



# Youth Farm Project

## 2013 Annual Report



## Garlic Harvest Poem

With our digging forks we dug  
And with our hands we tugged  
Unearthing garlic on a sunlit morning.

We pulled up Zemo, then some Jack  
Taking full wheelbarrows to the barn  
And bringing empty ones back.

We harvested it all after harvesting four rows  
With eight people it's amazing how fast it goes.

Then we tied with our hands  
Bundling garlic with twine strands  
Stringing them under the old barn roof.

Some of us tied knots  
While some of us hung.  
Some worked and talked  
While some worked and sung.  
We hung up hundreds, and more and more!  
Til leaves and fallen cloves littered the floor.

Now admire! A morning's work is done!  
Who knew that garlic could be so much fun.

**By Amelia Kaufman, 2013 Crew Leader**





## To Friends and Supporters of the Youth Farm Project:

2013 marked our 4<sup>th</sup> incredible season at the Youth Farm, filled with hard work and growth. Students from high schools throughout Tompkins County have once again come together to establish a bountiful acreage of vegetables, that have found their way to schools, community centers, and families for whom such healthy produce is too often out of reach. Started in the summer of 2010, the Youth Farm Project continues to build on its mission: **To include our local youth as integral participants in building equitable local food systems and healthy communities.**

Our central commitment to diversity has continued to bring a wide range of local youth together, cutting across neighborhood, socio economic, and cultural differences, while simultaneously developing leadership skills, a sound work ethic, and interpersonal communication skills. Paid through local youth employment agencies, we were able for the first time, to have youth involved with the farm during the entire year. Winter salsa and jam sessions, a spring farm wake up crew, our core Youth Farm summer program bringing 30 local youth to the farm for 8 weeks, and a fall crew responsible for final harvesting and putting the farm to bed, have made the Youth Farm Project a 12 month program. This in addition to an increasing number of college volunteers and interns, community volunteers and visiting youth groups has made the Farm a place of active networking, connection, and community-wide learning.

What has become clear, over our first four years, is that the growth of the students themselves is even more inspiring than the growth of the foods they have produced. We have put special effort into honing the curriculum of our weekly Development Sessions and integrating the ideas developed into the ongoing work at the Farm. One day each week, youth meet off-farm to cook the food we grow, eat together and engage in activities, discussions and documentaries bringing to light the myriad connections between their work in the fields and far reaching food production issues concerning food justice, migrant labor, environmental sustainability, and their own health.

The benefits of working with the YFP can be best described by the youth farmers themselves –please read some highlights from the youth’s responses to a summer of working at YFP.

Thank you for your support and for taking the time to enjoy the information and stories presented in this year’s Annual Report.

Sincerely,

Dan, Katie, Joseph, and Ann

**Rayna** has been working with YFP for two years now, and was one of the first crew members to work on the Youth Farm year-round. Currently a junior at the Lehman Alternative Community School, Rayna exhibits professionalism, wisdom, and a commitment to social justice far beyond her years. Working alongside her at the farm, it is clear that she takes each task seriously and with great excitement.

Below is a beautiful piece Rayna contributed to the YFP blog after a full year of working with YFP through the seasons. It is clear from her reflection that our year-round program provides opportunities for growth and learning that reach beyond those offered in an intense but brief 8 weeks of summer:



“When the Youth Farm Project’s 2012 summer season came to an end and I began to gear myself up for a new school year, I couldn’t imagine spending my days inside, rather than that the farm. I left the summer program with an immense feeling of accomplishment and pure joy. Never before have I had an experience that had such a huge impact on my interests and passions. I was overjoyed when I was invited to continue working part time at the farm for the rest of the year.

This was the first year that the Youth Farm Project was able to partner up with the Youth Employment Service (YES) of Ithaca to hire youth to complete a year round position at the farm. There were usually about four young people working during a given week. We worked 1-2 days after school from 4-6pm and Saturdays from 9am-1pm.

Fall at the farm is a whole different scene, hot busy days of weeding meld into crisp days that leave you with gorgeously full buckets of beans, peppers, kale, broccoli, collards, brussel sprouts, potatoes, onions, beets and carrots. During the fall months we harvested over 2,000 pounds of potatoes! Digging for potatoes is like digging for treasure. You enter a rhythm, pushing a pitch fork into the soil and lifting to unearth beautifully grown potatoes. Harvesting onions was one of my favorite fall tasks. When onions are ready to harvest the top of the onion is revealed. You can see the lovely yellow or deep magenta purple of their fruit. As you harvest you pop them out of the ground, leaving behind a little divot in the soil. During the fall most of the food produced on the farm goes to the BJM Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program and ICSD. Nothing filled me with more excitement than seeing potatoes in my school lunch that I had harvested the previous weekend.

We slowly finished harvesting fall crops and began to allow the farm to slip into a sleepy trance of dormancy. The thing that amazed me most about the farm during the winter was the amount of potential held quietly in the snow covered fields. It is sometimes unbelievable to me how much the farm produces. To see it totally quiet, yet know that so much life was being contained and stored up for the spring was breathtaking. During these cold months we busied ourselves by cranking out jam and salsa. We make jam from currants and raspberries from a local berry farm, Kestrals Perch (Thanks Katie!). In some batches we add a bit of jalapeno pepper grown at YFP to create a unique warm tasting jam. Our Salsa Verde is made from our tomatillos and jalapenos, it is so delicious to eat with tortilla chips, or on just about anything!

Beginning the spring farming season was a joyful time. Seeding flats was our first task, though tedious at times, I poured my excitement and energy for new life into the job, knowing that I would soon be rewarded with the task of transplanting. As the spring months have passed we have been hard at work cleaning out the barn, building and preparing our new hoop house, raising a new batch of chicks and transplanting flowers, basil, tomatoes, kale, collards, cucumbers, squash, lettuce, onions, leeks and much more! Our first spring harvest was peas! They were delicious, especially after spending hours planting and weeding them! As we transition back into the beautiful mayhem of summer I couldn’t be more grateful to have gotten to experience the farm in each stage of its being.

After working on the farm for a full year I am back for another summer. Throughout the year I have familiarized myself with the farm to a greater extent and learned so much more about the different work we do on the farm. This year I am taking on more of a leadership role within the program working to lead one of the four crews of youth on the farm. It’s awesome to be able to share what I learned over the year with the people in my crew. I hope that I can help them to feel excited and empowered by the work we are doing, because it is really special work.”



**Natalia** started working with the Youth Farm Project in the summer program of 2011; YFP's second year of running the program. While wrapping up her junior year at Ithaca High School, Natalia heard about YFP through friends who went to LACS who were already involved with the program. She applied and was hired as a crew member that first summer of 2011, and then went on to work as a crew leader in the two summers thereafter. Speaking with Natalia, it was clear how much the Youth Farm Project influenced her growth as a leader, advocate, and future farmer. She explained, "The biggest thing it did for me my first year is introduce concepts of food deserts and food justice". She went on to describe how this is one of the strongest components of the summer program, and talked about how important it is that crew members get exposure to

these issues within the context of extremely helpful, supportive, and informative program directors and crew leaders. She articulated how the program "allows people to formulate questions and seek out their own information... just thinking about where it all starts is really important", while increasingly learning and talking about the interconnectedness of and intersections between agriculture, food, social justice, environmental health, and personal health.

Currently, Natalia is working hard in her sophomore year at Cornell University, majoring in International Agriculture with a concentration in Agriculture & Food Systems. With classes such as Soil Science and Sustainable Agriculture to other more sociologically-based classes, Natalia is getting a formal education covering issues first introduced to her by the Youth Farm Project. She explained how last year, she went into her freshman year at Cornell undecided, as Cornell has an overwhelming number of options for programs of study. Natalia found that all the classes she was interested in "all led back to agriculture... and that's because of the Youth Farm". When asked about her future, Natalia answered honestly, "I just kind of want to farm!" It is very exciting that Natalia has fallen in love with agriculture, and that she will be entering this field with such a high level of experience, drive, and commitment to justice and sustainability.

This summer will be the first in three years that Natalia has not worked in YFP's summer program. Instead, she'll be undergoing an intense farming internship on an organic farm in Connecticut. Come fall, she'll be headed to Costa Rica, where she'll be studying and working on a coffee plantation. Until then, Natalia can be found studying in her apartment (where she'll still working on convincing her Engineering roommates to compost!), and lending a hand at each Saturday Work Party at the Youth Farm. We'll sorely miss her energy, enthusiasm, and contagious smile this summer and fall, but we are very excited to see Natalia go off to show the rest of the world what a powerful farmhand and leader she truly is.

An excerpt from a piece contributed by Natalia to the YFP blog, reflecting on this summer as a YFP crew leader:

"While the crew is less enthusiastic about yanking endless plans from the pathways and beds, we try to make that fun... We make conversations about the British humor in Monty Python sketches, or play word games for as long as they can still be fun, but these discussions inevitably taper away. Truthfully, weeding is a lengthy and monotonous job. But we do it anyway, and I'm immensely proud of the way my crew can motivate each other. We have begun referring to weeds as the bullies on a playground, picking on our poor, innocent vegetables, and we are determined to protect our plants so they can grow. The work we do results in incomparable satisfaction. This satisfaction comes at the end of the day, when we see freshly cleared pathways and newly exposed vegetables stretching their leaves to the sun, or take a look at the vast pile of discarded plants that used to be crowding our fields. Our job is special in this way; there are few other types of employment that require manual labor for hot, sunny hours outside, but end in such a unified sense of pride. Some of my crew members will never farm again, and maybe some will pursue it as a lifelong career. Either way, we get the privilege of spending our summer together, bonding with chickens, weeding weeds, and feeling the sweet satisfaction that comes with some good hard work."

“Through working on the farm for two summers now, I have really begun to see how **interrelated** the way we produce food is to other aspects such as environment, community and personal health. It shocks me how changing the way we grow things can have such a **large impact.**”

*“It has given me the drive to start a small garden of my own, and to help others to become more educated about food justice.”*

“I learned how to **ask questions**. Usually I assume, but with farms, you can't do that.”

“I have gained muscles I've never thought of before.”

“YFP has opened my eyes to many new possibilities for feeding large populations. I think I have grown as a person and a farmer by gaining knowledge about communication skills, agricultural skills and world problems that need to be addressed. It has definitely been the **most fulfilling part of my summer.**”

“One of the biggest things for me was just that you really have to care about what you're doing. Hard work and motivation, and a belief in what you are doing will almost always pay off in the end.”

“I learned that I can enjoy this job much more than I thought possible... that I could be a strong crew member and a balanced part of a team. It was a wonderful experience.”

# The Food We Grow: who eats it & where does it go?

## School Meal Programs

As part of our commitment to building a stronger, healthier, and more sustainable local food system, we have continued to strive to sell our produce consistently and affordably to local school lunch programs. In this way, the Ithaca City School District Child Nutrition Program has served as one of the primary avenues through which we aim to provide children of underrepresented groups with the nutritious food needed for a healthy life.

This year, over one TON of the Youth Farm's produce was served in Ithaca City Schools – over twice as much (and over 1,000 pounds more) than in 2012! We sell this produce at a price the district can afford, which is a mere one-half to one-third of the typical organic wholesale price. Youth reached with this food include all of the children served by the Ithaca City School District's Child Nutrition Program, Ithaca High School, New Roots, and LACS.

Additionally, YFP provides the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program at Beverly J. Martin Elementary School with 70 percent of their produce this fall. Through this program, 250 children ate healthy snacks each day, made with fresh fruits and vegetables which many of them would have never tried otherwise. Other avenues through which we sell and donate produce in efforts to improve community food security is to the Market Boxes Program, providing low cost CSA-type shares to low income families, Loaves and Fishes, the Ithaca Health Alliance, the Friendship Donations Network, the Congo Square Market/Southside Community Center. In 2013, YFP donated an estimated \$2,000-worth of produce to these organizations and to local families as well as volunteers and the Youth Farmers themselves.

Vegetables from the Youth Farm served in local school meals include:

*green beans, kale, onions, potatoes, tomatoes, bell peppers, zucchini, garlic, broccoli, leeks, daikon radishes, cutting celery, hakurei turnips, collards, field greens, carrots, and more!*



# Farming through the Seasons

While the Youth Farm Project is most active during its summer program, 2013 marked the first year that YFP sustained its program for all twelve months of the year!

## Spring

5 Youth Farmers got to work getting the farm ready and planting seedlings. The New Roots Charter School's "Food and Farming" class came out to the Youth Farm this spring, one of the students was so excited about YFP that she came to work with us as a crew member this summer!

Shown at Right: Youth Farmers seeding trays with students from Hobart & William Smith College visiting the Farm for their Alternative Spring Break trip.



## SUMMER PROGRAM

30 new and returning youth from high schools around the area took to the fields for eight 20-hour weeks to grow a total of 7,500 pounds of food this year!

In addition to the good hard work the Youth Farmers put in in the fields, they also engaged in weekly development sessions, hosted other youth from various summer camps throughout the area, volunteered at Loaves and Fishes, and sold their produce at local farmers markets.

Surrounding photos: Youth Farmers engaged in all aspects of the farm, from weeding and harvesting in the fields, to cooking and selling the produce they've grown, to leading discussions in important topics in food and social justice, health, and sustainability.



## Fall

After a hot and busy summer, 6 Youth Farmers finished the job by harvesting endless bins full of veggies (shown to the right, top row) to be served in their own school lunches.

Weekly Saturday Community Work Days continued strong into the end of the season, with many volunteers from throughout the community showing up each week to lend a hand (shown in left-most photo on the right).

Part of our commitment to education includes **welcoming classes to the farm for hands-on learning experiences** – and fall is the perfect time of year to do this! Classes from both LACS (shown below right) and the Ithaca Waldorf School (shown below left) came to the farm on a weekly basis throughout the fall.



Above: Youth Farmers sell produce, salsa verde, and Raspberry-Currant-Jalapeño Jam at the Good Life Farm's Thanksgiving Farmers Market.

## Winter

Once we finished planting garlic and cleaning up as much of the farm as we could before the temperature dropped too low, the Youth Farmers headed indoors to the warmth of the LACS kitchen. There, we made our value-added products of Raspberry-Currant-Jalepeno Jam and Salsa Verde, using ingredients from our farm and Kestral Perch. Photos: Youth Farmers make jam in the LACS kitchen, and trim leeks in the cafeteria to prep for delivery to ICSD lunches.



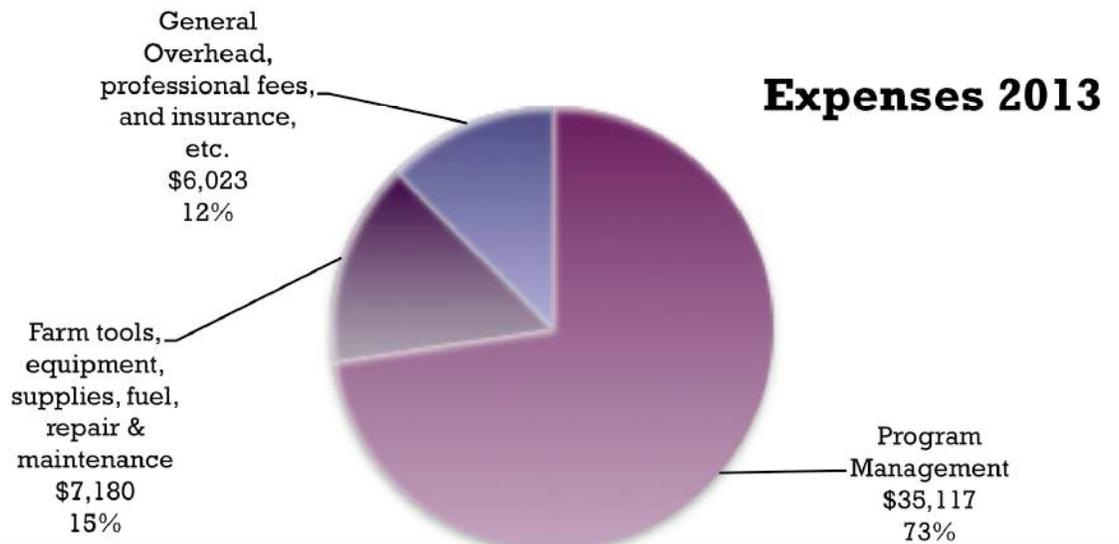
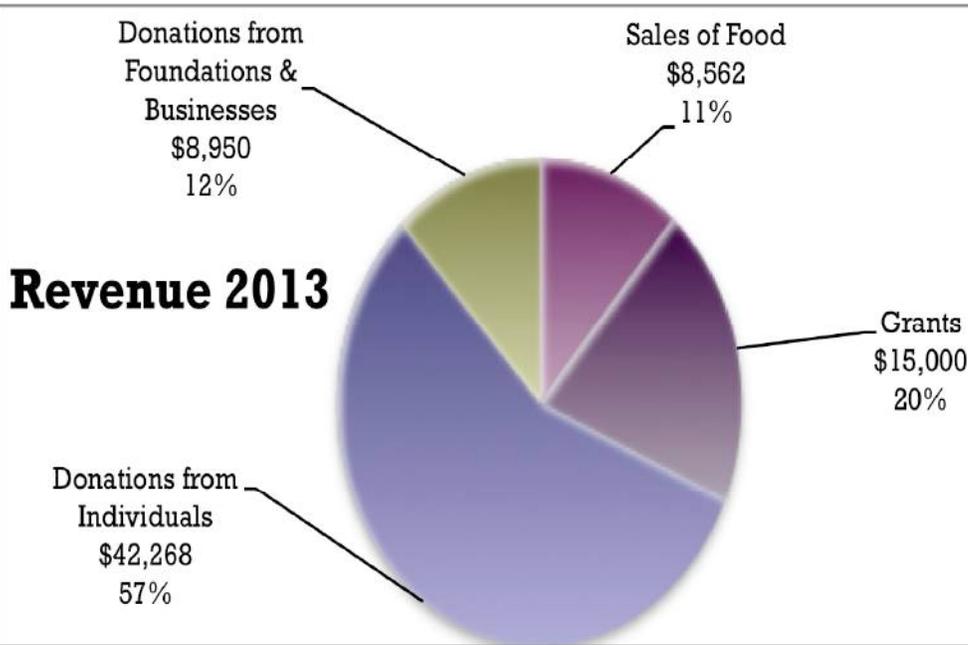
# Financial Summary

2013 was a year of incredible abundance in produce, learning, as well as financial support. The Youth Farm Project received individual donations to a degree that exceeded expectations, which we both greatly appreciate and largely attribute to the positive impact this program has had within our community. The surplus revenue has been allocated towards our budget for 2014.



Above:

Youth Farmers Rayna, Elena, and Shida sell our value-added products, Raspberry Currant Jalapeno Jam and Salsa Verde, at the Triphammer Farmers Market.



# Donations

As an experiential educational program for high school students, providing healthy produce to local disenfranchised members of our community, the Youth Farm Project is built on community support. While we purposefully include an entrepreneurial component in our program, our work simply would not be possible without the financial support of many generous individuals, foundations, and businesses. Here, we would like to name and extend our greatest thanks to those who have contributed gifts in support of our mission. Although this publication cannot fit the names of each individual supporter, each contribution of any size truly makes a difference in our program and in our community.

## Individual Donors \$1,000 or more:

Frank H.T. Rhodes Award & Michael  
W. Mitchell Prize

*won by Joseph Amsili;  
donated to YFP to fund his  
position as Assistant Farm  
Manager*

Anonymous

## Individual Donors \$100 - \$999:

Anonymous

Carolyn Abbot & Robert Belle

Susan & John Barr

Richard Berg and Lori Yelensky

Mitchell Bobrow & Kathy Rogers

Elizabeth Bunting

Jane Calder

Diane Carruthers

Jumay Chu

John Claus

Susan V. Compton

William & Carol Cooke

Fernando de Aragon & Jacqueline E.  
Thompson

Laurie DeFlaun and John Grady

Timothy DeVoogd

Donna Fleming and Rick Kaufman

Richard Furnas

Carla Golden & Diane Carruthers

Lawrence Hirschberger

Naeem Inayahtullah & Sorayya Kahn

Carrie Koplinka-Loehr

Andrea M. Lachance & T. Bruce Lauber

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Kristen Nygren

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David Schwartz

John Suter

Varya Siegel & Chris Proulx

Bruce Thompson

Alicia Wittink

Ken and Jan Zeserson

## Foundations, Corporations, and Other Institutional Donors \$1,000 or more:

Ben & Jerry's Foundation

Jerry Greenfield & Elizabeth Skarie  
Foundation

Middlecott Foundation

Midwest Foundation

The Park Foundation

## Foundations, Corporations, and Other Institutional Donors \$100 - \$999:

Emmy's Organics

Home Green Home

Ithaca Bakery

Simon Burt Fund

## Gifts In Kind

Much of our work is made possible with the support of in-kind donations in the form of professional, legal, fundraising, and non-profit assistance. Our greatest thanks to those who make our work possible:

ALL of our volunteers, including guest speakers and chefs

The Crooked Carrot CSK

The Full Plate Farm Collective

The Ithaca Youth Bureau Youth  
Employment Service

Kestral Perch Berry Farm

LACS food service staff

Max Paskin-Flerlage

Sujata Sidhu Gibson, Esq.

The Ithaca Waldorf School

Greenstar Community Project's Food

Justice Summit Farm-A-Thon

Cornell University- Into the Streets  
Ithaca College

Fingerlakes Institute at Hobart and

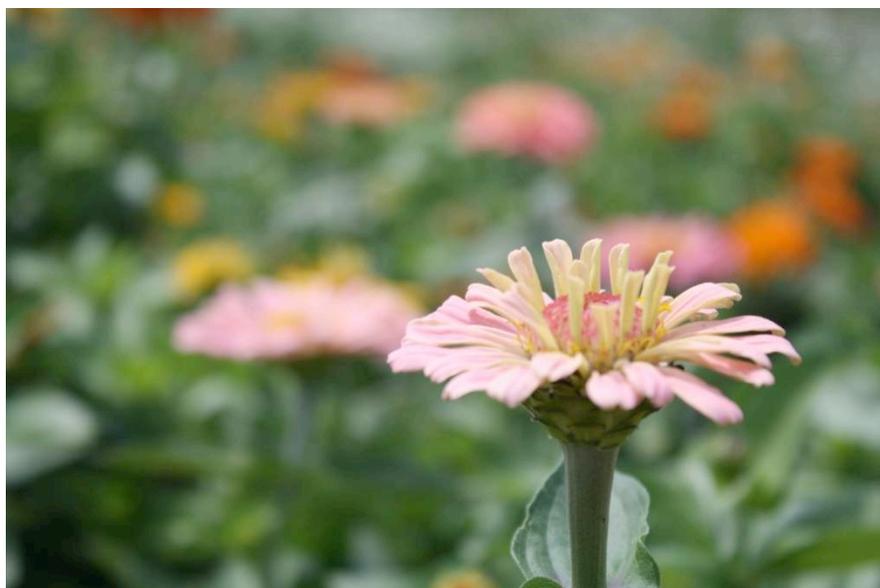
William Smith Colleges

The Good Life Farm

Gardens for Humanity

Social Ventures, Inc.

## Looking Ahead: Changes in 2014



From the overwhelming volume of donations received, to the outstanding support of in-kind services, to the feedback expressed in end-of-summer evaluations... to the smiles we see on each youth worker's face... it has become increasingly clear that the Youth Farm Project is providing a valuable experience and service within the Ithaca community.

In order to continue to work towards furthering our mission, one of our objectives for 2014 is to hire additional employees and restructure for a more sustainable organization.

We will continue to develop our value-added products, focusing on the educational aspects of this process. Additionally, we will continue to work to improve teamwork and collaboration between our own organization and other non-profits in the Ithaca area, in order to collectively increase our reach throughout the community. As part of our commitment to experiential education, we will continue to host classes from local schools at the Farm, while reaching out to schools and classes that have not yet visited. All of these improvements will help to strengthen our year-round program, which we will continue to build in order to provide more youth a valuable and comprehensive experience working with the Youth Farm Project.

## RIP Ranger, the Beloved Farm Dog

The winter farm, where the chickens are surviving the weather like cold blooded dinosaurs, seeds are being ordered, field layouts figured, collaborations with FFVSP, the Full Plate, and ICSD are being made, and a full on YFP fundraising campaign is in the works. A lot happened last month in January; a grant was submitted to the Park Foundation after many, mostly Dan's, hardworking volunteer hours, I drove across this amazing country with a wonderful friend, my heart warmed in the California sun, and I lost my dear canine friend. I would write about any of those things, but the subject of death, mortality and impermanence definitely trump to top of the list. Ranger, beloved farm dog, died on January 25th 2013.

Ranger: dog, beast, friend. I know, I'm about to write about a dog. Some of you may be uninterested by that, it's true, he was not a person. Maybe you never set foot on the farm, or you've never had a dog? If you have had a dog, you may know the nature of that relationship. If you have set foot on the farm, you would know this dog had a love to be reckoned with. You would not leave the farm without having smiled at him and snuggled a bit, or at least wanted to, even those non-dog people out there. He could win anyone over eventually. He was part of the farm and everything we did, even if he did eat veggies right when you were trying to harvest them, or wash them, or pack them... Out in the fields with us he was eating, chasing, digging, tromping on baby plants, or sitting on your feet while you were trying to work, looking up at you with those eyes, you know, those big brown puppy dog eyes that would bore right into your soul, his head resting on your legs, waiting for you to reach down to stroke his proud chest. Some may think his behavior was annoying, or distracting. Sometimes it was, until you found yourself wondering why on earth you were just taking yourself so seriously. I think he thought everyone came to the farm just to play with him, if thinking is what one would call it. Actually I think a lot of our youth farm workers did come because of him, farming too, but also him. Their first words upon arrival at the farm wouldn't be, Hey Ann, what are we harvesting today? It would be, Hey Ann, where's RANGER???

This life seems to be such a delicate balance of living in the present moment and planning for the future. Even if no one knows what the future holds, we spend a lot of time making plans for it. I'm pretty sure Ranger didn't think much about his future plans. Every moment was claimed with an equivalent amount of enthusiasm, regardless of how repetitive it was. He seemed utterly delighted every time his food bowl was filled up, and I fed him pretty much the same exact dog food his entire life. He was filled with identical fervor every single time you picked up his leash or opened the car door. As if he had literally won the jackpot, AGAIN. He looked like his world was falling apart in joy if someone was rubbing his belly, or better yet, when someone was lying on the ground with him, rubbing his belly. You'd be surprised how often I'd encounter that scene. Taking him on a walk in the woods was to witness the wild in him. Watching him bound through the trees like a skilled huntsman, disappearing, than reappearing from a completely different direction, like he had just looped you five times without you realizing, like tiredness was for the weak. He would hop like a goat to get a better view of the squirrel to chase, as if gravity was his antithesis. Then he would stop suddenly, perk his ears, cock his head to the side, and just end up looking like he was posing for a picture, before resuming his hunt for victory.

One of the best compliments I ever got was when someone told me I was a lot like my dog. Is it weird to say I can only hope so, minus the inappropriate licking, gorging on dead things and occasional terrible gas? I like to think I can learn from my relationship with him, and how he lived in the world. Ranger shared with me his compassion and empathy and simple expressions of joy all the time. I felt like he knew me like no one else, had more patience with me than anyone possible, would look me in the eye and understand all of me, without having to exchange any words! What empathy!

I want to remember the gift he left the day he died. How it is a miracle that I wake each morning with an entire day in front of me with my son in it. That I get to fill up my lungs and breathe, look with my eyes around at this magical world, and live. Not a life tied to a leash, a life tied down to burdens of obligations or expectations or false securities, but with a true heart, honesty, a certain grace and maybe a little wildness. To live with complete abandon and joy, I can only hope to emulate as Ranger did.

So in Ranger's honor, wherever you are today, try channeling some of his energy. Approach someone with gentleness, compassion, and empathy. We are in this life together, and there are never any guarantees. We might as well be kind along the way. Approach something you've done a thousand times like it's the best thing you are going to do all day. There is a lot of kale out there, might as well be the best kale ever.

Rest in peace, Ranger.

We love and miss you.

