Inspiring a just and sustainable future through our programs, land, and legacy

Connecting to Food

Our future needs compassionate leaders, thoughtful stewards, and creative critical thinkers. Hidden Villa celebrates community, hands-on learning and the impact that each of us can make on the world we share.

Continued on page 4.
Dear Friends,

Spring is in the air at Hidden Villa and it’s the perfect time to enjoy the farm as the signs of rejuvenation and new life are visible all around us. As part of our celebrations, we will be hosting a Sheep Shearing Day on April 14th. Not only will our sheep be getting their annual “haircuts” but there’ll be sheep herding demonstrations and lots of wool and textile themed arts, crafts and activities. We’ll also be debuting our first Board-sponsored silent auction, which will include exciting items such as vacation stays, guided hikes, gourmet food and wine and much, much more! All proceeds from this Day will go to support our Environmental Education and Social Justice themed programs so please make sure that you sign up early to join us for this exciting event.

With spring upon us, it’s a subtle reminder that summer must be right around the corner! At Hidden Villa that means the farm will once again be filled with the sights and sounds of hundreds of excited campers (and their counselors) who are here to take part in our 68th annual Summer Camp. I have the rather unique perspective of being both a Camp parent and a long-time staff member here at Hidden Villa: my son will be in Farm and Wilderness Camp and my daughter in Tipi Camp (both for the second time) and they are already looking forward to more experiences living on a farm, making new friends and learning more about the natural world. Our camp is unique and transformative in that we intentionally bring children and youth from a wide range of different backgrounds together to learn greater respect and appreciation for each other and for the earth. If you haven’t signed your campers up yet, please contact the camp office as soon as possible as space is limited and some sessions are already full!

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your continued support for Hidden Villa. The work that we do to “inspire a just and sustainable future through our programs, land and legacy” wouldn’t be possible without all of you. I hope that you make it a point to come out for a visit to enjoy and celebrate the unique beauty of springtime at Hidden Villa.

Sincerely,

Chris Overington
Executive Director

Stewards of the Legacy

We are sad to share the news that our dear friend and colleague, Andy Scott, passed away on January 31st, 2012, after a long battle with cancer. Andy was Farm Manager at Hidden Villa for 16 years and was involved with farm interns/apprentices for over 30 years. In 2002, under his management, Hidden Villa became a MESA (Multinational Exchange for Sustainable Agriculture) Host for the first time. He was deeply involved with the Biodynamic Association and worked with their Apprentice Training Program since its inception. Andy and his family were an integral part of the Hidden Villa community for many years and he will be missed tremendously. Our thoughts are with his wife, Carolyn, his two sons, Forrest and Ray, as well as his friends and family.

Dear Hidden Villa Community,

Where is winter this year? With total rainfall well under half of normal so far, we hope for rain so the HVEEP children can enjoy walking around the farm in our slickers and boots, splashing in puddles as they go. Water fed by rain from the spring above the valley and from the aquifer under our feet irrigates our crops during the dry season. Careful planning and the foresight of those who came before resulted in our use of watering systems that are a model of sustainability of this critical natural resource.

Planning is on our minds now. The Board and staff gather together periodically to develop a three year strategic vision of how we can serve the community better by improving the way we deliver our mission of “inspiring a just and sustainable future.” Examples of initiatives described in the plan just completed are the wonderful programs we offer older youth, a new, user friendly website, programs to help children and adults better understand healthy food choices and sustainable farming, and improved programs for seniors in our area.

Right now there are over a dozen committees of board and staff members meeting to prepare for our planning retreat this March. We are studying a wonderful variety of topics including improving stewardship of our property, developing programs to improve sustainability throughout our community by showing how our practices can be used by everyone, improving our focus on environmental and social advocacy, and extending the youth and food education programs. I’m excited about the potential this work offers us to extend our service to the community.

Best Regards,

Bill Whitmer
Board Chair
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Each day, we strive to fulfill our mission “to inspire a just and sustainable future through our programs, land and legacy” in numerous ways: we teach young children the basic concept that food is a natural resource; we challenge youth to consider the impacts of their choices and actions; and we encourage parents to be more conscientious consumers and to share positive social and environmental values with their families and friends.

Food is one of our most basic needs. With so many modern conveniences, many people have become disconnected from their food sources and when asked where eggs come from, sadly the all too common response is “the store.” At Hidden Villa we showcase the entire process around food, from farm to table while building community, encouraging teamwork, and showcasing sustainable organic practices that minimize external sources, promote biodiversity, honor labor, value animal welfare and respect the capacity and wildness of our land.

We currently utilize 11 acres of organic farmland and an educational garden for our programs. In the garden we strive to have the six “plant parts” — roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds — available for our youngest program participants to taste, as we sing songs and act out the life cycles of plants to make learning fun - but what they often remember best is that tasting!

Learning through singing and dancing can be fun, but these methods don’t resonate with everyone; for older students (and many corporate volunteer groups for that matter) the focus is more often on working together, cooperation, and building community.

Talking about these concepts is not as dynamic as experiencing them. We use the process from farm to table to inspire these ideals. Beginning with group activities that benefit our food production like weeding and mulching, participants are reconnected to the Earth and shown the tangible, positive effects of working with their own hands. They are grounded in a way that is uncommon in today’s fast paced world.

“At Hidden Villa we showcase the entire process from farm to table while building community, reinforcing teamwork, and showcasing organic practices.”

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Continued from page 1.

From this more relaxed space we are able to talk about the necessary steps for food to travel from the field to the table to create a communal meal. This could be something as simple as fresh pasta and sauce with a salad and garlic bread, where the group is divided into four smaller groups: one each for the pasta, salad, sauce, and garlic bread.

Once all the food is prepared, the program participants come back together to share their creations (and a healthy, well-deserved meal!) Proud of their accomplishments, participants develop a greater appreciation of the effort involved to provide their sustenance – something that is all too often taken for granted - and conversations naturally take shape around these discoveries.
There are many other ways in which we are able to use our agricultural programs and activities to fulfill our mission.

We are the face of good, organic agricultural practice for the whole Peninsula region and a rare example of preserved land in productive use. We demonstrate a viable model of localized, environmentally-responsible food production. We produce high quality vegetables, fruit, meat and eggs for our 130 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shareholders and the local community and share approximately 25% of our vegetable bounty (over 11,000 pounds in 2011!) with our low-income neighbors through distribution of the Community Services Agency of Mountain View’s food bank.

The working scale and the educational message of our farming operations also provides the best real-world learning environment for our residential Interns and Farmers in Training. We also work with a cadre of high school students in our Summer Farm Academy and use hands-on learning to reinforce the concepts taught.

We are proud of the mutually reinforcing relationship of our food production and education. We know that hands-on learning works and are happy to be located here in Silicon Valley—a thoughtful community that asks questions and thrives on innovation. Our agricultural practices, educational programming and volunteer opportunities are layered to bring people together to truly inspire a just and sustainable future.

If you are interested in finding out more about participating in these programs, then please visit our website (www.hiddenvilla.org) and look in the following sections.

- For Pre-school and Elementary-aged programming, look at our Environmental Education or Public Programs pages
- For Middle, High, and College programs look under Youth Development
- For High School students interested in food production and the environment, look under our Summer Farm Academy (listed under Summer Camp)
- For those interested in a full year of on-site learning, you should look under Residential Internships

If you are interested in becoming a CSA shareholder or want to know how you can purchase our farm products look under Programs and then Sustainable Agriculture.

Lastly, if you are a Corporate Group looking for opportunities for service learning and/or team-building, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteers@hiddenvilla.org or call (650) 949-9702.
March

3  Little Red Hen Baking Class
Saturday, 3:00 – 5:00 pm
For ages 6 to 8
Who will grind the wheat? Who will churn the butter? Who will gather the eggs? Who will make yummy cookies? How about YOU? Come make 100% organic treats the old-fashioned way by gathering the ingredients from the farm yourself. Have fun baking with our teachers (and some new friends) while your adult goes for a hike on our trails or just relaxes in the garden! Location: Meet at kiosk $25 per child, no adult required to attend.

9  Toddlers on the Farm Series
Three classes in the series, will meet on Friday 3/9, 3/16, and 3/23.
Ages 1.5 to 3.5 and parents/caregivers.
Bury your hands in sheep wool, throw corn to the chickens, and more. Be prepared to get dirty! Offered rain or shine.
Location: Meet at kiosk $65 per first child and adult, $30 per each add’l person, no charge for sibs under 18 months of age.

10 Weekend Preschoolers on the Farm Series
Three classes in series, will meet on Saturday 3/10, 3/17, and 3/24.
Ages 3-5 plus parents/caregivers.
Bury your hands in sheep wool, throw corn to the chickens, and more! Be prepared to get dirty. Offered rain or shine.
Location: Meet at kiosk $65 per first child and adult, $30 per each add’l person, no charge for sibs under 18 months of age.

11  CHEESE Please Pizza Lunch
Saturday, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
For kids-only, ages 6 – 11
What a fun way to learn how to make mozzarella cheese, right here on the farm. Search our amazing garden too for edible flowers and greens, then create your own pita pizza and freshly picked salad for a healthy lunch to eat! No adult participation required!
Location: Duveneck House $35 per child, no adult required to attend.

17  Kids in the Kitchen
Saturday, 3:00– 5:00 pm
For kids only, ages 6 - 11
Come see your organic treats from start to finish! Collect eggs from our chickens; pick up cream from the milk parlor; churn butter; see how wheat is ground; core and peel farm-fresh apples; and bake some goodies! This kids only cooking class takes place in the cozy Duveneck house where they will make quesadillas from homemade tortillas and turnovers from scratch. No adult participation required!
Location: Meet at kiosk $25 per child, no parent required to attend.

23  Hidden Villa Moovie Nite:
Queen of the Sun
Friday, 7:00 – 9:00 pm
Adult program
Our popular movie series here at the farm features the best, most timely and informative documentaries... come watch and join in on the post-show presentation and discussion - a great way to learn and connect with our community too! Queen of the Sun takes you on a journey through the mysterious world of the beehive – this engaging and ultimately uplifting film weaves the dramatic story of the heartfelt struggles of beekeepers, scientists and philosophers around the world. Together they reveal the problems and the solutions in renewing a culture in balance with nature.
Location: Dana Center $10 per person
April

1. **Afternoon Cow Wow**
   - Sunday, 3:30 - 5:00 pm
   - Please see 3/18 for a full description.

7. **Morning Cow Wow**
   - Saturday, 8:30 - 10:00 am
   - Please see 3/18 for a full description.

Future Farmers
   - Saturday, 3:00 - 5:00 pm
   - Please see 3/10 for a full description.

Please note our Calendar is subject to change. For the latest information, please check our website at www.hiddenvilla.org.

May

5. **Guided FULL MOON Night Hike**
   - Friday, 8:00 - 9:30 pm
   - Please see 3/9 for a full description.
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