

Hello Young and Beginning Farmers!

We hope winter is treating you well. Welcome to the first issue of the WAYFC newsletter. With this newsletter we hope to keep you caught up on what the coalition has been up to, as well as keep you abreast of upcoming events. We'll also profile young farmers from around the state, showcase your farm photographs, and more...

Also in this first issue we've got a quick, **quick little survey** that we **really need** you to fill out, so we can know more about our audience. Please respond by following the link in your email, or by **clicking here**.

2011 RECAP:

In the past year, the Washington Young Farmer's Coalition had a total of over 500 people turn out for our events!

February: Crop-planning workshop with Josh Volk in Olympia

April: Field trip to the Small Farmers' Journal Horsedrawn Auction and a young-farmers' meeting during the event.

May: Spring crop mob and potluck at Dog Mountain Farm in Carnation

July: Summer crop mob at Full Circle Farmstead in Curtis, WA with potluck, live music by Pickled Okra and dancing!

October: Our 2nd annual Young Farmer's Mixer in Olympia, affectionately called the Apple Squeeze. 200 young farmers came out to press cider mix and mingle, square dance, pound sauerkraut, and share potluck dishes from farms and gardens all over the state.

November: At the Tilth Producers' Conference: Trivia night brought over 100 "young hearts, old farts, and middle-aged tarts" together for a rousing evening of games and beer. "After the Apprenticeship" workshop given for and by beginning farmers. WAYFC's Becky Warner elected to Tilth Producers Board of Directors.

And we're not slowing down in 2012! We've got more skill-sharing workshops and crop mobs in the works; we'll be carpooling down to the Horse-drawn Auction in April again this year; and, of course, we'll have the 3rd Annual Mixer in October. We've got some other exciting collaborations up our sleeves that we'll share with you soon, so keep in touch!



Caitlin
Carnahan



Justin McClane



Becky Warner

Leavenworth, WA: a little Bavarian hotbed of greenhorns

If you've ever been to Leavenworth -- say for one of the four weekends of Oktoberfest, for the highly-commercialized Christmas Lighting, or for any of the other dozen-something "Bavarian" festivals -- you might not suspect that this quaint replica of a German town is trapping more than just tourists. But if you think about the thousands of eaters that visit the upper Wenatchee Valley each year, and the dozens of restaurants that serve them everything from the traditional sauerkraut and schnitzel, to crepes, upscale tacos, and fine Italian cuisine, it starts to make sense...

Drawn to Leavenworth by the stunning landscape and welcoming community, Forrest Kelly, Laura Lentz, and Chris Petry are three greenhorns who have begun putting down roots in this unlikely hotspot for agricultural upstarts.

Forrest "Carrot Man" Kelly will be going into his third season growing storables for market. He started small, bringing a few hundred pounds of carrots and potatoes to the Leavenworth Farmers' Market his first year, while working full time as a trail-crew leader. His second year, he bumped up production and added a variety of other storage crops, including onions, garlic, dry beans, turnips, and beets. He quadrupled his earnings from the first year, and began to consider quitting his day job. For the coming season, he is entertaining the idea of picking up two more farmers' markets, and making a go of full-time farming.

Forrest grew up on a 300-acre tree farm in Iowa and still heads home for a few months in early spring to help his dad dig, transplant, and pot trees. He and his partner, Laura Shorey, have debated moving back to the mid-west to take on a bigger role in the family farm. But that would be a big adjustment that they are not sure they are ready to make, because, of course, they love Washington so well.

Like most of us who are getting started, Forrest farms on leased land and has to borrow tools for working the soil. The one implement he owns is an old disc that he pulled out of the bushes. In the spring, long-time Leavenworth farming-guru Grant Gibbs lends Forrest his tractor, which Forrest drives 8 miles down the road to use pulling the disc. For the rest of the season, he borrows a walk-behind tiller for bed prep.

When asked to offer some "words of wisdom" to the fellow greenhorn, Forrest gave these jewels of advice: "plan on taking it to the chest (financially) the first three years" and "remember that insanity, like farming, is doing the same thing over and expecting different results."



Laura Lentz

I definitely did not grow up on a farm. My mom had a nice perennial flower garden, and my parents were definitely concerned with eating healthy -- but I did not dig around in the dirt that much growing up, just the sandbox. I did love the sandbox.

I grew up in Saint Paul, MN, literally right in the city. I first worked for an urban gardening youth program in Saint Paul, MN, then later I moved to Washington to work in the San Juan Islands on a very small farm; then to Port Townsend to work on a larger farm (still pretty small); then I drove all the way to Connecticut to work on a 15-acre farm and study at a Jewish retreat center; then I moved back to Minnesota to work on a 200+ acre organic farm in the beautiful and bountiful blufflands.

Last year, I moved to Leavenworth and got a job at the Sleeping Lady Mountain Resort working in their 2-acre garden. This spring, I will be working with/for Danielle Gibbs at the Gibbs Organic Farm in Leavenworth. She graciously extended the opportunity of a partnership, and I said hell yes!

What drew me to farming? Well, there are the obvious answers, like I care about where my food and my community's food comes from, and I am an inherently stubborn and adamant person, so going right to the source of the food mystery was only natural for me. More personally, I am a very energized person who needs to do things with her hands, preferably in the outdoors, in order to really feel in the groove and be productive.

The biggest challenge I have faced so far in my journey towards becoming a farmer has been figuring out how to track down "quality" learning experiences, not just people looking for free labor. This has been magnified by the fact that I grew up in the city with hardly any agricultural exposure and barely any mechanically-minded training. So I have felt like I started at pretty much zero. Another challenge has been that small voice in the back of my brain telling me that there is no way that I can make a realistic living growing organic produce. But we'll see!

My favorite vegetables are lightly-frosted kale (red russian or lacinato), over-wintered parsnips, and freshly-picked, late-fall spinach. Carrots are really good, too. And garlic. I like cabbage too, especially the reds. Mmmm, sugar snap peas... oh yeah, and kentucky pole beans. Oh shit! Winter squash! I love winter squash! And thai basil is ridiculously gorgeous and delicious.

Chris Petry grew up in Trumansburg, NY, a small town with no stop lights, but a lot of hippies. He made it to Washington five years ago working for an international mountain guiding company, and never really had plans to end up farming. Then the bottom fell out of the market, he found himself without work for a summer, so he took an internship at Nature's Last Stand farm in Carnation. Chris commuted from Seattle to Carnation for two years, but eventually, the traffic, parking tickets, and concrete got to him.

So he looked to Leavenworth... He found himself a mentor (long-time organic farmer, Grant Gibbs), a storage shed, three-quarters of an acre at \$50/month, and said GO. He grew a bit of everything, selling to local cafés, restaurants, food stands, family, and friends. In his first season (2011), he put up a hoophouse and found himself swimming in tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants long before anyone else was bringing solanums to market. He calls himself the Oh Yeah! Farm and plans to collaborate this coming season with friend Tom Curtis on 1.5 acres.

When asked what his goals for the future are, he says "to soak up as much knowledge from the old guru farmers of the land, learn from my own mistakes in the market gardens, and continue to think outside the box. I strive to grow what isn't being grown, adapt new techniques, and modify current tools and methods to work for the small-scale farmer. Eventually, I would love to homestead with a witty, wild, powerhouse of a woman on a nice spread of land somewhere near Leavenworth. But until she lands in my lap..."



to submit your photos, recommend a young farmer we should profile, or to suggest an article topic, please write to: newsletter@washingtoneyoungfarmers.org