicole Vaughan,
community member*



A mother and daughter decorate a terra cotta pot and plant a seedling inside at a SHLT event.

and community, were few and far between. But then a group of dedicated farmers and community leaders came up with an idea to solve both of these problems. A small farmers' market had been operating in Alburgh for a couple of years, and they decided to work with South Hero Land Trust to bring a farmers' market to South Hero. From an ad-hoc market by the town garage led by volunteers to a successful nonprofit organization with two locations and a growing list of vendors, the market has come a long way. Christine Bourque of Blue Heron Farm was instrumental to this process, serving as the new Champlain Islands Farmers' Market's board chair for many years.

Christine Mack, owner and chef at Cook Sisters Cafe, shops at the market for herself and connects with farmers about wholesale purchases for the cafe. "The market brings back that small town feel, that place where you bump into people. You can get all kinds of the freshest produce straight from farmers for a great price; it's hard to beat that."

For Amanda & Hugo of Savage Gardens, the growth of the market over the years has mirrored their growth as a farm business. "The market is a significant part of our sales. And beyond raw numbers, the market is where we meet people, make connections, and get our name out there."

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Amanda and Hugo also feel that the market gives them a chance to give back to their community. “Our market prices are competitive with grocery stores. We have to make a living as farmers, but we also want to feed our community.” The market board

“Participating in the market makes me feel more connected.”

*~Cindy Walcott,
School House Studios*

also recognizes the importance of welcoming community members of all income levels to the market, and they accept 3SquaresVT (food stamp) dollars, have a strong Farm to Family Program (for WIC participants), and make other efforts to help everyone get fresh vegetables and fruits at a price they can afford. This year the market is partnering with C.I.D.E.R to provide a shuttle service for those who need transportation to the market.

For Cindy Walcott, artisan and farmers’ market board member, the market is not only the main outlet for her business, it provides a sense of community. “When my children entered high school off-island, I began to feel disconnected from our community. Participating in the market makes me feel more connected.”

The farmers’ market gives farmers a sense of community too. As farmer Colleen Cobb of Canamak Farms says, “I love the farmers’ market because it’s helped me get to know the other farmers in the Islands. Before the market we didn’t have an easy way to get to know each other. We love to barter our products with other farmers who produce things we don’t.”

For residents, visitors, vendors, farmers and businesses alike, the farmers’ market has become woven into the fabric of this community. As Christine Mack says, the market helps connect different kinds of people. The summer residents get to know the year-round folks and feel like they are part of the community.” From its humble beginnings it has grown into a gathering place where farmers and craftspeople can connect with customers and grow their businesses, where everyone is welcome and where all can come together to celebrate food, community, and friendships.



The daughter of a local farmer sets up at the Kids’ Market.



Customers load up on local tomatoes from Savage Gardens.

Amanda and Hugo Gervais love bringing their kids to the market with them. “Our kids have grown up at the market. They have their market-friends, and they get to sell their crafts and be young entrepreneurs.” The market hosts special activities for children, like the popular “Kids’ Market” and art activities with South Hero Land Trust. Families come for a meal together after a swim at the beach. Everyone finds fresh vegetables, eggs, and meats; yummy desserts and breads; and unique crafts found nowhere else.

Now, as spring draws nearer, the sap is flowing, greenhouses are vibrant with seedlings, berry bushes are starting to bud out, and artisans are working on their next project. Before long the market will be back! We hope you can make time this year to visit the market and enjoy all it has to offer. As Nicole Vaughan says, the market is a symbol of what a good community we live in here. “We love living here. People here will do anything to help out anybody, and nowhere is that spirit more true than the farmers’ market. We think the market is a gift.”



Saving the Family Farm and a Whole Lot More

As you may have read in our winter card, Crescent Bay Farm was one of the first conservation projects completed by South Hero Land Trust. This spring, we sat down with Julie Lane, and her son Nick, to talk more about this third generation family farm.

In 1998, Fred and Gladys Lane were ready to retire, and like many farmers in Vermont, their land was their savings. They loved their farm on Crescent Bay, with acres of rich soils rolling down to the shores of Lake Champlain, and beautiful views of the mountains beyond. They had bought the farm in 1961 and run a dairy there for over 30 years. They raised their three children on the farm, and were deeply committed to the South Hero community. They wanted their son Dave and his wife Julie, who had been working alongside them, to continue working the family farm.



Dave and Julie Lane in the sugar house.

“We wanted Dave’s parents to be proud of us, and we just had to put in the hard work, and take it one day at a time”

~Julie Lane

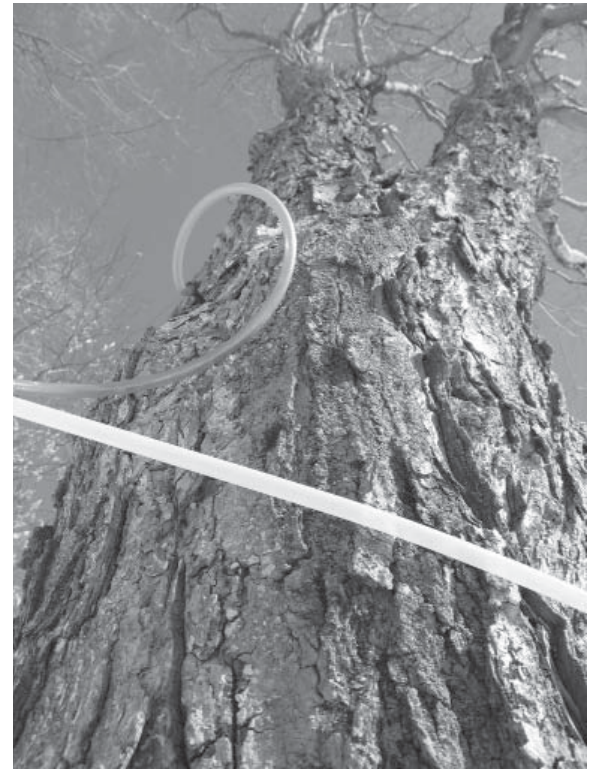
As Julie says, “Dave’s parents were great mentors for us. We were very excited about farming and wanted to buy the farm right away and start on our own, but they slowed us down and really made sure we knew enough to be ready, to be successful.” By 1998, Fred and Gladys knew that Dave and Julie were ready to take on the farm, but they didn’t know how to transfer ownership to them. The younger couple had two growing sons and the house needed major renovations. The price of land made the farm seem out of reach, and it could have been lost forever.

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So Dave and Julie called South Hero Land Trust, which had been founded just the year before. With help from the Vermont Land Trust and our community, we were able to buy a conservation easement on the property, allowing Dave and Julie to purchase the land from Fred and Gladys, and start planning their future at Crescent Bay Farm. “That was a crazy time” says Julie, “The house needed a lot of work, we wanted Dave’s parents to be proud of us, and we just had to put in the hard work, and take it one day at a time.” And they were lucky to have Fred and Gladys right next door. “It was great raising kids here because they got to be with their parents and grandparents, who were like a second set of parents! It really helped us establish our farm to have us all together.”

That was eighteen years ago. Now their sons, Nick and Alex, are grown. The farmhouse where they live is a cozy bed & breakfast. They built up a thriving maple sugar business. And in 2012 they purchased the neighboring Snow Farm Winery—reuniting two parcels that had once been one, and expanding the family farm. Nick reflects on growing up on the farm. “I wouldn’t have traded it for a million dollars. Lots of freedom in the woods, catching snakes, playing in the hay barn, swimming in the lake, biking with friends everywhere, helping with farm chores, farmers’ markets... our parents and grandparents were around, and we worked and learned off the farm and then brought back what we learned.”

The whole family works on the farm now. Dave and Nick continue to work off farm jobs, but spend many winter days in the sugar bush. Alex began working in the vineyard during high school, and he continues to work there now, caring for the grape vines. Julie manages the tasting room and bed and breakfast. The whole family is around in the spring for maple sugaring. They sell their wine and maple syrup at the Snow Farm tasting room, Champlain Islands Farmers’ Market, and Burlington Farmers’ Market, as well as at regional stores and restaurants. What was once a traditional Vermont dairy farm has been transformed into a diverse family business that welcomes the community year-round.



“I wouldn’t have traded it for a million dollars. Lots of freedom in the woods, catching snakes, biking with friends everywhere, helping with farm chores, farmers’ market...”

~Nick Lane

Julie was an elementary school teacher for many years, and remains committed to making connections between education and farming. They host field trips for students from Folsom School, walks with South Hero Land Trust, and invite the community to stop by in the evenings during the sugaring season. Julie says, “People need to understand place, and that takes visiting a place again and again, learning more each time.” She and Nick are always happy to pause during their day and talk about what they do, and the importance of family farms in Vermont.

Land conservation helped the Lane family transform their farm in a way that has impacted many people beyond themselves.

Dave, Julie, Nick, and Alex have remained committed to South

Hero, and demonstrate this commitment through their careful stewardship of the land; by welcoming community members into the sugarhouse, vineyard, and trails up Fox Hill; and through their eager participation in civic life. Their farm has become a community gathering place, where we can celebrate farms, families, and our special Island life.



Nick Lane leads a tour of the sugarbush with SHLT.

Spring Events Calendar

March 22 **Wally's Place's 10th Birthday!**

Wally's Place is turning 10! Help celebrate this exciting anniversary and support SHLT too! The crew at Wally's Place will have fun activities happening all day, and Emily and Guy will be on hand to talk about SHLT's latest projects. Wally's Place will donate 25% of proceeds from the day to SHLT, so come on over- eat bagels and support land conservation.

6:00 AM - 2:00 PM. Wally's Place, 260 US Route 2, South Hero.

March 24 **Maple Sugar Hike at Crescent Bay Farm**

Head up to Crescent Bay Farm to see the sugar bush in action! Enjoy a taste of maple syrup as we get a tour of the sugar-making operation, learn to tap a tree, and see the journey of sap becoming sweet maple syrup. We'll be joined by naturalist Alicia Daniel, and learn about SHLT's new Master Naturalist program. After the hike, stick around for VT Maple Open House weekend festivities, including sugar-making demonstrations.

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM. Meet at Snow Farm Winery, 190 West Shore Rd, South Hero. Free. All ages. Visit sblt.org or call 372-3786 to learn more and RSVP.

May 5 **Green Up Day**

Join your friends & neighbors to clean up South Hero's roads, trails, and shoreline. This year's volunteer activities will include roadside litter pickup, White's Beach Clean-up, and more! Then join South Hero Land Trust at our Annual "Thank You BBQ" at the Folsom Playground.

Road Clean-Up all morning, BBQ 11-12:30, other events TBA. Visit www.sblt.org for more information.

May 12 **Meet the Lambs at Paradise Bay Farm**

Join us for our annual Mother's Day weekend expedition to Paradise Bay Farm and meet this year's new lambs. We'll start with a wagon ride from the top of Buermann Hill, visit the lambs, and then learn about spinning yarn and weaving from farmer Ann Buermann.

10-11:30 AM. Paradise Pay Farm. Free. All ages. Visit sblt.org/events or call 372-3786 to learn more and RSVP. Registration required.

May 19 **Champlain Islands Farmers' Market Opening Day**

Visit your favorite local farmers, makers, artists, and cooks at the Champlain Islands Farmers' Market! The market is open two days a week from May 19th through September. Saturdays in Grand Isle from 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM. Wednesdays in South Hero from 3:00 - 6:00 PM.

Visit www.champlainislandsfarmersmarket.com to learn more.



Love being outdoors?

*Want to learn about the
natural history of the
Champlain Islands?*

*Looking for a great way to give
back to your community?*

*Join the South Hero
Master Naturalist
Program!*

*A year long course (4 day long
workshops) covering the natural
history of South Hero from plate
tectonics to modern agriculture,
followed by guided volunteer projects
with South Hero Land Trust. Learn
more and apply at [www.sblt.org/
master-naturalist](http://www.sblt.org/master-naturalist)*

SPRING 2018 NEWSLETTER



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