

EIGHTH DAY FARM

Fall/Winter Newsletter - 2017

We bought a truck!

It's a cute little thing! This truck was purchased with some of the funds we received from our annual Farm to Fork event. With Kyle moving on (and not needing a large diesel beast), we were able to buy it from him to help with hauling compost, various farm equipment, and keeping the farm looking neat.



2018 Farm Interns

A huge thank you to our intern class of 2017! What a great group of individuals that gave so much to the farm. And in return they were able to take with them, the experience of digging deep into our unique parking lot farm for the good of the almighty vegetable.



MEET YOUR NEW FARMERS!

It is with great enthusiasm that I write to the Eighth Day Farm community introducing our new staff!

Sometimes when you have a significant staffing overhaul within an organization it can be a real gamble and difficult to know what it will look like when the dust settles. In our situation though, we are blessed to have two "new" staff who are not totally new and who we know quite well. If you were a CSA member in 2016 you may remember John Puttrich, an Eighth Day intern that year. He is joining us along with Andy Rozendaal, who you may know simply because this is Holland, it is small, and he used to live in the area.

John graduated from Hope College with a major in Philosophy and a minor in Engineering. John knows the ins and outs of the Holland Town Center property and Eighth Day Farm's CSA because he was an intern in 2016. We believe this will be a real aid in the transition next year. John spent this last year furthering his gardening knowledge at the Ramah Day Camp outside of Philadelphia. Kyle has shared a sentiment, but in very Kyle-like language, "John is the greatest human being on the planet...I



He enters into death yearly, and comes back rejoicing. He has seen the light lie down in the dung heap, and rise again in the corn.

- Wendell Berry "The Man Born to Farming"

Farewell by Kyle VanEerden

Last winter I wrote a piece in which I compared the end of a farm season to death. It began like this:

Speak to a farmer in October about the impending first frost and listen close. Perhaps she will speak of nearly-ripened tomatoes, or peppers that should be harvested soon before it hits. She might speak of weather patterns and trends, and acknowledge that this one might miss us due to our proximity to the lake. Barely perceptible beneath the surface, however, you might just hear something unexpected: Hope. This work that she has given her life to for the last nine months will soon come to an end. Ice crystals like daggers will rupture cell walls with a world ending whisper – and in this death she will be set free.

The reality of a farmer is a continuous harmony of life, death and resurrection. When I wrote this a year ago I felt the weight of death, but I was also aware that next season's garlic was already poking up through the snow, almost perceptibly screaming "LIFE"! (continued on page 3)

love that man." John married Jenna last winter and the two of them are excited to be returning to the Holland area in early 2018. John will oversee the New Fast Food program out of the Growth Center and assisting Andy with the CSA.

Andy majored in Agricultural Studies at Iowa State but wrestled with the philosophy there because "ISU talked so much about sustainability but was always around developing new GMO varieties and the talk about synthetic fertilizers and pesticides was only about minimizing the use for increased financial sustainability." Near the end of college he felt a stronger call to the ministry and enrolled at Western Theological Seminary. After graduating from WTS Andy served as a pastor in a church in Hamilton for 9 years. But agriculture is in his blood, so in 2010 he and his wife Erin moved to Chicago where Andy served as the Director of Urban Agriculture for a non-profit called the Resource Center. Andy ran the City Farm program, selling vegetables to high-end restaurants and farmers markets in Chicago. In 2012 he migrated a little ways over to Gary Comer Youth Center to be their farm manager. Andy worked a 1.75 acre property with the help of high school and college students (one being a young Kyle VanEerden) and increased production from 4,000 lbs of food to over 20,000 lbs. Andy and Erin, along with their kids Zoe and Grayson, moved to the greater Holland area to be closer to family. We are blessed to have such an experienced and faithful leader stepping into this position.



Both Andy and John bring new skills to Eighth Day Farm that I believe will help the organization expand upon its mission in multiple ways. They have been drawn to Eighth Day Farm for the same reasons you have- their love for local organic food; their desire to be good stewards of the land and to love their neighbors as themselves; to feed the hungry; and to live out their

faith in God in holistic ways. I pray you welcome Andy and John into your hearts and homes.

In turn, to Andy and John, we are excited for you to meet the Eighth Day Farm community. One could argue that the very existence of Eighth Day Farm in a small, conservative town like Holland is a miracle, especially when you consider that it's founders were dirt poor. There was scant vacant land to farm, but somehow the farm took root and grew. It grew because there existed, and



exits today, a special group of people that comprise the Eighth Day Farm community. Folks that aren't rich or powerful, but have imagination and big hearts. They will be your greatest asset, and more than an asset. They will be your help in times of need and your partner in the execution of Eighth Day Farm's mission. Don't be afraid to lean on them. They are strong.

Farm to Fork event sells out, huge success

Vendors are starting to arrive! The pig is almost ready! Final touches on the tables! It's just about go time...

This year's Farm to Fork event was everything we hoped for, here at the farm. A relaxing night for our members and guests, with great entertainment and food, and amazing food made with our very own produce incorporated into every dish. This event also acts as the farms main fundraiser. This year we were able to raise over \$8,000! Thank you!

If you get a chance, show some love to the businesses that helped us out at this years event by visiting their establishment.

If you get a chance, show some love to the businesses that helped us out at this year's event by visiting their establishment: Creative Dining Services, New Holland Brewing, Our Brewing Company, Brewery Vivant, Fenn Valley Vineyards, deBoer Bakkerij, Lemonjello's Coffee, Sacred Springs Kombucha, Coach Stop Farm, Cultured Love, and The Farmhouse Deli.

VanEerden Farewell, continued from page 2

This ongoing cycle of rebirth serves as a constant reminder of the grace that abounds throughout creation.

But this season is different. This is goodbye. While I no doubt retain my faith that the spring will return clothed in green abundance, I am thoroughly immersed in the winds of winter.

As I've given different answers to different people over the past few months I have not yet come up with one that actually sounds satisfying to me as to why I'm leaving or where I might be heading. Some days it's the 90 hour weeks, other days it's the curiosity for something new. If I've had a drink or two it likely has something to do with capitalism. While all of these answers contain seeds of truth the ultimate reality feels more nuanced and mysterious.



I was fascinated by anthropology as a college student. Of particular interest to me were the large sociocultural shifts that have taken place in human history such as the move from nomadic hunter gatherer societies into more permanent agricultural ones. Many anthropologists now agree that our nomadic ancestors likely enjoyed much more leisure time in a more egalitarian society than we have ever seen since. Agriculture, as it were, gave rise to more work and more inequality. It also provided a stable enough foundation for philosophy, poetry, literature and most of the other human achievements we consider beautiful. I've once heard good farming described as mostly mimicking nature, but then at the exact right moment manipulating the environment to maximize yields. In this subtle but decisive action our ancestors opened Pandora's Box, as it were, and for once quite literally the rest *IS* history. What forbidden fruit have we sank our teeth into?

But before I can despair I am reminded of all of you. Of the conversations and kind words during pickups. Of recipes excitedly exchanged. Of the potluck suppers with "a dish from each house for the hunger of every house." I am reminded of why we farm, and why we strive to do it well. Having read plenty of Wendell Berry in college I had an academic notion of what community was supposed to be, but you all made those words come to life.

When I moved to Holland in 2013 it was only meant to be a very brief stint. One year or maybe two at the most before I moved on to bigger and better things. This was simply a stepping stone. Little did I know, however, that something infectious had taken hold of me. I sometimes joked that the farm ruined any chance I'd had at furthering my academic career, but this may not have been far from the truth. After spending a summer in the soil the halls of seminary felt so hollow. Holland became a home that I never even realized I needed. Rather than being a stepping stone or a resume piece, my life was transformed through the work I participated in and the friendships I formed. My vision of upward mobility had now been replaced by one more fitting of a farmer, one of cyclical and seasonal balance. I leave now not to move on to something bigger and better but rather in the hope that like a good grower I have appropriately observed the conditions of the field and have chosen the appropriate moment to make my move. I am thrilled to see what new life and new hands will bring to Eighth Day next spring even as I move into a deeper union with winter. Andy and I planted next season's garlic together just the other day in what felt like the most appropriate transition from one farmer to the next, planting together in hopeful expectation of what is to come.

I could go on endlessly attempting to express my gratitude for what this farm has meant to me but the truth is that I don't yet think I have even yet begun to understand most of it. You all have prepared the soil of my soul with the love and care of a farmer, and I will go forth and do my best to produce good fruit. Thank you for the conversations and camaraderie. Thank you for the love and support. Thank you for the meals. Thank you for making Holland home.

I think that I'm supposed to be giving an end of season wrap-up in this writing of mine, but it's a little too late for me to get fired so I will simply say this: It was another season full of chasing chickens, toil in the soil, delicious vegetables, amazing interns, broken trellises, exhaustion, love and joy. I regret none of it.

Now, rather than any more ramblings from Kyle, I would rather leave you all with a gift. It is not an exaggeration to say that I would not have become a farmer if not for the writings of Wendell Berry, so I now want to leave you all with my very favorite of his poems. I think about this poem nearly every day, and I hope that it's wisdom and beauty will have some small impact on your day today. Thank you my friends.

The Mad Farmer, Flying the Flag of Rough Branch, Secedes From the Union

By Wendell Berry

<i>From the union of power and money</i>	<i>In the one life of the commonwealth and home,</i>	<i>And its replenishment at mealtimes and at night.</i>
<i>From the union of power and secrecy,</i>	<i>In their own nation small enough for a story</i>	<i>Come into the body's thanksgiving, when it knows</i>
<i>From the union of government and science,</i>	<i>Or song to travel across in an hour, he cries:</i>	<i>And acknowledges itself a living soul.</i>
<i>From the union of government and art,</i>	<i>Come all ye conservatives and liberals</i>	<i>Come into the dance of the community, joined</i>
<i>From the union of science and money,</i>	<i>Who want to conserve the good things and be free,</i>	<i>In a circle, hand in hand, the dance of the eternal</i>
<i>From the union of genius and war,</i>	<i>Come away from the merchants of big answers,</i>	<i>Love of women and men for one another</i>
<i>From the union of outer space and inner vacuity,</i>	<i>Whose hands are metallad with power;</i>	<i>And of neighbors and friends for one another.</i>
<i>The Mad Farmer walks quietly away.</i>	<i>From the union of anywhere and everywhere</i>	<i>Always disappearing, always returning,</i>
<i>There is only one of him, but he goes.</i>	<i>By the purchase of everything from everybody at the lowest price</i>	<i>Calling his neighbors to return, to think again</i>
<i>He returns to the small country he calls home,</i>	<i>And the sale of anything to anybody at the highest price;</i>	<i>Of the care of flocks and herds, of gardens</i>
<i>His own nation small enough to walk across.</i>	<i>From the union of work and debt, work and despair;</i>	<i>And fields, of woodlots and forests and the uncut groves,</i>
<i>He goes shadowy into the local woods,</i>	<i>From the wage-slavery of the helplessly well-employed.</i>	<i>Calling them separately and together, calling and calling,</i>
<i>And brightly into the local meadows and croplands.</i>	<i>From the union of self-gratification and self-annihilation,</i>	<i>He goes forever toward the long restful evening</i>
<i>He goes to the care of neighbors,</i>	<i>Secede into the care for one another</i>	<i>And the croak of the night heron over the river at dark.</i>
<i>He goes into the care of neighbors.</i>	<i>And for the good gifts of Heaven and Earth.</i>	
<i>He goes to the potluck supper, a dish</i>	<i>Come into the life of the body, the one body</i>	
<i>From each house for the hunger of every house.</i>	<i>Granted to you in all the history of time.</i>	
<i>He goes into the quiet of early mornings</i>	<i>Come into the body's economy, its daily work,</i>	
<i>Of days when he is not going anywhere.</i>		
<i>Calling his neighbors together in to the sanctity</i>		
<i>Of their lives separate and together</i>		

A Letter from the Roessing Family

Dear Eighth Day Farm Community,

After eight years with Eighth Day, Melissa and I have decided to embark on a new adventure. This decision was anything but easy, and we've been sharing all along that we feel ready for a change of pace and place, but not people. There are too many memories to relate in a letter, it would take a long night of porch sitting to unpack even a handful. But here are few we'll take with us...

- The CSA pick ups... seeing people mingle and catch up with one another; children running around the farm; folks filling baskets with fresh organic food and countless stories of people trying new vegetables and liking them (and even memories of David telling me almost every week that the only thing Swiss Chard is good for is putting in a vase)- this was the farm in all its glory.
- The Wednesday night potlucks at Rosa Parks Green where we broke bread and bok choy together, and interns graciously included my uncoordinated kids in their games of Frisbee.
- The many oddities and the limitless creativity that came with having folks like Gary around...such as the time when he and Kyle tried to slaughter their first rabbit. The only time I ever caught a rabbit in a live trap I somehow caught two simultaneously. Gary wanted to eat the rabbits and planned on using a blow gun he made to execute the slaughter. It didn't go according to plan and one rabbit escaped, but the second one made good eating and inaugurated Gary's birthday tradition of eating rabbit. (Rabbit hunting and college intern reactions to it could be its own chapter).
- The evening when Sam was trying out his motorcycle with Kyle and the interns around in my backyard; I was working on my back porch and I saw Chara hop on and Kyle and Sam giving her instructions. Then I watched as Chara took off with impressive speed with the bike and her aimed directly at the side of my house. Chara intuitively crashed it and bloodied up her legs and everyone stood gaping and breathless. She got up as chill as ever and said she was fine.
- The relief that a particular rainstorm brought back in 2012. In our first year at the Holland Town Center we had 90 degree days and no rain for 30 straight days. And I can vividly remember when the heavy rain came and cooled the sizzling parking lot and I stood there drenched with a huge smile on my face.
- There were also the rhythms of the farm that I got to experience and re-experience year after year, from the first harvest when the cooler would fill up with crisp lettuce and large bok choys to the first fall breeze, signaling an approaching rest and bodily reprieve.
- Most importantly, there were the many people who shared their lives with us. So many of you opened your hearts and your homes to us. So many of you supported us and the farm with gifts of all kinds-checks, and random anonymous cards with money in our mailbox, Chris giving me his truck after my van was hit, and Josh donating his Montero to the farm. The generosity and love has been amazing. And there were so many of you we wanted to know better. We kept being surprised by how many beautiful souls Holland possessed.
- This has truly been a Community Supported farm. People have and continue to pour their time and energy into board meetings, Farm to Fork, volunteer days and projects. Thank you all. Thank *you* specifically.

The good news is that Eighth Day Farm is an evolving community, and it is as robust as ever. We've hired a new farm manager who is beyond qualified and I believe will take Eighth Day Farm to the

next level. We are glad to be leaving Eighth Day in the black and in the hands of someone who loves and believes in the mission of Eighth Day Farm. You don't take a job like this if you aren't committed. Also, Melissa and I do plan to continue to work with the review committee for the Jubilee Response Foundation that is underneath Eighth Day Farm. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this foundation, you can check it out under the justice and charity tab at www.eighthdayfarm.org. Eighth Day Farm's mission is Psalm 146: 7 "executing justice for the oppressed and giving food to the hungry." Like other non-profits we have figured out how to give food to the hungry, but the Jubilee Response Foundation tackles the more difficult calling of justice.

Melissa and I will close out this calendar year and move to our new home in December. Our children will finish out the year at Holland Language Academy and Melissa will stay with Community Action House for the time being. We will be living about a half hour south of Holland in a 130 year old brick farm house on 7 acres, 342 62nd Street, South Haven. We are starting a business called Black Sheep Shelter that will include a small organic farm, a bed and breakfast, and eventually a unique wedding venue. The layout of the property and its various outbuildings preordained these plans. Our desire is for the event space to double as a guild for appreciators of the wild, the yummy and the arts. We will be renovating the skeleton of an existing barn into a new creation- essentially a large, barn-like pavilion (covering 4,400 square feet) which opens up and structurally extends into a lengthy cottage garden area. The existing posts will be like dry bones awakened with clematis, dutchman's pipe and hydrangea vines. The goal is to leave a bit of the romantic ruins in place and start a conversation between the built environment and the less tamed world of the flora and fauna. There is something spiritually compelling about blending what is usually indoor space with outdoor space, about union, about the stories in the old and the ruined standing amongst the young and aspiring, about opening our interiors to the exterior and yielding a measure of control. For me its also a deep appreciation and belief that nature holds a beauty that we are not meant to modify or alter, but invited to stand back and behold with gratitude. We hope you will come visit us!

So this is not goodbye, but see you later. I would say this blessing over the crops, but I say it now with even deeper sincerity to each and every one of you, "May the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord make his face to shine upon you and give you his peace, now and forever."

Jeff and Melissa