
2017 Cooperator of the Year

Hillside Springs Farm of Westmoreland, NH

Each year the Cheshire County Conservation District honors an individual, business or organization with the “Cooperator of the Year” award. This is done to celebrate the efforts the recipient has undertaken to steward the natural resources on their land in cooperation with the Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This year we are happy to announce Hillside Springs Farm of Westmoreland, NH as our 2017 Cooperator of the Year.



Hillside Springs Farm includes three acres of gardens, over twenty acres of pastures and hayfields, as well as an orchard, 8,000 square feet of greenhouses, and a sustainably managed woodlot including a small sugar bush. Since 2002 Kim Peavey and Frank Hunter, along with their daughter Gwen, have been the farmers, owners, and stewards of Hillside Springs. They have a strong commitment to both the land and the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model. Their CSA supports 90 households in the region; providing over 100 varieties of vegetables, herbs, and flowers to these customers is their primary focus, but their produce is also available at the Farmers’ Market of Keene.

“By horse and by hand,” is the way Frank and Kim describe how they farm. Their operation is wholly horse-powered, and they value the partnership they have with their horses in managing the farm chores. This low impact method helps preserve and protect the resources on their farm while reducing air emissions for all. Biodynamic and organic farming practices are followed at Hillside Springs and they are dedicated to improving the health and fertility of their soil to nurture their farm’s future as well as produce the healthiest food possible for the community.

Frank and Kim have been farming together, with draft horses, for nearly twenty two years, fifteen of those living and farming full time in Westmoreland, New Hampshire. After interning on several CSA and draft horse farms in the Northeast, Frank and Kim spent two years CSA farming on rented land near Ithaca, NY, before moving to NH. They love the seasonal rhythm of farming, enjoy working together, both appreciate their connection to nature, and enjoy the freedom of being self-employed.

Cooperator of the Year continued

Frank Hunter grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia, and majored in Environmental Studies at Prescott College in Arizona. Frank has a strong interest in botany and has done plant inventory work for the Forest Service and worked at a native plant nursery for a couple years before diving into vegetable farming. Frank's interests include seed-saving, grafting heirloom tomatoes, driving horses, live music and travel. He is a volunteer manager for the Farmers' Market of Keene as well as a political activist who volunteers for the Monadnock Progressive Alliance.

Kim Peavey grew up on a family dairy farm in central New York State and studied literature, theology, and environmental issues, earning a Master of Divinity and Master of Arts in English Literature before returning to her farming roots. Kim is a freelance writer and over thirty of her essays and poems have appeared in various periodicals, and she also writes the monthly column Farm Talk on farming and sustainability. Kim currently volunteers as the Chair of the Parents in Partnership group at the Monadnock

Waldorf High School and Frank and Kim have been co-class parents at the Waldorf School which their daughter, Gwen, attended since kindergarten.

Gwen knew the difference between a weed and a lettuce transplant before the age of two. These days, she may prefer reading to weeding, but she helps with the whole spectrum of the farm and enjoys horseback riding and being outdoors. This accomplished family of three live in the 1880's farm house on the property and run the farm with no staff. They have a no-debt farm, and focus on slowly and intentionally growing and improving their business each year. "We couldn't have done it without great neighbors; it's all about community," comments Frank. Both he and Kim appreciate the people of the Monadnock Region, who have provided a welcome environment from day one, offering helping hands and many learning experiences along the way.

Hillside Springs Farm has been working with our partner the USDA NRCS since 2012 on conservation planning and implementation. They have participated in the Environmental Quality Incentive



Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA) which are all Farm Bill Programs. Practices they have

worked on include conservation crop rotation, cover crops, mulching, nutrient management, seasonal high tunnel for crops, residue and tillage management, forage and biomass planting, heavy use area protection, irrigation and water management plan, irrigation pipeline including micro-irrigation, pumping plant, fencing, forest management plan, forest stand improvement, early successional habitat development and management, and brush management.

Beyond their environmental commitment, Frank and Kim are also dedicated to improving food access for all income levels. CSA farms often attract membership with high incomes and they are working to address this both through creating a CSA scholarship fund with contributions from members, and offering work/barter options. They have also formed a partnership with the CCCD to accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and offer Granite State Market Match to double the food dollars for low income families that participate in their CSA farm. Kim and Frank also make vegetarian chili full of their own farm vegetables once a week for the Hundred Nights Shelter in Keene NH.

Offering education and service to the



community are also a big part of the mission of Hillside Springs. They have worked with UNH Cooperative Extension, the CCCD, and NOFA-NH on educational events, trialing new vegetable varieties, offering pollinator habitat, and hosting open farm days. In addition, they offer their farm as an outdoor classroom and host groups from the Monadnock Waldorf School, Keene State College, Antioch University and KROKA. Kim and Frank also initiated and organize the Annual Monadnock Region CSA Open House, which has been going strong since 2005 and is a fantastic educational opportunity for the general public, as well as a way for farmers to work together to grow their markets.

“You two have courage,” a neighbor said to Frank and Kim. I think all can agree that they have courage, a strong work ethic, and a whole lot of heart to follow their dreams and build a beautiful life for their family while giving back so much to the community that supports them.

It is with great honor that the Cheshire County Conservation District presents Hillside Springs Farm with the 2017 Cooperator of the Year Award.