



# SOUTH HERO LAND TRUST

*Newsletter*

*Spring 2014*

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## The Conservation Home Stretch: Sawyer Bay Farm becomes Health Hero Farm



### **New Farmers Now Own the Sawyer Bay Farm**

South Hero Land Trust is very excited to have closed on the sale of Sawyer Bay Farm to Health Hero Farm at the end of November 2013! After a great first season on the land, Hannah and Eric Noël, Bob Fireovid, and Joan Falcão now own the farm. The security of owning the farm will allow the four farmers to continue to invest in the land and business, and build soil quality, put up greenhouses, and increase their herd of beef cattle.

### **Things to Look For on the Farm this Year**

This year will be an exciting time on the farm. During summer they plan to build and begin using a high tech wireless monitoring system. The monitors will measure the wind, precipitation, air temperature, soil moisture, soil nutrient levels (mainly phosphorus), water infiltration rates, soil compaction, water flow, forage quality (energy), and a lot more. All this data will flow into a collection and analysis software platform that will allow Health Hero Farm to measure, map, quantify and manage the water and nutrients in the soils and therefore build soil health.

There will also be some more visible changes on the farm. The first of two houses for the two farm families will be built at the north end of the farm. They will begin their second year of Community Supported Agriculture, with summer, winter, and year-round shares. They will also open an on-site farm stand to sell vegetables, eggs, and eventually their own beef. They will be growing their beef herd, as well as continuing to graze animals for other farms. They hope to have their own beef for sale as soon as August.

### **Using Science to Monitor and Improve Farming Practices**

Health Hero Farm is participating in a number of grants and studies to improve their own practices, and to inform sustainable farming practices across the state and country.

They are a demonstration farm for a Conservation Innovation Grant administered through UVM's Center for Sustainable Agriculture. This study will take a look at the management practices of Planned Grazing (sub-soiling and seeding, amending the soil, and inter-seeding) and how they impact soil health, water quality, productivity and profitability. The farm will be monitoring these practices using standard soil tests, biological soil tests and soil surface biological monitoring along with collecting productivity and profitability data.

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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  
minner@shlt.org  
emily@shlt.org

## Board of Directors

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Dick Heilman

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# New Beginnings at the Landon Farm

## A Note from our Executive Director

*Dear Friends and Neighbors,*

*The sun is shining in South Hero. Though spring seems a distant dream, we are feeling energized and hopeful that warmer days and melting snow are on our horizon. As we transition from winter to spring, we are also experiencing a transition on one of our conserved farms. The Wells family has sold the farmland they purchased in 2003 to Vermont Land Trust, at the request of the family. The iconic Landon Farm property has beautiful views to the east, great agricultural resources, and a public access trail. After the Wells family purchased the property, they worked hard to start a diversified farm on the land and invested in important infrastructure. But after a period of change for the family, they decided it was time to sell.*

*As most of you know well, the 170 acre Landon Farm was conserved in 2003 in partnership with the Vermont Land Trust (VLT), South Hero Land Trust (SHLT), the Lake Champlain Land Trust, and The Nature Conservancy of Vermont. The land was protected with a conservation easement and that easement will remain on the land for all subsequent owners of this farm. As part of this transition, VLT is seeking a qualified farm buyer to purchase and operate the Landon Farm. VLT will temporarily own the farm as they seek a farmer to buy the conserved land.*

*Once a farmer is identified, the land will be sold to that farmer and the land will once again be put to good agricultural use. Our sincere hope is that the farm will become productive again and that we will welcome a new family and farm enterprise to South Hero and the Champlain Islands community. VLT has taken the lead on identifying a new farmer for the property through a Request for Proposal Process. They are trying to move as quickly as they can with a goal of getting a farmer onto the property in time for this year's growing season.*

*This is an aggressive timeline, and we will keep you posted as we progress. In the meantime, if you have any questions about what is happening on the farm during this transition, or would just like to talk more about this process, please feel free to give me a call at (802) 372-3786.*

*As we close one chapter on the farm and dream about the next chapter, we at SHLT and VLT want to wish Erik and Annette and their family all the best.*

*As always, thank you for your tremendous support of agriculture and South Hero Land Trust.*

*Thank you,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Minner Hobbs". The signature is fluid and cursive.



## Health Hero Farm, continued...

They are also participating in a study of Climate Change and Resilience on Farms, being administered by UVM. This study is designed to help limit the amount of risk that farmers face due to changing climate. At Health Hero Farm they will be monitoring greenhouse gases (GHG) coming from the soil, assessing financial costs and benefits of specific best management practices, looking at the social impacts of different practices, and be doing landscape visualization modeling of practices to help Eric and the rest of the farmers picture how their fields could change under different management practices.

Finally, beginning in July, they will be working with UVM Extension's Champlain Valley Crops, Soil & Pasture Team on "cocktail" seeding and inter-seeding for forage biodiversity in a hay and pasture system. The goal is to develop a forage chain that will extend the grazing season from earlier in the spring to later into the winter, and minimize the summer growth slump. Health Hero Farm's aim is a high energy forage system that can finish beef cattle throughout most of the year, with the added benefit of soil health and increased water quality.

### **There is still time to support this project!**

We have just over \$200,000 left to raise. Thank you to everyone who has already supported this extraordinary project! If you haven't yet, please consider making a contribution today. By supporting this project, you will have helped ensure that this farmland is protected for generations. We also hope you will feel pride in taking part in something much larger than the immediate conservation of this farmland. As detailed above, Health Hero Farm is engaged in numerous studies that place this farm in the larger global context of resilient and viable farming. This work will impact farms and communities around VT and the world. Please join this effort today!

# **News From Our Farmers: The growing season is coming!**

We are still in the depths of winter, but signs of spring are beginning to appear. The migrating birds are starting to return, and melting snow is dripping from rooftops. The sugar makers are tapping and getting ready for the spring sap run, and the vegetable farmers are starting seeds in the greenhouses. At South Hero Land Trust we are beginning to create the 2014 "Champlain Islands Grown" Guide to Agriculture, our ninth edition of this great community resource!

Thinking ahead to summer, now is the time to think about signing up for a Community Supported Agriculture share with a local farm! Several Islands farms offer CSA shares in various forms, from pre-paid cards to use throughout the summer, to weekly boxes of vegetables, to shares of meat in the fall. Champlain Islands Farms that offer CSA shares include Blue Heron Farm in Grand Isle, Darby Farm in Alburgh, Health Hero Farm in South Hero, MR Harvest in Grand Isle, and Savage Gardens in North Hero.

Farm stands and farmers' markets will be starting up again in May, in the meantime local meats are available from several Islands Farms. Maple syrup too! The 2014 edition of the "Champlain Islands Grown" Guide to Agriculture will be printed in May. In the meantime check out the 2013 guide on our website for sources of chicken, pork, beef, lamb, eggs, maple syrup, and other great local products!



*A view from the sugar bush at Crescent Bay Farm*



# Farmers' Table Cooking Classes: Our Second Year is Off to a Great Start

We warmed up winter with our first two cooking class of the year! Gloria Ruvalcaba was our guest chef for "Mexican Home-style Meals." Gloria grew up in Mexico, and is now the co-owner of local company Grand Isle Pasta. She shared stories, recipes, and techniques from her native country.

Kaight and Rob Althoff shared what they have learned about Ethiopian cooking and food traditions, since adopting 2 children from Ethiopia into their family of 7. They had stories to share of their travels and family, and taught us about the spices and vegetables commonly grown and used in Ethiopia.

In both classes we learned a lot, and shared stories and a lot of laughter! We mixed ingredients from Islands farms with special spices from around the world for unique blends of flavors and aromas. The Mexican menu included Chicken Enchiladas with Chile Verde and Chile Rojo. The Ethiopian menu included Doro and Segá Wat (chicken and beef stews), Injera, and a spiced honey bread.

For the Mexican cooking class we highlighted ingredients from Savage Gardens, a conserved farm in North Hero. For the Ethiopian Cooking Class we highlighted Health Hero Farm. The farmers and their families joined us for a celebratory meal at the end of each day- helping us make the connection between the food we eat, the land it comes from, and the farmers who grow it!

Our final class will be "Authentic Chinese Cooking with a VT Twist" with Lifei. We will be highlighting ingredients from Blue Heron Farm. Lifei is originally from Xichang in the Sichuan Province of China. She is a dear friend of the Hobbs family and new resident of the US. She is a talented cook and is passionate about sharing her culture with her new community. Lifei will just have returned from a trip to China in time to teach this class, which will meld traditional techniques and ingredients from her homeland with seasonal meats and vegetables from Vermont!

If you'd like to try them out, we'll be posting the recipes from this and future classes on our website! Visit [www.shlt.org/index.php/en/blog](http://www.shlt.org/index.php/en/blog).

*Pictures (clockwise from upper right): Gloria shows students how to make Dulce de Leche; Kaight oversees making Doro Wat; proud chefs and students gather around Ethiopian creations; and chef, students, and farmers enjoy a Mexican meal together.*



# Winter Wonderland Activity Guide: Ideas for Getting Outside & Enjoying Nature

## Twigs & Trees Matching Hunt

Collect twigs from several trees and shrubs outside (use garden shears to cut them from the end of each branch). Look at how each is different. Some are shiny and other are hairy. The branches can be opposite or alternate. Bark color and texture can be different too. Give each child a handful of twigs and send them outdoors on a hunt to find the trees and shrubs that match.

## This One's For the Birds

Make simple bird feeders to feed the birds in your yard. Roll pinecones in peanut butter and sprinkle with birdseed. Hang them from tree branches where you can see them from the window. Get out binoculars if you have them, along with bird identification books, a pad of drawing paper, and colored pencils. Keep a list of birds that visit your feeder, learn their names, and draw pictures of them.

## Catch a Falling Snowflake

During a snowy day, place sheets of dark construction paper in the freezer for 30 minutes. Then take them outside with a magnifying glass. Catch snowflakes on the paper and examine them with the magnifying glass. Each one is six sided but uniquely shaped. Borrow a book from the library on Snowflake Bentley, the historical Vermont figure whose photographs of snowflakes demonstrated that no two snowflakes are alike.

## Go on a Tracking Walk

After a new snowfall, head outside to look for signs of animal life. Birds, squirrels, rabbits, and other animals leave footprints in the snow. Can you follow them? Look for where their dens are and guess what they might be eating. Where else do they go? Make your own tracks, and create a trail through the snow. You or your children can draw big feet on heavy cardboard, cut them out, and tie them to your own feet. Head outdoors to make trails through the snow, and then see if you can follow each others' paths.

## A Day at the Beach

It might not be swimming weather, but the beach is a great place to visit in wintertime. Choose a still afternoon, and bundle up for a beach walk. How does the beach look different in winter? What sounds does the ice make? What shapes do you see in the snow and ice? Do animals visit the beach in winter?





# South Hero Land Trust Winter & Spring Events



*New Date and Theme!*

## **April 26<sup>th</sup> Farmers' Table Cooking Class: Authentic Chinese Cooking with a VT Twist**

Join Lifei, a dear friend of the Hobbs family and new resident of the US, for our final cooking class this spring! Lifei is a talented cook and she is passionate about sharing her culture with her new community. Lifei is originally from Xichang in the Sichuan Province of China. She'll just have returned from a trip to China in time to teach this class, which will meld traditional techniques and ingredients from her homeland with seasonal meats and vegetables from Vermont!

*Cost: \$35 per person. 3:00-7:00 pm. Space is limited, RSVP required by April 21<sup>st</sup>.*

## **April 27<sup>th</sup> "Seasons of South Hero" Wildflower Hunt at Round Pond State Park**

Join SHLT and our friends at Lake Champlain Land Trust for a gentle walk along the trails of Round Pond Natural Area. Bring the family to look for wildflowers and other signs of spring!

*Free. Family friendly. 1:00-3:00 pm, Round Pond Natural Area. Space is limited, please RSVP to [events@lclt.org](mailto:events@lclt.org) or (802) 862-4150 x3.*

## **May 3<sup>rd</sup> Green Up Day Clean-Up and BBQ Celebration**

Help clean up the streets and shorelines of South Hero, and then celebrate with our annual (free!) celebratory BBQ at the Folsom School playground. SHLT is organizing the town-wide clean-up this year, call to sign up to clean your street! We'll also be hosting a group clean-up of White's Beach in the morning. Thanks to the Naud/Pendolino and diCarlo families for generously sponsoring the BBQ again this year!

*Free. Family friendly. Independent clean-up of streets in the morning, SHLT White's Beach Group Clean-Up from 10:00-11:00, and celebratory BBQ from 11:00 am-12:30 pm at Folsom School.*

## **May 24<sup>th</sup> Food for Thought Film Night: "A Place at the Table"**

Join SHLT and the South Hero Congregational Church for a showing of "A Place at the Table," a film about the economic, social, and cultural implications of hunger in America. Enjoy appetizers and treats donated by local farms and food businesses. Help raise funds for Food for Thought, a program providing healthy food to Grand Isle County children at risk of hunger. *(This film has some content that may be challenging for children, we encourage parents to preview the trailer online).*

*Cost: by donation. Open to all. 6:00-8:00 pm, South Hero Congregational Church.*

## **August 10<sup>th</sup> Celebrate Conservation & Community at our Annual Meeting- Save the Date!**

Save the date for our celebration of land conservation and community. We are teaming up with Vermont Land Trust to celebrate conserving Sawyer Bay Farm and selling it to Health Hero Farm. More information and invitation to follow!

# Farm, Food, & Outdoor Events in the Islands

*Our partners in the community are getting ready for a great spring and summer season too!*

## Champlain Islands Farmers' Market Summer Season

Saturday, May 24<sup>th</sup> - Wednesday, September 27<sup>th</sup>

Wednesdays in South Hero,  
St. Rose of Lima Church 3 - 6 pm

Saturdays in Grand Isle,  
St. Joseph Church 10 am - 2 pm



## Local Motion Island Line Bike Ferry

May 24<sup>th</sup> - June 8<sup>th</sup>: Weekends and Holidays 10 am - 6 pm

June 14<sup>th</sup> - Sept 1<sup>st</sup>: DAILY SERVICE 10 am - 6 pm

Sept 6<sup>th</sup> - Oct 13<sup>th</sup>: Weekends and Holidays 10 am - 6 pm

Adults: \$8 (\$6 for LM Members)

Youth (7- 17): \$5 (\$4 for LM Members)

6 and Under: Free

Season Passes available beginning May 1<sup>st</sup>



## Lake Champlain Islands Agriculture Network *Savor the Islands Farm Dinners*

Join LCIAN for a series of on- farm dinners featuring local ingredients from Islands Farms. Dates, times, and locations to be announced soon, visit [www.savortheislands.com](http://www.savortheislands.com) to stay posted!

*Profits benefit Food for Thought, a local program providing healthy food to GI County children at risk of hunger.*



## 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Open Farm & Studio Weekend

The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Discover the Heart of the Islands  
Open Farm and Studio Tour  
will take place on July 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>

Visit vineyards, farms, gardens, art studios, galleries, and farmers' markets. Meet the artists, agricultural producers and their animals living and working within sight of, and sometimes at the edge of, magnificent Lake Champlain. To learn more visit [grandisleartworks.com/ofast2014](http://grandisleartworks.com/ofast2014).





SPRING 2014 NEWSLETTER



Address Service Requested

South Hero Land Trust  
PO Box 455  
South Hero, VT 05486



# SAVE THE DATE!

*South Hero Land Trust and Vermont Land Trust are teaming up to co-host our*  
**Annual Community Celebration & Picnic!**

**Join us on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at Health Hero Farm  
to Celebrate Conservation & Community in South Hero**

