

Community Homestead

Newsletter: Winter 2022

501 280th Street, Osceola, WI 54020 (715) 294-3038 www.communityhomestead.org

Mission: “to establish and maintain a community so that people with developmental and other disabilities can reach their fullest human potential”

Enjoying Christmas ~Christine Elmquist

We had hoped that this Christmas would herald a return of celebrations as normal-shared meals, a play in-person, lots of singing. And then up rose Omicron and we realized that we needed to step back into viral control strategies that we, like everyone else, are frankly tired of doing!

Getting over ourselves and our disappointments, we revisited the idea of a filmed play like last year. This time though, we went for a more unified nativity play, filmed on one go, outside and around the garden. Shepherds met by the hay bales. Innkeepers burst out of the shed doors. Mary and Joseph were visited by angels in the herb garden.



Desi, Chelsea, Oaken and Hannah

While the rest of the cast huddled up in the greenhouse, giggling, chatting and being shushed in the background, our players came out for various scenes, robed in tablecloths and sheets with their long-johns underneath in the 20 degree weather.

Two-year-old Oaken was a stunningly serious cherub

accompanying his fellow angels, Chelsea and Hannah! Shepherds; Shannon, Richard and Nastia included a small, bewildered one-year-old “lamb” Aldo who, though used to being plopped in a wheel barrow while parents milked, and undaunted by the snow and ice, felt putting mittens on was a step beyond outrageous.

Asger, who has been doing this play 70 years, found the original lines more accessible to his memory than our simpler version and fortunately, Desi adapted her cues with great alacrity. Between takes, he leaned over to her appreciably and said, “You make a very lovely Mary” to which she retorted, “bet you say that to all the maidens!” which I so regret NOT getting on tape.

And, after all this, we handed all the

clips to Jacob Elmquist in Atlanta who pieced it all together and presented us back a play which, despite our dubious group singing and modest abilities, we felt rather proud of, and put up on our website.

Stained Glass ~Hannah Gregor

In the greenhouse we get to do stained glass. Different people have different pictures they get to do.

We get to cut them out onto pieces of paper and then glue those pieces of paper onto the stained glass. And then there's this thing we have to use so that all around the stained glass is smooth. It is like a stone but you can't push too hard or the glass will break and then you have to cut a new piece out for that picture!

I got to do a humming bird and Nadine let me pick the colors. I picked green for the body and a peachy pink for the wing and a red for the beak. Desi did a flower and she had to put tape around it after smoothing the glass. Nadine will come around and mark the glass if it has to be smoothed a little bit more.

Trying to put the tape on it is really difficult. It's not easy for me to do the tape: you have to keep turning it around until it overlaps and then the corners have to be smooth. You have to make sure the flappy pieces are tucked down and don't come up.

Hillary and Mary are doing stars. Oscar does it on a different day and he is doing a flower right now. Desi completely finished the flower and also a star but that did not turn out quite right like Nadine wanted so Desi kept that one. And I finished the humming bird's tape and now there has to be this silver metal that has to be painted on the tape.

Everyone does a good job in there. I like it because there is not much people in there and it's warm and not noisy. There is a lot of things to do in there and we are not all doing the same thing. You can help other people or do it yourself. It's fun when me, Mary, Desi and Hillary are in and Adrian comes in all the time to check how we are doing and says, "you guys must be warm in here" and, "you guys are doing a good job!"



Alex H.



Janette



Alex F. and Christina

Needle Felting ~Alex Hansen

I made a picture, a boat picture. The boat is legend! I had a photo of my brother's boat. His name is Aiden. My Dad did the photo. It looks good.

For my picture, the boat is wool. We put a river, and a tree, and a boat! We used colors from wool. How you do it? First, we put water and then soap and use a fabric for the back. Spread down the wool. Then it has to dry first and that's the background. For trees, we do wool. I put it down. Christine puts her needle and makes it down for me. I chose colors, white, black, grey for the boat. The motor is black.

We put it in a picture frame.

Art in the Winter ~Scott Cummings

This winter season I am doing some arts and crafts, one of which is painting with Chelsea and Janette on Fridays. I want to do it because it is a good creative outlet for the winter. We do the background first in acrylic, with a brush.

We also do stencil cards. We get small squares of fabric pieces and then the stencil and cover it with paint where the holes are. There is a variety of designs, some nature themed things, like flowers. It is a good artistic endeavor and it is rewarding because you get to see your creation. It is tangible because you start with nothing and then you have a work of art!

Gnomes ~Janette Schauls

Gnomes are cute. I do them from wool.

Mango ~Evening Star



Mango and Hillary

Hillary: After Christmas this winter, Cheryl, Brendan's mom, she's great! And Mango. They stayed at Evening Star. Cheryl went to her sister's in Pennsylvania. Mango stays here at Evening Star with us. I like Mango because he's an awesome dog; he sits, and lays down, and "stay", he can play catch and do "paw". He likes to kiss people on the face. He comes to my bedroom, and runs. I feed the dog food every night. He likes to play. I'm trying to encourage him to catch the frisbee I got from last year.

Alex: Not so bad for a dog. I wish he didn't drool so much. He's at his finest when he's running outside.

Brendan: There is a dog named Mango. He was originally given to me in a K-mart parking lot. I trained him and spent a lot of time with him for a year or so before abandoning him and leaving him with my mom, as any good son would do. Eight years later, my mom has embarked on a sort of *Nomad Land* type journey where she has sold everything including her house. Thus, Mango moves to Community Homestead. He specializes in hiking, and putting things that don't belong in his mouth, in his mouth.

So far, he's gotten positive reviews from people at Community. A few people outside of Evening Star have been especially drawn to him such as Steven Kicker who may come by after potluck and snuggle. Austin, a day program participant, likes his ears and head licked. Lastly, Hannah loves to get him excited; Also, she has taken him for walks and helped to give him a bath.

Steve: Hahahaha, I don't know.
(Do you like him?)
Yes I like him.

Riding Horses ~Nastia Baerg

In the fall, I texted Sarah at Limitless Rach and asked if I could ride there. And she said I can volunteer and then I can ride afterward without paying. That was great!

I go there every Thursday. Asger drives me there pretty much every Thursday, drops me off, looks at his map, drives around and goes for a walk. Then sometimes he comes to watch and sometimes he sleeps in the van!

I get the horses ready. Some take a lot longer but that is okay, I take them out and wait for the student riders. I walk next to the rider, focus on the rider's leg and saddle because sometimes it goes back too far and if they don't have the right shoes their foot could get stuck in the stirrup. I just do this for one rider. We are getting new students too. They are mainly teenagers or younger.

Then it is my turn. I ride one horse whose name is "T". I have to get the right saddle because we change the saddles every person to ride him. "T" does a little bit of everything Sarah said; jumping, barrel racing, trail riding. Sarah says, "you are doing a great job but sometimes, sometimes, you forget your feet!" She told me, "make sure you are like a cooked noodle, not like a board" I liked that because I was more relaxed. It was not so painful in my thighs afterward.

Riding horses is good for hands, legs, brain, eyes. If you are looking down or have reins in the wrong place, the horse might do his own thing. Usually, riding a horse is easy. My body knows it so I don't have to think about it. And that is really nice.

It's fun. I like Sarah. She is a really nice person and doesn't ever get mad. She has a lot of different animals. When the kids come riding, if they don't feel like riding, they can train the colt, or walk horses if someone walks with them. Pretty much all the horses go up to Sarah because they think she has treats!



Nastia on Mouse

Coming and Going ~Christine Elmquist

Fall is always a time of change and the community typically settles down to a smaller home group for the winter.

After almost two wonderful years, Claire Scanga left for her home state and more adventures. Steve, Isaac and Asa Brackett moved on to the next step of their journey, and Sebastian and Tony left for new experiences in Duluth, MN.



Bruce and Janette

This created daunting gaps in the community, especially with Covid preventing visas being issued for international volunteers, but it also created new opportunities, and a chance to look at other ideas and ways of living in community.

In late November, visas for volunteers became available and Johanna Pongratz, who had been hoping to come last August was first in line! She arrived in the new year and brings us sunny, determined, appreciative, energy. We are so pleased to have her here until August. Any day now Paul Heinzen from Wisconsin comes to help for a couple of months. In March, Rachel from Germany and Zuzka from the Czech Republic arrive. And then Wim from Berlin in May for the summer and Goose Macauley returns for a year. We are so excited! And from there right through summer we have new people arriving. We want to leave a little room for a few Americans in this international mix. Who is up for a summer of farm, garden, cooking or baking and community life with a fantastic group of people?

Email christine.elmquist@communityhomestead.org to explore before we run out of space.

Meanwhile, many thanks and huge shout-out to our day volunteers, Lynne and Gary Schauls, Lois Peterson, Cheryl Beardslee, Maureen McElrath, Linda Iwaszko, Mindy Hansen, Sherry Hanson, and Joyce Borgerding and Tom Rauch. You were our fresh faces and new conversation and made a whole new venture with the St Croix Valley Tree

Farm possible by manning the store in freezing conditions. Honestly, this year we could not have done this without you.

Finally Arriving ~Johanna Pongratz

Because of Covid I had to wait a long time to get my visa but I didn't give up the hope because I really wanted to live at Community Homestead. At the beginning of January I was able to enter the US and finally to come to CH. After some "quarantine days" at Morning Glory I moved to my new home, the Farmhouse. I really like my new home and I am happy to share the house with so lovely people.

Every day in my week is different and I get in touch with a lot of things I have never done before: On one day I help



Alex H. and Johanna

with constructions works at Orion, on another day I do pottery, but I also do a lot of arts and crafts like felting and screen painting.

I also got to know cross-country skiing which I have never done before. I really enjoy it. experiencing some new trails with Brendon and I am happy that I can borrow all my stuff for skiing from Shannon and Eric!

A big difference from my home (Germany) is the weather. It is the coldest place here I have ever been but I do like the cold and that we have snow here the whole winter!

Creative Living Space and the Projects Crew

~Richard Elmquist

We are renovating Orion. It needed repair, particularly the windows, siding, and interior work so, with Tony and Sebastian moving, we decided to take this opportunity to do this major work. With their leaving we also needed to be creative in accommodating the community and took the time to address some long-awaited dreams and needs. We added a room upstairs, and reduced the number of rooms downstairs to two and a living area.

The plans include eventually moving the bakery out of its cramped space and making this into more living space in the addition. This gives us the flexibility to treat the house as three separate spaces, or not, as various situations and needs arise. For right now, Steven Kicker is occupying the upstairs and Scott will be in the downstairs as soon as we finish.

There's been a large project crew on this effort since August which has stripped the siding, reframed window space and hung new windows, rearranged the interior including floors, gutting the bathroom and kitchen, framing partition walls, hanging sheetrock, mudding, painting installing new flooring, plumbing... you name it, we've done it! To date we have the upstairs 99.9% complete and Steven is happy and excited to have moved in to his own space. Downstairs, we

Moving into my own place ~Steven Kicker

I moved into my new place in December. I was very excited and antsy to move in because I have wanted this for a long time, This was a really big milestone, like getting my car back in summer 2020. I am so grateful and happy that I could get to these points in my life.

For a long time, I have been working on things like cooking and to understand what responsibilities I need to have living on my own. I am still doing that; working on food preparation, making sure I clean everything up to show that I take pride in the space I am living in

I am so excited about how nice everything looks, how big the place is. It's everything! There is nothing I would change at all. I am so satisfied because it really is ideal. It is hard to put it into words how I feel about it. I'd like to add a big thank you to everyone who made this possible for me and all the hard work they did for that.

removed all the flooring and ceiling, and stripped back the cinder block covering to correct water damage, replaced the drywall in the ceiling for better fire protection. In the next week or two we are replacing the subfloor and putting in new partitioning.



Desi

We had a very enjoyable work-day with everyone in the community to do the siding on the south side of the house in October. Adrian and Nadine have helped a lot on siding and baseboard. Brendan and I have mainly headed up the projects crew with Scott, Terra, Joel, Michael, Oscar, Nastia, Desi, Dustin, Alex Hansen, Janette, Steven Kicker, Steve Fons and lately Johanna, but others have spent many weekends laying floor and painting too.

We are still planning to do the new apartments as a separate project, but we are waiting for builders to be more available and construction material

costs to stabilize.

Scott: I am excited about the apartment because I will have a new place to live when it's done. I will have some living space and it'll be a new opportunity on a new level of the house. I look forward to it.



Steven and Shadow

Herb Crew ~Alex Felt

Last summer, the orchard started a humble tea herb plot: Lemon Balm, Spearmint, Chamomile, and Tulsi. Janette and Dustin would tend to and process those herbs in the shade of the picnic table nearly every week from July through October. In the garden, Desirae and Sandra were busy harvesting and drying herbs, while Nastia, Alex Hansen, Terra and Christine managed the new herb beds at Morning Glory. Meanwhile, Tony spearheaded the Orion house crew to dry many savory herbs.

In January, I gathered the disparate piles of bags of herbs (dried remnants of summer!) and the crew of Janette, Kelly, Dustin, Bruce and myself have processed them off the stem, weighed them and thought, "What can we do with these treasures?" The truth is, as someone who is new to herbalism, I'm still figuring out the specifics... But come summer, keep your eye on the look-out for tea blends, healing salves, and herbs for your kitchen.

Seed Saving ~Gardeners

Even in the middle of winter, when the sun shines, the green house feels like spring. Sometimes you can even catch a smell of damp dirt. This has been a great setting for the seed saving crew.

Nadine: Most of our seeds are harvested in late summer. On a dry afternoon we cut the dried stems and stuff them into feed sacks. This year we harvested spinach seed, bunching onion and leek seed, carrots, dill and parsnips and lots of beans. For the beans we wait until right before the first hard frost and then harvest the whole plant into a wagon so the pods can keep drying under cover.

Sandy: I like doing the beans. I am peelin' them off the vines. Fillin' up the buckets. We got different kinds of beans.

Hannah: I get the beans out of the pods by putting them through the thresher. You have to keep your fingers away so



Sandy



Janette

they don't get threshed.

Hillary: I put the threshed beans on the screen to sort them into a bucket.

Nadine: Alex Hansen and I feed them through the clipper seed cleaner.

Kelly: I like sorting beans. I sort them into different varieties.

Hillary: Seed saving is nice because the sun makes me warm.



Hannah



Aldo waits for Mom

It's freezing cold! I wear a winter jacket, muck boots, overalls, gloves, hat and a lot of clothes because walking up there is cold!

When you get to the barn inside it's warm because the cows are in there. I do feeding, cleaning, kicking the cows out-unhooking them and say out and pet their necks- and most of them go out. Some of them stand there and say, "I don't want to go out" and then someone has to make them go out. They get fresh air and exercise. We make sure we know if they are in heat. If the cows don't have so much exercise they forget how to walk and they don't pick their feet up and jump and slip. It's not icy in the barn and Eric cleans the yard with a tractor especially around the feeders so there is no snow or manure. They hide in the shed if its windy. They don't mind the snow too much.

We have a farm team. Dustin fills up the wheelbarrow of silage and does the back section and just follows people and helps if they need him. Joel feeds the cows in the motel, gives them bedding, and does a little bit of everything in the barn. Travis does the back section too, fluffs the beds in the motel, cleans the milk area



and the pasturiser. Eric does the drop and fixes stuff that he needs to, like the water troughs because they get a hole in the tubes, or the back section needs hot water to defrost the water troughs. Some of the cows try to drink out of the bucket when you pour the water out! Shannon helps Dustin and fixes stuff or deals with something that comes up. Trying not to freeze the water is a big challenge. There's other people too that do milking too like Eric and Shannon and Alex and Brendan. Hannah and Desi and Joel and Johanna. I prefer summer. We can clean the barn more often and the cows can go in the fields so they don't get dirty and we can brush them easier. I can walk out with the cows and make sure they go in the right pastures.



Joel

Thank you to our donors September 2021 to February 2022

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Christmas connections with St Croix Valley Trees ~Christine Elmquist

What a great partnership we enjoyed with St Croix Valley Trees this past Christmas. For several years now, we have been making fresh green wreaths for this Christmas Tree Farm. The trips to the farm, the pick-up truck full of greens and the smell of pine permeating the entire Community Center marks the beginning of Advent for all of us.

We use the offcuts discarded from the cut trees, and then return them to the farm as wreaths which are decorated by the staff there and sold in their beautiful old barn. This was the first year we also filled a nook of this barn with gnomes, jam, ornaments, mittens, pottery and other gifts for sale. Manning it was a challenge but a troop of wonderful volunteers came to the rescue and helped us with chilly weekend shifts in the gift shop. And then, at the end, after all the customers went home to enjoy Christmas, we all went to pick out and harvest a tree for every house. Many thanks to the Schotter family and particularly Shaun for his warm support and generosity in connecting us all together. We look forward to enjoying another creative season of joint activity!

CSA 2022 now open for registration!

A box of organic fresh vegetables a week. Farm raised beef, pork and chicken raised on organic pastures and grain. Plus an option of fresh bread, cookies, pies, fruit. What is not to love? Chose a box size and combo that fits you and your family. Sustain your health AND people living in this lovely inclusive community!

www.communityhomestead.org and click SHOP



Give Big SCV 2022 ~Christine Elmquist

Now we are three months into a huge and exciting renovation project. Orion's makeover! Two individuals are getting the chance to live in their own personal spaces right now. Let's make that three, if we can move the little bakery out of its addition so we can convert that too. And for that, we need to build a new bakery!



The pole shed by the community center is our destination. Two creative rooms for a bakery, and a pottery are our goals. And yay CH construction team, we will be doing the work ourselves! We still need your help though!

Give Big April 26. Big Online Fundraiser.

When you give on this day, no matter how much, you can win us hundreds more dollars in extra prizes!

www.givebigscv.org

search for Community Homestead.