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## FOCUSING ON ALL THINGS FARM AND ANIMAL

Some of our avid readers might notice that this, yes, is indeed the “Animal and Farm” issue. But for those same avid readers, they might be questioning why, oh why, is this coming out in February – and not March like all of the other years. Well, there's a good reason for this! You see, next month – March of 2023 – is kind of a big deal for us. This magazine is turning double digits. *Main Street Magazine* is going to be ten years old! Can you believe it? I can, and can't at the same time. Have I really been producing this for that long? It doesn't seem that long, not really. But I suppose looking back, it really has been that long since I forged ahead, asked Ashley to quit her job and come work for me and then she and I went door-to-door in the middle of winter selling advertising, while I networked with local writers like Christine and Mary, who have become incredible friends. It's been a ride!

So because of that reason, and because of the fact that our March issue is going to be a very big deal, we moved the “Animal and Farm” issue up a month. Hope you don't mind! But true to our usual theme for this issue, basically everything here will be either animal or farm-related! What can I say? People love the critters and all things farming. We do, too! And in fact, this is Ashley's favorite issue when it comes to the Friendly Faces, because they are all animals. She's even petitioned me to do this more often... the jury is still out on that one though! Likewise, she's been after me for years to put her cat, Otis, on the cover. (For our online followers, you know that Otis has a weekly blog that he / Ashley produce and it has quite the following!) Sure, he's a pretty boy, and I don't doubt he'd make a good cover model... but look at this chipmunk! He is just too adorable! Those cheeks! Sorry Ashley, maybe next year!

As you flip through the pages here, I hope that you find a story or two that are of interest to you. We've got some really good ones, lots of fun ones, and just cute and cuddly animals, too! What's not to like? And if you're ever in need of more, I'd like to encourage you to follow us on Instagram and Facebook because we're always putting fun stuff on there. Additionally, our website ([www.mainstreetmag.com](http://www.mainstreetmag.com)) always has additional content and stories that we just can't fit into the magazine. If you're more into audible things, our podcast Main Street Moxie, just entered its second season and we have the distinct honor to talk with some amazing people! We appreciate you reading, following, liking, and listening to us! Enjoy!

– Thorunn Kristjansdottir



FEBRUARY 2023

Meet Chipper - or that's at least what Olivia likes to call her little chipmunk neighbor friend.

Cover photo by  
Olivia Valentine

## The Animal & Farming issue

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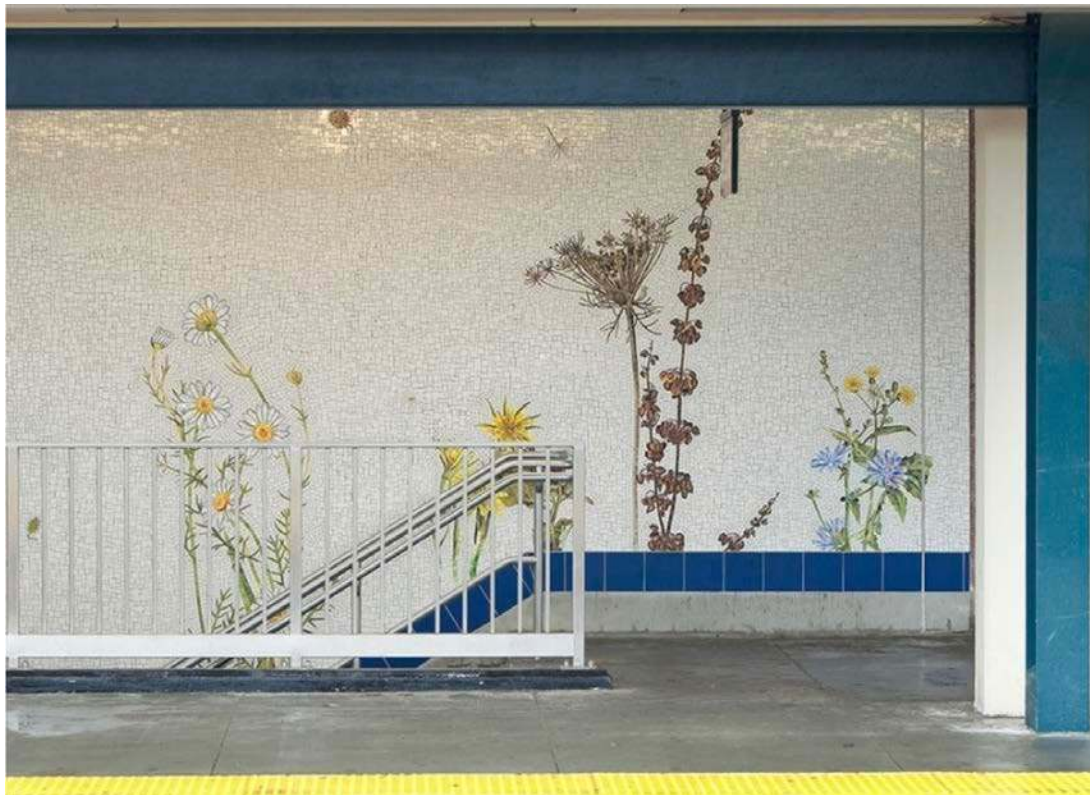
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# FOR JASON MIDDLEBROOK, NATURE ALWAYS PREVAILS

By Anna Martucci  
info@mainstreetmag.com

I first learned about the artist Jason Middlebrook while assisting Deborah Goodman Davis, an art advisor based in Lakeville, CT, and New York City, with a show she curated for James Barron Art in Kent, CT. The show, currently on view until March 11 is titled *Mosaics*, and it brings together a body of work by “artists who express themselves in different styles and media, while hailing from different countries and generations.” Throughout her many discussions with James Barron deciding which artists to put in the show, Ms. Davis was consistently resolute that local Hudson, NY artist, Jason Middlebrook, be included. Not only because of his skill with the traditionally associated artwork of mosaic, but also perhaps because his body of work itself, is in its own way a mosaic of mediums.

## Conceptually promiscuous

Middlebrook is an artist who gathers creative inspiration from both nature and technology and transfers their complex relationships into works of sculpture, installation, paintings, mosaics, and large scale drawings. He says that his practice has sometimes been described as “schizophrenic” and “conceptually promiscuous.” How-

ever, there is continuity and major threads that intersect one another throughout his work. No matter the creative medium, interconnection between human beings and nature is always apparent. His work is often a reminder of human beings’ wastefulness and how modern living can be destructive to the planet. Yet Middlebrook remains optimistic about the resounding strength of nature and the complex, inspiring force behind it that no human being can truly understand.

Middlebrook says, “All the things that people are upset about are essentially human conditions. I don’t want to go down that road to be inspired by those things because I find that the more energy we give them, the more power they have. I want to be inspired by nature. Nature for me is far more complex than human problems. Not to discredit human problems but the theme of my work is that nature is the guiding force behind it and the ultimate force behind that is that we don’t truly understand nature and we are all kind of afraid of it.”

## Environmental accountability

Middlebrook is fascinated with the ways nature erodes and changes man-made objects over time and utilizes those objects as an opportunity to illuminate the need for environmen-



tal accountability. He will often use recyclables and discarded materials as his medium such as a sculpture made from hundreds of plastic bottles or a cascading waterfall mobile made out of Styrofoam. In 2009, Middlebrook exhibited *Live with Less* at the University at Albany Art Museum showcasing a 35-foot tower made from two tons of cardboard collected on campus over a one month period (see image right). The tower, analogous to a landfill, brings awareness to human consumption and begs the question: can we live with less?

In 2010, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago invited Middlebrook to participate in a show responding to the work of Alexander Calder. He began collecting objects, primarily wood, that had gone through some kind of life in Chicago and then been dumped on the streets – three-legged chairs, mantles, window sashes, lattice, spindles from the electric company, and even cribs. He put them all together in a sculptural mobile, counterbalanced by a massive log. It was, in essence, a project about the history of these objects, how they are discarded, where they come from, and asked the question: at what point do we get tired of the things that we live with and need something else? Again, Middlebrook brings awareness to human consumption and waste. What really happens to objects when they are thrown “away”?

### Metaphors

Middlebrook’s MTA installation *Brooklyn Seeds* is a massive glass mosaic garden of native weeds and wildflowers including milkweed, burdock, goldenrod, aster, daisies, and spotted knapweed that grow in unexpected places like cracks in sidewalks, on the outside of buildings and in alleys. The seed pods floating in the air and moving in various directions can be thought of as a metaphor for the subway traveler moving around the city. The installation takes a look at the way human beings and nature interact and how, despite mankind’s best attempts to contain it, nature always breaks through and prevails.

### Creating in the Hudson Valley

In 2005, Middlebrook relocated with his family to the Hudson Valley where he began working with indigenous hardwoods purchased from a mill in western Massachusetts. His inspiration for the work came from his love of minimalist artists like John McCracken, Frank Stella, Ellsworth Kelly, and Agnes Martin. He paints on textured, sliced planks of timber attempting to superimpose his own grid on top of the beautiful wood grain. Out of respect for the natural magnificence of the wood, Middlebrook describes himself as a “visitor” and stays on the surface, creating a symbiosis between the paint and the organic form of the wood. The idea is analogous to the ways mankind is trying to put a skin over the earth with sidewalk and asphalt, yet that “skin” is constantly being broken up by weeds, tree roots and erosion.

For the *Mosaics* show, Ms. Davis chose one of Middlebrook’s sculptures that builds upon the natural canvas of a tree trunk to construct a whimsical geometric composition. The tree trunk is tiled in a ceramic and stained



Above: *Cardboard Stack*, 2009, 2 tons of discarded boxes, approx. 35 feet high; at the University of Albany. Below, left: *Mosaic Tree Stump*, 2017-18, styrofoam, fiberglass, tile, stained glass, epoxy, grout, 28 x 42 x 39”.

Opposite page, L-R: *The Many Nights*, 2016, Ink and acrylic on maple, 98 ½ x 16 x 1”, Contact Miles McEnery Gallery. *Brooklyn Seeds*, installation view at U Avenue subway stop (Q line), MTA commission 2009-2011.

All images courtesy of the artist.



Continued on next page ...



glass mosaic and as the light changes over the course of the day, so does the reflection off the tiles. Middlebrook's lighthearted yet reflective investigation between man-made objects and nature is on full majestic display.

## Interview with the artist

### What drew you to the Hudson Valley?

I had been living in Brooklyn, Williamsburg specifically, and was looking for more space for my studio. I came to visit a friend in Hudson for the weekend and fell in love with the place – it was a blast from the past, and only a hundred miles from New York City.

The city is great but you are one fish in a big pond of so many other artists who are all competing for the same thing. It's driven by greed, it's dirty, it's just not a healthy environment and I didn't want to raise a family there.

When you're younger it's glamorous – you run into Frank Stella and Ellsworth Kelly on the street, and you're out all night. But, you're just a number there, and in the country the relationships are much more personal. And once I got out of the city I realized there were so many other opportunities elsewhere and that's when my career really took off.

### How has living in the Hudson Valley affected your work as an artist?

The theme of my work in the city was more about nature's battle with humanity and how the evolution of the city was always threatened by nature – that's where you get the images of the weeds busting through the concrete, it was this perpetual tension between nature and man constantly trying to contain it. When I moved here, it became more about my craft and less environmentally conceptual. It became a delicate dance with nature rather than the fight for it like it is in the city. I thought about how I could represent nature through my eyes with different materials, in an eloquent way. When you start to spend a lot of time in nature you become in tune with it, whereas in the city it is always a battle just to get a small piece of it.

### Where does your desire to use art as a vehicle for environmental responsibility come from?

It starts with growing up in California and from my mom who is a radical plant designer and native plant advocate, she instilled an awareness in me from a young age. Living in the Hudson Valley, climate change, and particularly from raising a family, I started to think about how we could tread more lightly. It's our responsibility to leave the Earth as if we were never here, and not take the Earth for granted.

I used to think I should be more heavy handed about it, but it doesn't have to be so political, I just want people to pause and be in the present and have an experience with the art. Perhaps it will encourage people to think about things more carefully before making decisions about our resources.

### What's next for you?

I'm really excited about the next body of work in terms of my mosaic



Above: Jason Middlebrook in front of his most recent mosaic painting, *Botany is Destress*. Below, left: *From the Forest to the Mill to the Streets to the Home to the Streets and Back Again*, 2009 - 2010. Log, salvaged wood and iron, 25 x 23 x 15'.

paintings in particular because I've already done so much on wood with the plank series. It's almost impossible to create something new – all art is essentially derivative, but when people see my art I want them to say, "I've never seen anything like it." I want it to have an indelible mark on their memory. The goal is to do something that no one has ever seen before, and I don't think I can do it with painting or sculpture but I think I can with my mosaics. •

To learn more about Jason Middlebrook and his work, you can visit his website at [www.jasonmiddlebrook.com](http://www.jasonmiddlebrook.com). The show "Mosaics" is currently on view at James Barron Art in Kent, CT, until March 11.





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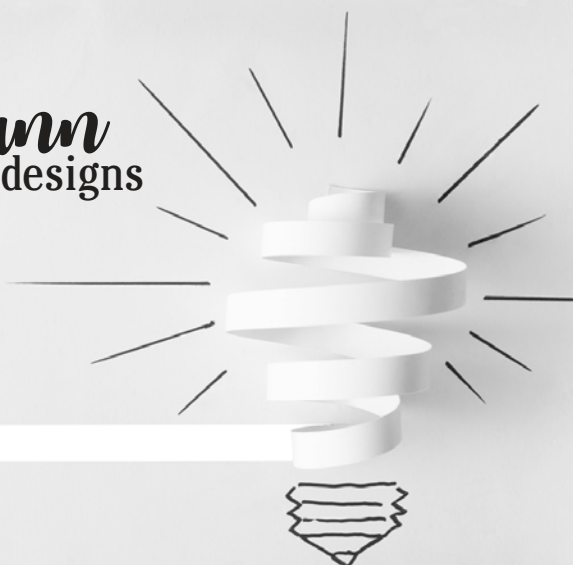


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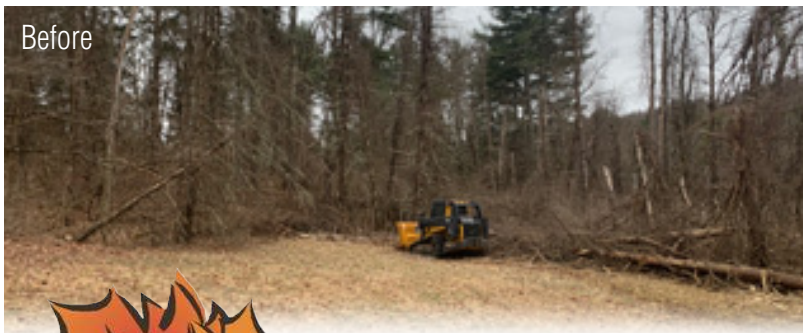
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## friendly faces: meet our pets, fur-babies and furriends



Fifteen-year-old **Chip** is a handsome short-haired tiger cat. Adopted at only a few weeks old (along with his brother Roly from the same litter) by Donald and Gail Fournier, of Copake, NY, they recall Chip being the runt of litter. “His eyes were bigger than his body (or so it seemed) and he fit in the pocket of Donald’s T-shirt!” Chip is a very lovable house cat who loves cat naps, sunning himself on the enclosed porch, and wrestling with his brother. According to Gail, there’s no denying she’s Chip’s favorite human! “He meows when he wants my attention, especially when he wants water to drink from the bathroom sink. He knows when it’s time to go to sleep at night as he jumps on the bed and curls up next to me.” He certainly knows how to communicate!



From being fostered in Bantam, CT, John Allee and Olivia Valentine of Millerton, NY, adopted four-month-old **Ruby** from A Good Dog Rescue. Ruby is a mixed breed. Oliva isn’t sure if they will find out what she is mixed with, but one thing is certain: she’s 100% adorable! Ruby catches on to commands rather quickly. She sits, gives her paw, and is working on ‘stay’. “We can’t wait to take her swimming this summer. She has webbed paws so we are hoping she will be a swimmer!” Ruby’s favorite thing to do is eat treats and has earned the title of puppet master of the house. Speaking of titles, Ruby is rocking some sweet nicknames: Rube’s, Rubilicious, and The Rubester! Ruby-Roo entered John and Olivia’s lives the day after Olivia lost her 15-year-old dog. “Ruby is helping to fill a large hole in our hearts.”



Who’s a good boy? **Jack Mosher** is! Born in Macon, GA, only a year and a half ago, Jack is very happy to be now living in Stanfordville, NY, with his loving family Steve and Karen Mosher. Believe it or not, Jack’s parents are both goldendoodles – go figure! Jack loves to play and swim, play and swim, and swim some more. Hang in there buddy, summer is coming! Jack’s actually a very good guard dog and he is keen for squirrels. Not only is he handsome, Jack has quite the personality, and loves playing with his buddy Vee. If you see Jack on a R&R Servicer job site, he will gladly accept a belly rub. Karen says, “We have a saying, ‘Don’t underestimate Jack!’”



Sweet year-and-a-half-old **Willow** is from a farm in New Jersey. Adopted into her forever home by the Martucci family, Willow now resides in New York City, but frequents upstate New York on the weekends. This adorable little Maltipoo comes with a very picky appetite regarding her food and treats. Pet mom, Tamara, says, “she will sniff offerings and usually walk away.” And don’t let those little legs fool you either; she is an extremely fast runner! Willow’s favorite past time is to go for walks, play with her furry friends, chase squirrels, and train for treats. “I was under the weather recently and Willow spent the entire day cuddled up next to me. She would not leave my side.” Good girl, Willow!



Do these two handsome fella’s resemble anyone you know? That’s right! Otis’ [Otis has a weekly blog on our website who aren’t in the know] full brothers; **Sir Bazel** and **Saint James** were adopted by Paul and Felicia Amash of Hillsdale, NY, back in 2009. Between the two of them, they know how to comfort their family members if they aren’t feeling well. “All we have to do is sneeze and they come meowing to cuddle with us,” says Felicia. Just like most cats, Bazel and James cat nap the day away, but in their free time they play in boxes. The sibling rivalry makes for good competition to see who can fit in the smallest box. Bazel is notorious for stealing socks and mittens and carrying them proudly around the house. James on the other paw – let’s keep him away from candles. That’s a story for another time...



Found under a porch two and a half years ago in Dover Plains, NY, **Zahra** was syringe fed, then adopted by her pet parents Heather and Ryan Boyles, human brother, Parker, and two labra-sisters named Daisy and Sunny. Heather and Ryan joke she’s a “cat-coon.” Part cat and part raccoon because she loves to find paper, trash, money, bags of treats – you name it – and carry it around the house. According to the vet, she’s a domestic short hair with muted tortoise shell coloring. “After Zahra uses the bathroom, she does zoomies around the house and fluffs her body up like she’s scared. It’s our favorite! She also parties at 2am... not our favorite.” Zahra has always been a confident and social girl, but never really affectionate or attentive to her humans – that is until Parker made his debut almost a year ago. “She’s been rubbing all over us, sitting with us, and extra lovey. It’s really sweet!”



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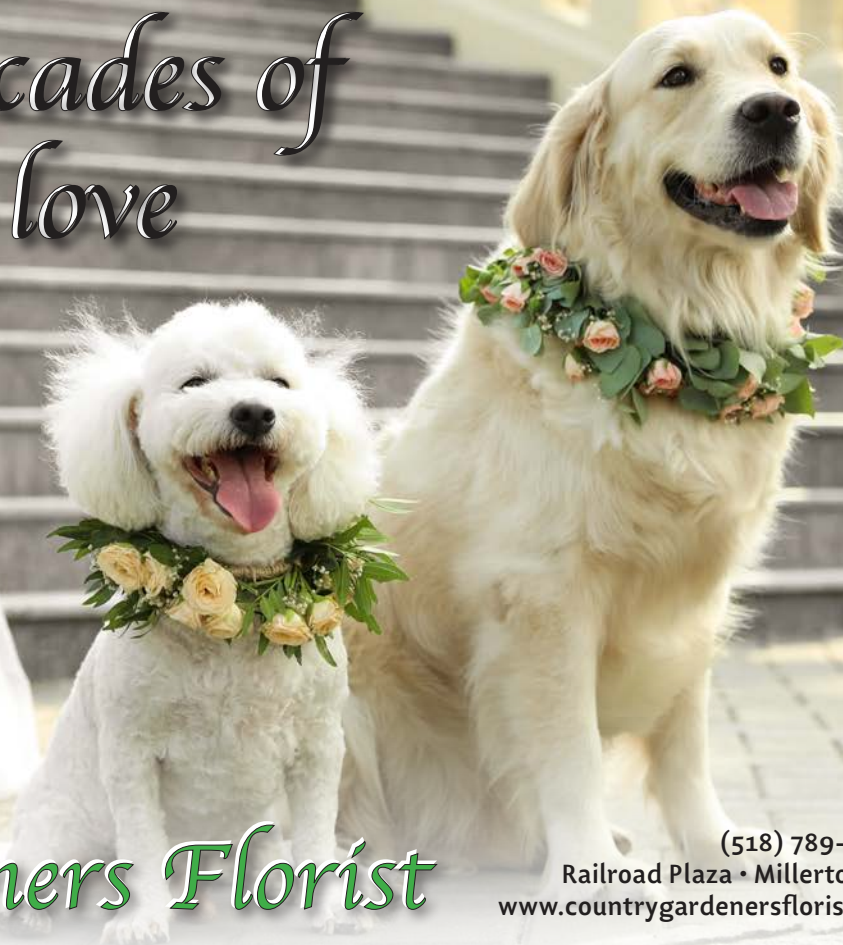
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# The Copake Hillsdale Farmers Market is Not your average farmers market

By Thorunn Kristjansdottir  
info@mainstreetmag.com

*When it comes to local businesses, they come in all shapes, forms, and sizes. Most are for-profits, while there are numerous not-for-profits and non-profits too that strive to contribute and help our communities. We were thrilled to be able to catch up with Laura Griffin of the Copake Hillsdale Farmers Market and learn more about the impact that this market has on our community, farmers, children, visitors, and beyond.*

## Tell us about the farmers market

The Copake Hillsdale Farmers Market, operated by CHFM Inc. and runs six months out of the year, roughly from Memorial Day to Thanksgiving. We are open on Saturdays from 9am to 1pm. The best source of information about our unique market is on our website at [www.copakehillsdale-farmersmarket.com](http://www.copakehillsdale-farmersmarket.com).

## Do you have a mission statement?

The Copake Hillsdale Farmers Market's mission is to educate our community and visitors in regard to sustainable farming and healthy living; to promote local agriculture, healthy foods, environmentally sound practices, and local cultural events; to ensure consumer access to high-quality local food; and to raise awareness of the importance of sustainable farming and the benefits for the environment and mankind. We aim to accomplish these goals through the operation of our successful farmers market.

## How many vendors do you have and who are some of them?

Once we started using the space outside of the covered barn for vendors at Roe Jan Park, it allowed us to grow in a big way. We are glad to host almost 30 weekly farmers and food vendors. In addition, we welcome 5-6 artisan crafters every week, from a pool of about twenty talented local creators that we work with.

Our produce farmers make up the foundation of the market, naturally. Most have been with us since the start, or close to the start: White Oak Farm, Hawk Dance Farm, Markristo Farm, Earthborn Gardens, Honey Dog Farm, Yonderview Farmhouse, Common Hands Farm. They each bring something special to the table. White Oak is known far and wide for their sweet corn and BBQ sauce; Hawk Dance often adds jams and beeswax candles to their veggie display; Markristo is certified organic and abundant; Earthborn, until recently, used horses to help with the farm work; Honey Dog is well known for their garlic and sunflowers; Common Hands has expanded into value-added products such as hot sauce and salad dressings.

Overall, as we think of each vendor, we could tell you a story about them and their value to our market. They are just the most hardworking and passionate people you'd ever want to work with.



## What can customers expect when they come to the farmers market?

Smiles! From the intern greeting you from the manager's table at the entrance, the friendly leashed dogs, to the vendors who are pleased to have such a nice setting to sell from, it's a pretty happy and relaxed environment.

At the core of it, good food from people they know and trust is what everyone can expect.

## Who are some of the folks who are integral to the market?

We can't really break that down into individuals, but it comes down to three groups: the loyal customer base, the intrepid board of directors, and the community of supporters who have expressed their faith in our mission with dollars.

All images with this article are from the Copake Hillsdale Farmers Market and are courtesy of Laura Griffin.



Continued on page 15 ...



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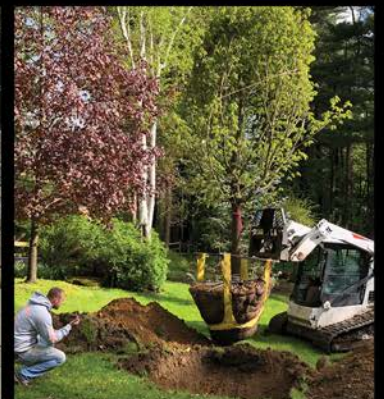
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### What's the impact of the market on the community?

We believe that the Copake Hillsdale Farmers Market has a wide impact. First, by giving local food producers and artisans a venue to earn income without traveling hours away. Besides the amazing food, the community benefits from the local organizations that we bring in as guests, to inform and educate (master gardeners, conservation, aging at home, sustainable farming and so on). And certainly not least, we feel that our food stamp matching program is a huge positive for our neighbors; we basically double your SNAP dollars, which makes healthy food so much more approachable.

There is also a ripple effect concerning the towns around us. Visitors to our market also go the surrounding towns and do business at the shops, eateries, and lodging that we enjoy in this area.

### Who are your customers?

It's quite a range of customers. Maybe 75% are people who live within 30 minutes of our market, drawing from Copake, Hillsdale, Ancram, Hudson, and Great Barrington. Second homeowners make up a large component, as they recognize our market as part of the overall benefits of living here. Locals and visitors make up

the rest (visitors include vacationers in short-term rentals, RVers, and/or campers staying in one of the terrific campgrounds in the area). One of the things that always amazes us is when we stroll through the market and hear Italian, German, Swedish, or another language being spoken, and we find out that these visitors chose to explore our market as part of their travels.

### How do people learn about the market, your offerings, and vendors?

We use a range of tools to make sure people know about us like Facebook, Instagram, our website, email marketing, printed materials, and advertising (yay, *Main Street Magazine*!) as well as radio. Our Google reviews are enthusiastic. Since we are now an established market, we think that word-of-mouth is also a very big driver of our traffic.

### What are some of the special things about the market that's unique to it?

Can we say "everything"? The setting inside the Roe Jan Park sets it apart in a big way. The longevity of the vendor relationships as well as their tight geographic proximity is impressive. We grin when we see the amount of collaboration between vendors, for example, Little Apple Cidery serves Jacuterie salamis on their charcuterie boards, and Graylight Farm keeps a few bottles of Common Hands hot sauce on their table to complement their grilled breakfast sandwiches (which, by the way, are served on Berkshire Mountain Bakery ciabatta rolls, another vendor).

The relaxed and easy ambiance of the market truly makes it more than a simple shopping trip, with the live music and comfortable umbrella tables.

In our customers' own words: "Great location for this small farmers market. A beautiful drive as it is set in the hills of Copake. A good selection of vendors offering a variety of items for sale at a very reasonable price." — Mario M.

"What an awesome group of vendors and a beautiful landscape!! Always fun and informative the farm-



ers talk about their food. We always buy lunch or dinner to cook at home. Dogs allowed too." — Michael K.

"Genuinely a fine place to go. Friendly atmosphere and great things abound." — Darla M.

### Who was behind creating the farmers market?

The Copake Hillsdale Farmers Market was launched around 2005 by two Hillsdale residents, Caroline Stewart and Timmy Bates, who identified a need for an outlet for local farmers. For seven years, the market operated out of the Hamlet Park in Hillsdale, then joined forces with the Copake Farmers Market and became what it is today, situated under the covered barn at the beautiful Roeliff Jansen Park on Route 22.

### What is the connection to the park and, by extensions, the association with Copake and Hillsdale?

With the merger of the Hillsdale Farmers Market with the Copake Farmers Market several years ago, it made sense to operate in a location that was squarely between the two towns. The Roe Jan Park is spacious and gorgeous, and offers so many amenities to us as well as the folks who visit all through the week. Walking trails, a dog park, a lovely stream, an event venue, a community garden... it is ideal.

### What services do you provide?

Being a farmers market, the emphasis is on providing lots of fresh, healthy, local food. We do that through the hard work of our 30 farmers and food producers. Thanks to them, we are able to offer most of the staples you'd find on a weekly grocery list!

Food is the foundation but it's not all we offer. We have some great makers of body care products, and we host local craftspeople and specialty food vendors.

One essential service that we provide is a variety of food assistance programs. We accept SNAP (traditional food stamps), and we accept Farmers Market Nutrition Program checks, all of which give lower income customers a way to enjoy the bounty. Our market is the only farmers market in Columbia County to participate in DoubleUp Food Bucks, a matching program for SNAP customers that provides up to a \$20 allowance for produce and fruit, per visit. With generous support from Berkshire Agricultural Ventures, and individual sponsors, we are able to guarantee a dollar-for-dollar match of SNAP dollars.

Continued on next page ...





We can't forget to mention gift certificates, as a service available to customers! They are such a thoughtful gift, as they can be used for anything from veggies to jewelry to spirits to lavender plants. The gift certificates are available in any denomination from the manager's table.

As we attract a lot of young families, we have a couple of little red cars ready for customers to use to cart their kiddos around in. If a grown-up happens to want one to use for their purchases, that is fine too.

### What geographic areas do you cover?

Our market attracts customers from the local area, of course, but also second homeowners, tourists, leaf-peepers, visitors from Massachusetts and Connecticut, and even international travelers. Despite being located in a lightly populated area of Columbia County, we host over 20,000 customers every season.

### What sets you apart from other markets?

There are numerous other farmers markets within a 25-mile radius, and each one has a different makeup and approach. For the Copake Hillsdale Farmers Market, we think we've combined some of the best characteristics into one market. We offer variety and abundance, but have retained an intimate setting that customers enjoy. Our market is located on an active farm in a real barn, one of the few, perhaps the only market in our region

to have this advantage. Many of the vendor booths are staffed by the actual farmer or food producer, allowing customers to interact directly with the grower or producer.

Our live music, community guests, and childrens' programs create an atmosphere that turns a shopping trip into an outing. We're so pleased with our collaboration with the Roe Jan Community Library, who has managed the Farm Market Kids program for many years now. We welcome guest educators as well as guest chefs, to add an important education piece. The frosting on the cake is our comfortable umbrella tables, ample parking, dog runs, hiking trails, even a small stream running through the park. When it all comes together, it's a unique experience!

### What is most rewarding about being in this business?

The rewards are multi-faceted. First, knowing that our market is providing an outlet for local farmers and food producers to sell their products and earn a living is gratifying. Some of our vendors have achieved tremendous success, while others have been supported as they begin their journeys in farming or food.

Second, providing high-quality food to customers makes us happy, knowing that we are contributing to their health and satisfied palates. Undeniably, there is a great deal of pride in putting our little piece of New York State on the map.

Because education is a founda-



tion of our mission statement, we are proud of our Farm Market Kids program, operated with the support of the Roe Jan Community Library, as it exposes youngsters to the farmers market concept early on. Through the "Power of Produce program," kids can do activities related to food and farming, and earn real dollars that they can spend at the market. We think this aspect of the market is so valuable, and it inspires us.

### How does one become a vendor?

Our application process begins in early January, with decisions made in April. We strive to keep our vendor fees as low as we can while still operating efficiently. Anyone who wants to learn more can visit [www.copakehillsdalefarmersmarket.com/vendor-application/](http://www.copakehillsdalefarmersmarket.com/vendor-application/)

### What do you see going forward?

We envision continuing with our current model, but fine tuning and improving where it makes sense to. We expect our application as a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization to be approved by the 2024 season. Certainly, obtaining more grants and sponsorships will allow us to keep vendor fees low while still strongly marketing, expanding services, and attracting the best food producers in the region. ●

*To learn more, folks can follow their story at [www.copakehillsdalefarmersmarket.com](http://www.copakehillsdalefarmersmarket.com), or [copakehillsdalefarmersmarket](#) on Facebook and Instagram.*





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# Coffee crumb cake



By Olivia Valentine &  
Caroline Markonic  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Happy February! This month is all about the LOVE! For Valentine's Day we are making something that neither one of us can say is our favorite. This dessert is specifically for our main squeezes. Both Caroline and my (Olivia's) significant others love coffee cake. Now, Caroline has been making coffee cake for her beau's birthday and Valentine's Day for around three years. Every time she makes it, my sweetheart drools over it. Never having been able to try it, because someone (not mentioning any names here), isn't willing to share!

Caroline has graciously decided to share this recipe with me, her mom, and all of you! If you have a special someone who loves coffee crumb cake give this a whirl. But first you'll have to go out and buy loads of butter. Happy Valentine's Day folks, we hope you enjoy!

## Cinnamon swirl

1/4 cup flour  
2.5 tbs cinnamon  
3/4 cup brown sugar

## Double crumb topping

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 cup light brown sugar  
2 tsp cinnamon  
1 cup (2 sticks) butter, melted and cooled  
Powdered sugar for dusting

## Cake

2 1/2 cups of cake flour OR 2 1/4 cup all-purpose flour + 1/4 cup corn starch  
2 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 tsp salt  
3/4 cup butter, room temperature  
1 cup light brown sugar  
1/2 cup granulated sugar  
3 large eggs, room temperature  
2 tsp vanilla  
1 cup sour cream, room temperature

Preheat oven to 350°F and grease or line a 9"x 9" metal baking pan with parchment paper

## For cinnamon layer

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and set aside

## For double crumb topping

Melt butter and allow to cool. Add 1 cup of light brown sugar with cinnamon and flour to a medium bowl. Pour butter into the dry mixture and stir with a fork until large clumps form. Set aside.

## For the cake

Sift flour, corn starch, baking powder and soda, and salt into a medium mixing bowl and whisk to combine. Set aside

Add butter, brown and white

sugar to a mixing bowl and beat on high until fluffy and pale in color (at least 3 minutes) scraping down the bowl occasionally. At low speed, pour in vanilla and add eggs one at a time. Once eggs are incorporated, mix in the sour cream. Add in flour mixture until just combined. Give it a final stir with a rubber spatula to ensure everything has mixed in from the bottom.

## Assembly

Spoon half of the cake batter (it will be thick) into the pan and spread to make an even layer (spray spatula with cooking oil to make this a little easier). Spread the cinnamon mixture over the batter evenly. Spoon remaining batter on top of cinnamon mixture and spread. Finally, add the crumb topping.

Bake in the oven for 60-70 minutes. The cake is done when a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Allow to cool for at least 15-20 minutes and (optionally) top with powdered sugar. Enjoy with a nice cup o' joe. •

*Olivia and Caroline are enthusiastic foodies and bakers who are constantly in the kitchen, as well as explorers who create their own adventures in our area – and did we mention they are mother and daughter? Follow Olivia on Instagram to see her many creations at @oliviavalentine.*



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# Animal kind: Bringing animals, humans, and kindness together



Above: AnimalKind suffered a fire and extensive flooding in 2012. No one was hurt, including the resident felines, who were lodged in the basement of a nearby hotel and by generous volunteers, who also helped evacuate them. All photos are post-renovation. From L-R: A contented Katrin with contented kitten. AnimalKind's whimsical facade mirrors its spirit as a place of play and safety. Katrin and cat in the new quarantine room. Photos by Robin A.F. Olson.

By Lorraine Alexander  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Based on information published by the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), 6.3 million companion animals, mostly dogs and cats, enter US shelters every year. Even more sobering, “Each year, approximately 920,000 shelter animals are euthanized (390,000 dogs and 530,000 cats).” These unsettling numbers, gathered in part by Shelter Animals Count, a collaboratively compiled database initiated in 2012, are nonetheless an improvement over past years; in 2011 twice as many shelter animals were euthanized.

The overall decline in euthanasia owes much to an increase in pet adoptions – nearly four million, or two-thirds of the those entering shelters annually – and to a rise in the number of lost pets being reunited with their families. Microchips for animal identification, patented in 1985 by AVID in southern California, were first implanted in 1989, and now they are a standard, non-surgical, painless mainstay of veterinary practice. That said, there is currently “no government institution or animal organization [that] is responsible for tabulating national statistics for the animal protection movement.” The latest,

2019, figures compiled by Shelter Animals Count represent a sizeable accomplishment, dependent as they are on voluntary self-reporting. And the kindness of strangers.

## Rescue, care, and adoption

For many years my husband and I attended *Met Live HD* performances at Time & Space Ltd. in Hudson, NY, which as many readers of this magazine know is a river town that was a commercial hub before river and rail traffic all but disappeared. Having survived the ups and downs of whaling, ironworks, brickworks, knitting mills, cement plants (the last one closed in 1975) – Hudson survived much hardship and has settled into symbiosis with artists and entrepreneurs. By the time we were driving north from Millbrook, Hudson was climbing back, clinging to the rockface of respectability, becoming a magnet for shops, restaurants, galleries, and refugees from Brooklyn.

On upper Warren Street, near the town square, we noticed a brownstone and its inviting sign: a handsome tabby cat and, underneath in pink lettering, “AnimalKind.” Its purpose was the rescue, care, and adoption of another group of refugees: the abandoned, injured, abused, or lost cats who were filling the town’s many

alleyways. (This feature of the town’s grid street plan has been preserved since the 18th century, paradoxically, sometimes poverty supports historic preservation). We filled out an adoption application, and then one Sunday weeks later, with friends who’d agreed to be “godparents,” we stopped by to check on “our” cat, raced to a performance of *Don Pasquale*, and returned just before closing to adopt our mostly Russian Blue, whose shelter name, Smedley, we changed to Homer. With the exception of his nose leather’s top line, shaped like a sweetheart neckline, he was already a live replica of the bronze statuette from the Met’s Egyptian collection, a classic.

## The one and only Katrin Hecker

I first met AnimalKind’s founder, Katrin Hecker, while adopting Homer. Everyone has a story, and hers is as rich with surprises as it is with unflinching commitment.

**Katrin, you are a heroine here in Hudson, it seems to me and many others. But you are not from this area, not even close. Please explain.**

I was born in Karl-Marx-Stadt (now Chemnitz) in what was then East Germany, which was under communist control. My family had ap-

plied repeatedly for visas to leave, and we finally did, for political reasons, in 1979, ten years before the Berlin Wall came down. We immigrated to West Germany, and in 1982 I became a pediatric nurse, working for several years at Altona Children’s Hospital in Hamburg. My plan was to be a nurse in Africa, but I had learned only Russian in East Germany. So, I came to New York, alone, with the intention to learn English.

**And eventually you began following other interests, specifically in fashion and painting, with a stint in advertising. When did you move to Hudson?**

I met my late husband, Avis Davis, a rock musician – he died two years ago – and in 1995 we moved to a 9,000-square-foot deconsecrated church in Hudson. I was planning to launch a clothing line but immediately began seeing cats roaming the streets. At first I thought the people here must really like cats, but then I began seeing that the cats – kittens, feral cats, all sorts – were emaciated, injured, pregnant, hungry. The local

Continued on next page ...



humane society was euthanizing every cat it could catch back then, but I didn't believe in killing as a solution. I took in cats that were friendly, rehabilitated sick ones, and found them homes, including my own.

**It sounds as if you instinctively threw all your energy into their care.**

First I started feeding them, driving my motorcycle through Hudson's alleys, where 30-60 cats were living on every alley block. I started using TNR – trap, neuter, return – to stop the breeding cycle of these unwanted, neglected cats. In the very beginning, I had seen a black cat with only three legs and a bad eye infection. He was my first trapped cat, and I named him Lucky. He was the real founder of AnimalKind. Eventually I took a dozen black cats home, putting them in my painting studio. The idea was that I'd let one cat out at a time to run around and explore, with my husband thinking I had only one. That worked until we had a power outage, and the cats found their way to the fireplace where we were sitting. It was very funny; he thought his mind was playing tricks on him when the "same" black cat multiplied before his eyes!

**Were there already any organized community efforts you could partner with to control the cat population? To keep them alive when possible and care for them?**

No. No one was assisting this feline population when I arrived. The cats were tolerated, abused, ignored. Catskill Animal Hospital [in Catskill, NY] was most helpful, however. After spending too much money of my own in the early years, I started AnimalKind in 2000. It was my husband who thought of the name. He had his own work but was very supportive of my decisions. Really, he had no choice!

**AnimalKind is more than two decades old. I'm tempted to rephrase that to say you've / it has survived for 20-plus years. I cannot imagine how demanding the work must be for the staff, the volunteers, you... all the hard life-and-death calls, the constant stresses.**

Well, that's a lot, isn't it? I can say that in that time we have rescued approximately 20,000 cats and kittens, done 40,000 spay/neuter surgeries. I am proud of everyone who helped in those efforts. My staff of ten, our three vets, we are energized by remembering the animals we have saved.

AnimalKind is a 501(c)(e) non-profit, and of course money is always needed, for medicines, cleaning, utilities, salaries, rescue expenses. And then, each new day, that concern has to recede while you do the work. We have one or two fundraising auctions and a fashion show annually. The auctions are easier: limited input, optimal outcome.

I am always thinking about the dedication of our staff who go into some of the saddest situations for both animals and people, and still [there is] joy seeing the impact of our hard work firsthand. Then, after animals are rescued, a lot of work goes into their care. They need food and shelter, but also routine medical care, vaccinations, and enrichment activities. Rescue never stops; it is 24/7. What we get back is the heartening feeling when the rehabilitated cats find loving homes.

**It has occurred to me several times as we've talked that abandoned or abused dogs do not figure much, at least in Hudson, in this crisis of animal welfare. How do you explain that?**

Comparatively speaking, we do not have a lot of stray dogs in NYS. Municipal funding cuts have increased their number, but most lost or abandoned dogs are quickly retrieved by dog control officers and taken to shelters that have contracts. AnimalKind will attend a dog in an emergency, then contact the appropriate services.

The bigger picture for dogs is a very mixed bag. In the US, there are more stray dogs in the West and South than elsewhere. And I work with fervent rescue advocates, of both dogs and cats, in Syria, Lebanon, even Costa Rica. But Mexico has the most stray dogs in Latin America and Asian countries also have large populations of homeless, mistreated dogs.

In any depressed or unstable economy, pets in low-income neigh-

borhoods have lower neutering and higher pregnancy rates. AnimalKind works with and for the most underprivileged pet owners, offering in addition to the services already mentioned pet-food banks and emergency boarding. But that does not explain the canine-feline disparity. There is frankly a prejudice against cats as aloof or "independent" creatures, and we are a dog-oriented society in love with "man's best friend," etc. Homeless cats are also harder to catch than dogs are. It's complicated. Some people may believe that cats are better able to live "free" on the streets, but this is of course untrue. They suffer just as any animal would from lack of food, shelter, health care, and affection.

**What can you tell me about "kill shelters?" I have read that they are more prevalent in the South, and I know there are groups that bring shelter animals north in customized buses to escape those places.**

Many shelters say they are not "kill shelters," when in fact they are. And, yes, the South has a higher euthanasia rate. It's the small print one needs to pay attention to. "We do not kill for space" is the most common misleading statement. Many such shelters will kill for often arbitrary standards of behavior or age. One should always ask about these policies when surrendering an animal to a shelter.

AnimalKind has a clear policy on euthanasia. We do not euthanize animals for space, age, or any other reason that is not strictly medical, when the animal is in pain and unable to be rehabilitated. We do not believe in killing feral cats. They are not prime candidates for adoption, of course, but they are brilliant "workers" (mousers) in rural settings. Altered feral cats can live in managed colonies. We are here to give animals a new chance at life with caring humans. We do our best to save lives, even when outcomes are imperfect. We repair their bodies, test and vaccinate them, screen and educate the people who adopt or need our help maintaining care. Feline HIV is not prevalent in our area; we've seen three cases in five years. The cats we take in are vaccinated for rabies and distemper,

deflead, dewormed, microchipped, and altered (a \$450 value). We charge an adoption fee of \$85 for adult cats and \$150 for kittens (they need more vaccines). We apply a flexible sliding scale for our medical assistance.

**One hears of "crazy cat ladies" hoarding cats in unsanitary conditions. Dogs might bark the place down, I suppose, so they seldom go undetected. Do you think there is such a thing as "too many cats"?**

Such "crazy" cases exist, unfortunately. What separates hoarding from generosity is how many animals can be responsibly cared for. I live in the countryside and have 40 cats I care for every day – with help, I should add. My routine begins early in the morning – feeding, cleaning, tending the mostly special-needs cats. They are with me because nobody else wants them; they are considered unadoptable for a variety of reasons.

**Your devotion is palpable. And your commitment is obviously unwavering. Have you ever regretted not following the paths of fashion and painting you discovered?**

The dilemma of unwanted cats in Hudson was so obvious when we moved here, and I saw this and responded. I believe we always have choices about what to do with our lives. It was not at all a decision that was backed up by intellectual consideration. I just did it, and did it every day, which became months, then years... This became its own dynamic, and with it came people who helped.

Truthfully, I never missed my fashion business or the painting, which just showed me that we can be creative in many ways. I created a cat rescue, and, yes, it's more satisfying to me personally than designing 100 coats. I feel blessed and lucky to be able to comfort helpless animals and people with their pets. I have always believed in community outreach – working with people to address the crisis of feline overpopulation – and I still do. •

*To learn more, go to [www.animalkindny.com](http://www.animalkindny.com) for more information on feline welfare, adoptions, and donations.*



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# SHARON LAND TRUST

## THE FORESTS OF TOMORROW

By Ian Strever  
[info@mainstreetmag.com](mailto:info@mainstreetmag.com)

Right about this time, 17,000 years ago, the *Main Street* distribution area was covered by hundreds of feet of ice. From the Housatonic to the Hudson, South Taconics to Catskills, the Laurentide Ice Sheet shaped our area at literal glacial speed, scouring bedrock and depositing minerals in places that would determine the character of this land for millennia. That house-sized boulder that you discovered on your last hike was likely the work of the Laurentide melt-off that lasted for thousands of years, leaving artifacts as grand as valleys and as detailed as glacial striations.

Fast forward 12,000 years – over twice the length of human civilization – and Native Americans began to use fire as a landscape management technique, diminishing the underbrush to improve sight lines for hunting and to ease travel. Human impact began to shape the pine, oak, and birch forests of that time and, combined with climate change and several thousand more years, resulted in the forests we know today, starting about one thousand BCE.

### Claimed land

Just over four hundred years ago, the first major epidemic decimated native New Englanders, marking the start of colonization and a new attitude toward the earth that would be characterized more by consumption than management, with settlers claiming parcels of land as their property and extracting resources from it for trade and personal gain. In those scant four hundred years, all of the land in our area has been claimed, and the forests that have existed for millennia have become fragmented and diminished by human activity.

### Preserves and land trusts

Scientists of the last fifty years have increased our awareness of this impact, however, and efforts to preserve the planet have become more organized at all levels. Locally, nearly every town can boast of preserves and land trusts that provide access to nature, supported by volunteers who work to acquire additional parcels and steward those spaces for future generations.

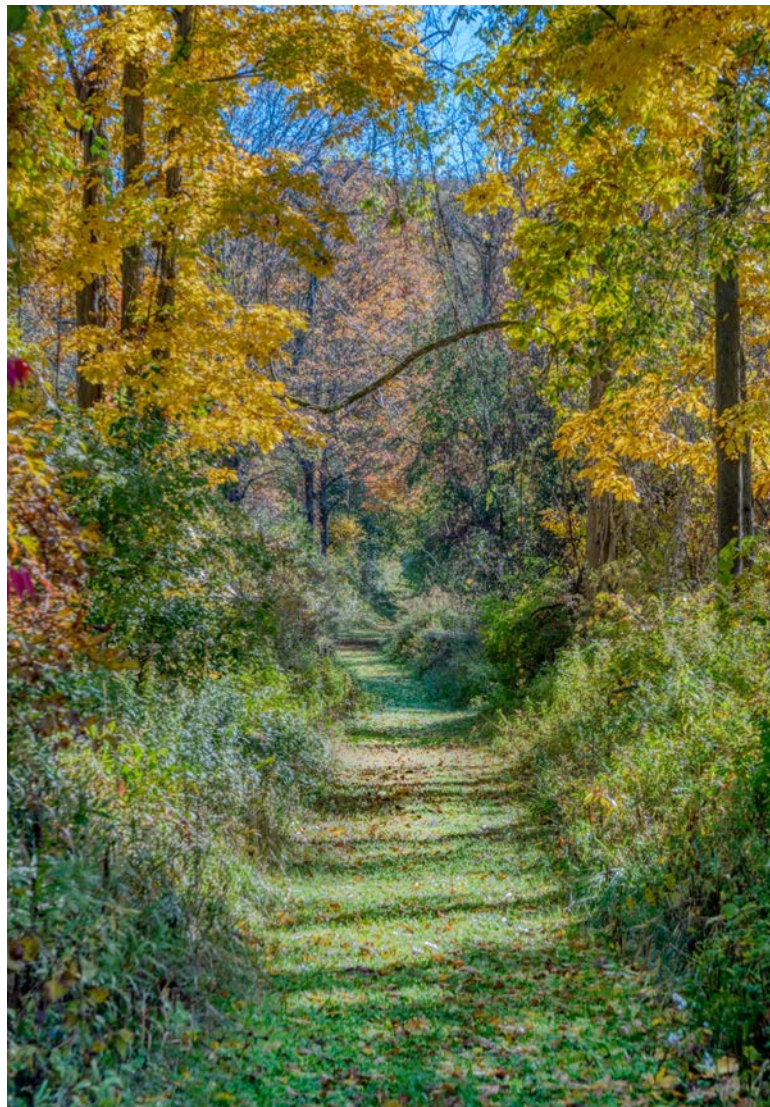
While these holdings will never recreate prehistoric forests, they represent sizable portions of our towns that preserve our rural character and, through the act of stewardship, create community.

### The Sharon Land Trust

The Sharon Land Trust (SLT), now in its fortieth year, has acquired more than 1600 acres of land, and volunteer stewards have endeavored to open those spaces to the public with well-designed trails that invite hikers to connect with the forests of the town as they have been transmitted to us today.

Over twenty-five miles of trails offer access to the best parts of the trust's eleven accessible parcels, and on a recent hike with volunteer coordinator Brooke Loening, we meandered over the hundred-plus-acre ridgeline that constitutes most of the Goodody Preserve, situated almost on the border between Sharon, CT and Millerton, NY. The property is a prime example of today's forests: a patchwork of several preserves that the SLT has acquired through a combination of private fundraising and public grants, both state and federal.

The stated goal of the trust is to acquire an additional 400 acres of open space by 2024, a goal that they can reach through a combination of



Above: A well-marked and maintained access trail leads hikers into the forest, just steps from a working corn field. Photo courtesy of Brooke Loening.

Continued on next page ...





Above: The mixed-use acquisitions of the Trust result in uncommon views of Sharon's natural beauty. Below, right: The Land Trust's holdings feature spectacular scenery and solitude. Photos courtesy of Brooke Loening.

easements, donations, and incentivized sales directly to the trust. Most of their holdings consist of land that would be difficult to develop or use for farmland, although much of it is former pastureland that has reverted to forest over the course of the last century. In my hikes on several of the properties, I noticed stone walls and relatively new-growth hardwood and hemlock forests that hint at their historical evolution.

#### A coordinated effort

Some of the properties are contiguous with working farms, too, and landowners such as the Wike Brothers have provided easements that facilitate public access to the trails on land where such access would be impossible or inconvenient. This allows trail networks to follow natural contours and to provide hiking experiences that are enjoyable without being excessively rigorous. It also results in interesting views that incorporate enclosed, wooded spaces with gracefully arcing fields.

Such coordinated efforts to acquire mixed-use land are not accidental, and neither is the pleasant path that Loening and I traversed in our two-hour hike through the Goodbody/Paley Preserve. As the volunteer coordinator, he works with steward director Tim Hunter to design and execute trails that provide access to the best parts of each parcel while preserving the ecological integrity of the location. In some cases, this entails everything from routing a trail around an active hay field, grading a series of switchbacks that make a slope easier to climb, and constructing erosion bars that divert runoff from degrading a trail.

#### Making trails

The process of situating a trail begins with a survey of the terrain using maps and Google Earth to identify trail features and potential routes that avoid insuperable climbs and obstacles. In addition to easing public access, careful trail mapping will limit erosion on steep trails and the amount of construction and maintenance that can be achieved by volunteer trail stewards.

From there, Hunter and Loening assess the terrain in situ, spotting wildlife trails, natural switchbacks, and features that would support

foot traffic. They use ribbons to mark the general location of the path and then flag the exact placement of the path itself. At that point, they can develop a list of tasks that require groundscaping by their team of volunteers.

That can include everything from clearing blowdowns and brush to building steps and erosion bars. The group maintains a spreadsheet of prioritized tasks, which Loening cross-references with his list of volunteers to organize work parties.



Not all volunteers are able to do all kinds of work – some are skilled with a chain saw, some are unable to lift heavy objects – but there are roles for any volunteer, and plenty of work to go around.

One small but brilliant decision Loening made was to limit work parties to two hours instead of the three or more that are often asked of volunteers. This reasonable commitment allows him to organize shorter, more frequent meetings that not only accomplish a lot of manual labor but build a sense of community and ownership among the volunteers. These trails are theirs, too, and they will use them and share them with others.

Their efforts add an element of appreciation for hikers who can notice not only the remarkable views and natural features, but the skill of the trail builders who make them accessible. For anyone who appreciates the opportunity to be present and attentive with their surroundings, their work provides yet one more feature to admire in our local area. •

*To learn more about the Sharon Land Trust and all that they do, call (860) 364-5137 or visit them online at [www.sharonlandtrust.org](http://www.sharonlandtrust.org).*



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Societies for the  
apprehension and  
detention of

# HORSE THIEVES

By Christine Bates  
info@mainstreetmag.com

A simple sign can make you ask, “What could this be about?” The bronze plaque for the “Red Hook Society for the Apprehension and Detention of Horse Thieves, Second Floor” hanging in front of a brick office building in Red Hook, NY, recently caught my attention. The building’s front door was open, and I found Karen Baright, membership director of the aforementioned society, in her office on the second floor. I had stumbled into the horse thief’s society headquarters.

Baright explained how I could become a member. Leave my email, pay \$5 annual dues when I received a notice in September, and attend the society’s dinner the first Tuesday in October at the Klose Barn. Anyone can join the posse. But you have to pledge to go out and look for a member’s stolen horse if necessary. There is no record of the last stolen horse – maybe before the Civil War. But honoring the heritage of the society has been carried on annually since its founding in 1796. You don’t have to own a horse to join, although many members do, but you do have to live locally and have a horse story, preferably humorous, to tell at the annual roast beef dinner.

## No thefts for 100 years

During the 2021 meeting of Red Hook Society for the Apprehension and Detention of Horse Thieves, Ed Moore, chief of police in Hudson, NY, and the Society’s secretary, commended the Society on its record. “This organization compares to none in terms of its closure rate. We haven’t had any issues in at least the last 100 years.”

Red Hook’s Society is the oldest existing such society in the United States. Lawlessness prevailed after the Revolutionary War especially in the sparsely settled region east of the Hudson to the Berkshires and horses were a readily saleable, mobile asset – perfect for stealing and reselling. At the time these societies were formed there was no insurance, and law enforcement was non-existent or over-worked and ineffective. Horses were an important asset to every family and a key to survival whether pulling a wagon or a plow.

Society warning signs were printed and posted as a deterrent on members’ property. “Horse Thieves! Public notice is hereby given that a society is established in the upper part of Rhinebeck for the sole purpose of recovering stolen horses and apprehending the thieves, and to carry the same into effect, a number of riders are engaged to go immediately in pursuit of stolen horses, at the expense of the society for which adequate funds are established.” Riders were paid \$2 a day while chasing thieves with a bonus for retrieving the horse and turning in the bandit. The societies also acted as insurers, paying owners for loss of their valuable property.

## Other thievery societies

More than 30 New England mutual aid organizations were founded to prevent horse thievery, retrieve stolen property and bring the thieves to justice. Like the Red Hook Society, the Schodack, Stuyvesant, Kinderhook and Chatham Society for the Detection of Horses established in 1824 covered southern Columbia County. The last stolen horse they tracked down was in 1917. Like Red Hook, the Columbia society still maintains the tradition of meeting annually over dinner. The menu on the first Saturday in February is always the same, minced-ham sandwiches, clam chowder, and oyster stew with lots of jokes and the chance to catch up with



Photo: istockphoto.com contributor Ashva

old friends.

By the middle of the nineteenth century police forces began to be established in the eastern United States and horse thievery moved west with the frontier to the Great Plains, Texas and western territories. A national Anti-Horse Thief Association was founded in Missouri in 1854 with the westward expansion. By 1916 the association claimed over 40,000 members in nine central and western states. Between 1899 and 1909 the Oklahoma branch of the association alone had recovered \$83,000 of horses and had seen the conviction of 250 thieves. Unlike New England, horse thieves were often hanged.

## More tractors. Fewer horses.

With proliferating mechanization after World War I, stables were gradually converted to garages and tractors began to plow fields, horses gradually became less important. According to the USDA, records there were 19.8 million horses and ponies in the US in 1910, but only 11.9 million by 1935. By 2012 this had fallen to 3.6 million horses used primarily for recreational purposes. These figures do not include the 85,000 or so wild mustangs roam-

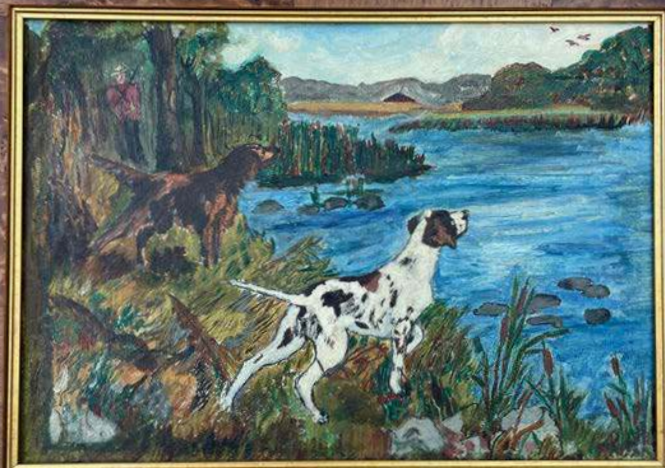
ing on 28 million acres of public land in ten western states.

Technology and law enforcement have taken over the role of horse thievery societies. Lost or stolen horses are posted on Facebook and internet sites like Stolen Horse International at [www.netposse.com](http://www.netposse.com). Branding marks have been databased and computerized. Security cameras guard barns. Since 2017 all registered Thoroughbreds are required to have an implanted RFID microchip in the nugal ligament of the neck which identifies the horse. A simple Apple air tag or other tracking device provides the location of any lost or stolen horse.

The big battle in the west is not with horse thieves but between horse activists who want to prevent the slaughter of mustangs, and cattlemen and ranchers who want to control horse range and numbers. No horse thief society will solve this problem, but they remain a tradition that reminds every one of our not so long ago past. •



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# a naturalist, naturally

By Caleb May  
info@mainstreetmag.com

**Naturalist.** It is a word synonymous with the great observers of nature like Charles Darwin, E.O. Wilson, Maria Sibylla Marien, and Henry David Thoreau. A title reserved for the history books when the natural world was uncharted and misunderstood. It is time to throw out that silly notion.

## A new generation of naturalists

Technology has always been thought of as something of an antithesis to nature. Technology distracts people from truly immersing themselves in the natural setting. Previously, it would do nothing but inhibit our ability to spend our days like the early naturalists, scrutinizing and learning every detail of the land that surrounds us.

However, recently that rule is being slightly altered in a way. Amateur and aspiring naturalists use technology to their advantage, turning the woods into a classroom and creating a new generation of conscious naturalists. The way that they do this is through a few recent phone apps and software that can bring entire databases to the confines of your pocket. This is your guide to some of those apps.

## iNaturalist

iNaturalist was created to fill a gap. Social media has risen in immense popularity over the past decade or so. As it grew, the niches that needed to be filled became apparent. While Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter were meant to appeal to the broadest range of users, the need for an outdoor-oriented social network was needed. Thus, in 2008, iNaturalist was formed and has since amassed over 3.2 million users worldwide.

The mission is simple: Users submit sightings of certain organisms to iNaturalist where the data is then compiled and used to aid scientists to estimate abundance or the general ranges of these organisms. If you happen to know the species then the submission process is easy. However, if you come across something you have never seen before or a flower whose name eludes you, a quick picture can be run through an AI system to give you a fairly accurate answer to what you just saw.

Complete these steps and you just became a valuable part of a network of citizen scientists whose data can be used by actual scientists to study the species you see.

A few other features make iNaturalist an amazing resource such as organized community bioblitz days in which people try to locate and identify as many different species as they can within the confines of their town or city. You can also connect with other naturalists much like you can on other social media to continue to gather information on local flora and fauna or to just meet some hiking buddies.

## Seek

iNaturalist has had a recent push to make species identification a little more accessible. From this, Seek was born. While iNaturalist is a more



Above: Chicken of the Woods is another species of edible mushroom that grows in the forests of this area. It has a distinct orange body with a yellow rim. You can look for these in the spring and summer but please use extreme caution when considering harvesting to make sure you have the right species. Left, top: Dog Vomit Slime Mold is a bright yellow mold that is spread all across the world. However, most of all it just has an awesome name. Left, bottom: Barred Owls are one of the most common owls in the United States and it easily recognized by its brown and grey speckled bodies and black eyes. They are rather unmistakable in their vocalization which translates to the pneumatic "Who-cooks-for-you" which can be heard all around mixed and deciduous forests in the area.



complete and whole experience, Seek offers the user to identify a wide variety of species without the need of cellular service. When you happen upon an unknown specimen, simply point the camera at it and wait for Seek to do its thing. It is truly remarkable.

That is not to say it is 100% correct every time. Depending on the condition of the specimen or what time of year you take the photo, Seek might get anywhere from the exact species to the general family to well, nothing at all. I think that is a chance I am willing to take in order to work on my identification skills of plants around me. Through Seek, I have been able to recognize Hen of the Woods mushroom, Carolina Horsenettle, and Violet Oil Beetle.

Once Seek has done its thing and a species is identified, all you have to do is snap a picture and the species and

Continued on next page ...



all the information like location, date, time, and taxonomy are saved to your account for you to view later.

iNaturalist and Seek are best used in tandem to maximize the on-the-go identification of Seek with the connectivity and networking appeal of iNaturalist.

## eBird

As a bird watcher myself, I am quite partial to eBird. Founded in 2002 by who else but the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, eBird pretty much has a monopoly on the birding world and you would be hard pressed to find a birder who has never used or heard of this amazing app.

eBird has no actual identification feature (more on that later) but rather acts much like iNaturalist. It is a collection of citizen science observations that dates back for almost a century as old sightings can still be recorded. Additionally you can friend and report joint checklists to make birding a more social activity. eBird saves all of your different birding lists and saves them under country, states, county, even down to the hotspot where you found the birds. Your life list is secure with eBird and with enough time you can soon see your self improve over the months and years.

The network of birders across the word who use this application means two things. One being the fact that

you benefit from all the eyes out in the field. You can enable needs and rare bird alerts for the county you are in which will send an email whenever a rare bird or a bird you have never seen before pops up in your county. Keeping your eye out for these means you can quickly boost your life list. The second thing is the fact that all that data, plus yours, means that Cornell and other scientists can use the data to inform actions and policies that could help bird species or just to broaden our understanding of how these birds move and interact.

Finally, outside of the website you can download the app on your phone and keep detailed track of bird walks with time, distance, and species recorded which is then synced to your account. It can even tell you how common each species is in your area at that time of year. No more clunky field notebook to scribble species names.

## Merlin

It seems like Cornell really does everything that relates to birds. Merlin is an identification tool (I told you I'd come back to this) and has seen some drastic improvements that make this a must have in the arsenal of any naturalist, regardless of their birder status.

How you use Merlin relies upon whether you saw or heard the bird you would wish to identify. If you saw it, you can answer a few questions like bird size, color, and what it was doing and in turn you will receive a possible list of birds that you could have seen. Now this is where things get interesting.

If you are hearing the bird simply press a button on the Merlin app and it will listen for you. If it can get a clear audio with minimal background it should return scarily accurate results for what bird species you are hearing. I urge you to download the app even if you are not a birder. I guarantee you that curiosity will get the best of you and will have you pulling out your phone to try and uncover the mystery of who is singing.

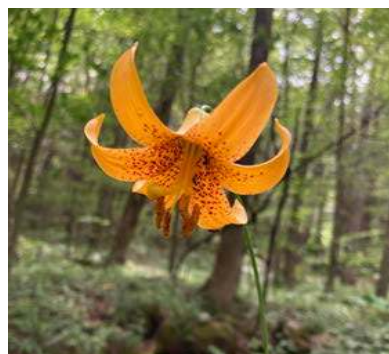


## A warning

There is a whole world of apps and websites that can help you become a better naturalist but there is a giant disclaimer that I must include here: I mentioned earlier how technology can spoil the fun of being outdoors. Although these apps are designed to make you a more aware naturalist, they are not a cure-all. Books and field guides can never be replaced or made obsolete and relying on your phone for ID and learning can make you complacent. As a birder I abandoned my traditional way of learning bird songs and identification and started a dependence on Merlin. My learning somewhat plateaued.

It is important to remember that what made the famous naturalists of old so successful was their observation skills and immense knowledge that was only mastered through experience. These apps can be a vital tool but also remember that even this technology, in too high doses, can stop you from becoming the best naturalist you can be. •

Above, L-R: Morels are a species of mushroom that appears all up and down the east coast of the United States. They are known for their trademark holes and hollow center and often go for high prices due to their great taste and illusive-ness. (Please use caution when foraging). Brook Trout are the only native trout to New England and the case can be made for the most beautiful as well. They sport a flaming orange belly that makes them a highly coveted and popular fish. They require pristine water conditions and there are currently huge conservation efforts to keep these fish in our waterways. Left, top: American chestnut is a species of tree that is often identified due to their extremely dentated leaves which relates to their Latin name, *Castanea dentata*. They used to be the most plentiful tree in the east with one in every four tree being a chestnut. Since then a fungus known as the Chestnut Blight has wiped almost all of them out. Now you can only find young saplings that sprout before the blight will attack them once their bark begins to crack. Left, bottom: Canada lily is one of my personal favorite wildflower. It is native to the eastern side of the US and Canada. The colors can vary from orange to yellow to red and the downturned head is a dead giveaway that you might be looking at a Canada lily.







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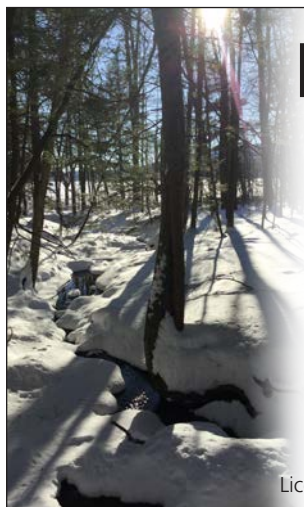
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# Farming legislation



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**O**ftentimes it has crossed my mind how much new legislative effort is being undertaken to help make life better, as in profitable, for farmers. While many folks tend to equate farming with the wide open spaces of the Midwest, those of us who live in the Hudson Valley and further upstate in New York are well aware that farming is a key component of what contributes mightily to a functional economy. But it surely is not as easy as farmers might make it look to those of us on the outside, who might erroneously look upon a farmer as someone who tools around atop a tractor all the livelong day. For our purposes here today, dairy will receive a heavy dose of attention.

By Jesse DeGroodt  
info@mainstreetmag.com

## **Income support**

In the grand scheme, income support for American farmers is seemingly never not at the heart of various and sundry federal and state legislation that's found its way into law over the years. How do those efforts work out? Seems as good a time as any to take a look at some of those legislative endeavors and what sort of impact they may have had. For some reason, my grey matter seemed to think there would be neat, tidy outcomes to these exercises, which is surely something I

cooked up in my dreams and nowhere near reality. As we quickly discover here, one might guess it would require an infinite number of pages to fully flesh out the issues presented here, so for now we'll simply have to live with the thumbiest of thumbnail sketches.

## **Ag assessments and unreasonable regulations**

In 1971, the New York State Legislature adopted the New York Agricultural Districts Law, designed "to protect and promote the availability of land for farming purposes. It allows reduced property tax bills for land in agricultural production by limiting the property tax assessments of such land to its prescribed agricultural assessment value." In the ensuing 50-plus years, various amendments have, as these things have a habit of doing, expanded the scope of this legislation.

To Eric Ooms, whose family was dairy farming in the Netherlands as early as 1525, and who nowadays milks 400-plus cows in the Valatie, NY-based family business, "I think we're going to have even more appreciation for this [ag assessment law] as we go along. It makes a big difference for agriculture in general." Ooms, who also serves as vice president on the NY Farm Bureau board and on the Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corporation board, added, "We pay the exact same property taxes whether we're here in Chatham or at my brother's in Malone, NY. Otherwise, you'd pay highest assessed, and

especially in this area that highest assessed can be a real problem. Welcome to living where we live."

The prime mover behind the 1971 law was Cornell-educated agricultural economist Howard Conklin, who developed a land classification map of the entire Empire State that depicted the economic viability of agricultural land, which in turn would encourage farming by real estate tax abatement and minimization of urban pressure. But even Conklin wasn't optimistic that in all cases keeping assessments at a reduced level as a stand-alone solution would save every farm, as evidenced by this:

"The possibility that farm-value assessments can prevent the spread of urban uses to farmland has been discussed at great length and answered in the negative. Real estate taxes cannot be reduced enough to assure that farmers will refuse to accept high urban offers for their land. Even the complete elimination of farm real estate taxes probably could not make farming that attractive," wrote Conklin and William G. Leshner in *Farm-Value Assessment as a Means for Reducing Premature and Excessive Agricultural Disinvestment in Urban Fringes*.

Continued on next page ...



On the other hand, it appears – judging from Ooms’ comments – that alleviating taxation pressures may indeed have proven an A-#1 solution to some of a farmer’s financial ills.

Ag assessments “probably benefit eight million acres of land” in New York, said Mark Twentyman, who was a student of Conklin’s at Cornell and who retired several years ago as agricultural valuation specialist with the state. “Early on, farmers began to recognize the benefit of the law.”

Perhaps just as critical, Twentyman pointed out, the 1971 law also limited unreasonable local regulation on farming practices. Since most of us seem to have grasped the concept that the cow that supplied the prime rib on the dinner plate wasn’t produced in the back room of the grocery store, what sort of thing are we talking here, one might ask? Let’s think spring, when farmers are known to spread manure on the fields on which oftentimes is grown the grasses that fed that cow. At times that manure has been known to offend the olfactory senses. Does it seem like a good idea to anyone to deny the farmer that right by some ill-conceived local law?

### Dairy termination program

The salvation of the dairy industry was how Dairylea, Inc. president Clyde Rutherford saw the “whole herd buyout” provision in what was then the upcoming 1985 Farm Bill. “We in the Northeast feel the whole herd buyout concept would have the least effect on agriculture of any program we could expect to see developed,” Rutherford told the *Associated Press* at the time. Did Rutherford have ulterior motives? That’s a discussion for another day.

The sale of dairy cattle for slaughter and those farmers to then quit dairy farming (those farmers would keep their land and be able to use it to grow crops) for at least five years



Photo: istockphoto.com contributor Shigapov

lay at the heart of the program, with the ultimate goal of reducing milk production by twelve billion pounds annually, thus maintaining higher milk prices for farmers. Coincidentally, this was a time when the consensus thinking among those in the industry had it that 30 percent of the country’s dairy farmers were on the precipice of calling it quits for good.

Under the buyout, a farmer opting to sell out was required to submit a bid for their herd – applicants to the program handed in bids that ranged from \$4.50 to \$150 per hundred pound of annual production. The bidding process spawned some wildly divergent thoughts. Some were concerned that between neighboring farmers, one might well make a bid of \$5 and the other a bid of \$35, thereby creating some friction-inducing inequities. Farmers in varying parts of the country could be carrying vastly different debt loads and reside in an area with higher or lower land values, thereby skewing the value of the herd and, at the end of the day, leave one with a bagful of cash and the other with little.

Cattlemen, in turn, held the dimmest of views of the dairy buyout, to the extent that the buyout program wasn’t underway more than two months before they were seeking north of \$200 million in damages from Congress. To them, beef cattle prices were artificially depressed when a preponderance of dairy cattle hit the slaughterhouse all at once.

Did the whole-herd buyout plan work as intended? To one Minnesota farmer, who sold his 133 cows for close to \$500,000, the answer was not particularly, in that in the long run it didn’t solve the problem. Further, in the eyes of some, such as the Minnesota agriculture commissioner, it may have turned out worse than that: “All of a sudden, the image is that they got on the dole. As far as I’m concerned, it’s a disaster. Ten percent of our single largest industry got wiped out by one stupid program,” he told the Gannett News Service.

### Milk production insurance

What has proven a bright orange life jacket to dairy farmers, according to Jim Davenport, is the Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMCP), newly constituted in the 2018 Farm Bill to replace the Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPPD). This is a voluntary risk management program for dairy producers.

Davenport, proprietor of Tollgate Holsteins in Ancramdale, NY, which has earned recognition for its exceptionally high quality milk, explained that the DMCP is the stepchild of the 2002 Farm Bill’s MPPD, which introduced what might best be described as insurance to help support the milk price for dairy farmers.

Nowadays, he said, “What all farms can use is the Dairy Margin Coverage Program. Economists come up with the margin between the cost of feed and the price of milk. They felt that \$9.50 was the limit on what you could use as a base. If the margin dips below \$9.50, when the price of milk is down and the feed inputs are up, then

you start to get a payment from the government. You can choose at what level you want to insure. Ninety-five percent of my production is covered at \$9.50, which is the level I choose.”

When high milk prices recently skyrocketed thanks to supply chain issues and the like, simultaneously feed prices were “out of this world,” thereby creating a relatively level playing field on both ends. Looking ahead, however, an imbalance is expected when milk prices drop and “grain prices remain out of this world. I’ll get my premium back in two months, and then after that it will help my bottom line,” Davenport explained.

“I can’t imagine there are too many that don’t sign up for the protection. It’s such a no-brainer,” he said. Almost as an aside, Davenport added, “We are really good at producing milk in this country.” To which Ooms chimed in, “There have always been problems with overproduction. We struggle with it now.” ●

Sources: *Palladium Times*, *New York Times*, *Utica Observer-Dispatch*.



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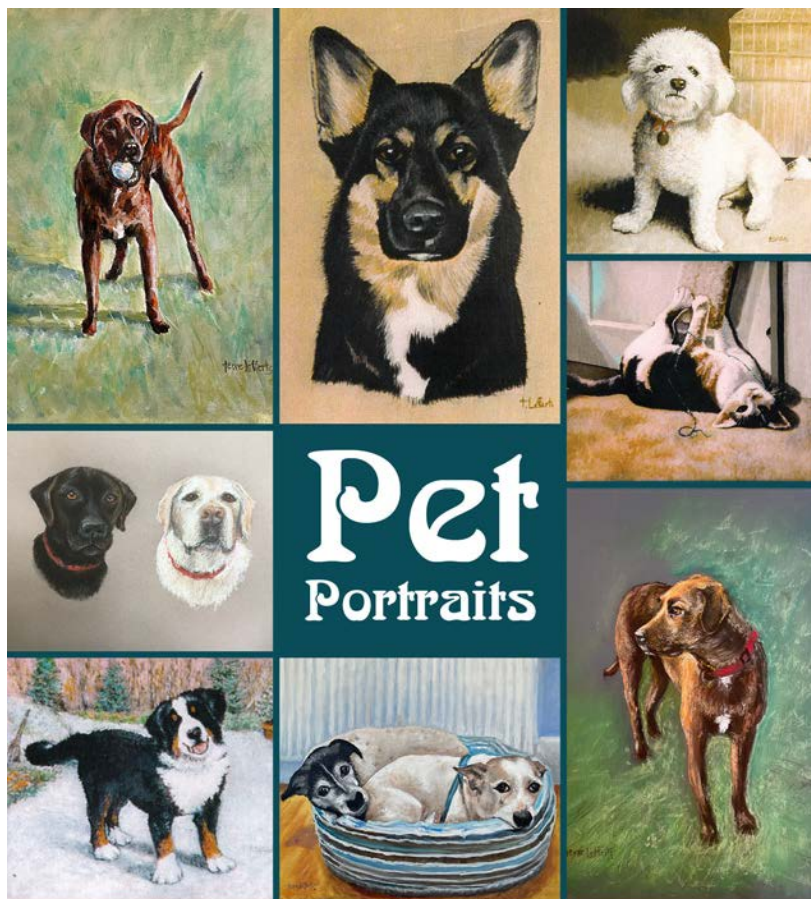
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# Hop in to the Year of the Rabbit

By Dominique DeVito  
info@mainstreetmag.com

January 22 was the official start of the Chinese New Year, which extends to February 9, 2024. Each year is celebrated with a different animal, and each animal cycles through only every 12 years. This year – 2023 – is the Year of the Rabbit. The Rabbit is assuming the place of the Tiger, who retreats to its lair until 2034. Following the Rabbit will be the Dragon in 2024.

Most of us know the Chinese Zodiac through paper place mats in Chinese restaurants, where you could find the year of your birth listed by one of the animals, then compare and contrast that to those of your family and friends. I always thought it interesting that I am a Taurus born in the Year of the Ox. Does this mean I'm doubly stubborn? Or should I take comfort in the stated qualities of persistence, determination, and hard work? Do you know what combination of Western and Eastern signs you are? You will by the end of this article.

## Understanding the Chinese Zodiac

Of all the information out there about the origins of the Chinese Zodiac, what I like best is the fable that seems to have survived. It claims that a prominent Emperor declared that 12 animals should race to determine their finishing times, and that would determine their order of importance in the zodiac.

The 12 animals were the Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat (or Sheep), Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig. Who would you put your money on?

The tale goes that the Rat cheated. It thought the Ox would win and so jumped on its shoulders for most of the race, jumping off at just the right time to cross the finish line first. The Rat thus became the first animal in the zodiac, followed by the others in the order listed above. Supposedly the Pig finished last because it stopped to eat and nap during the race.

Tale or tail or whatever, the 12 animals have been presiding over people's fortunes for thousands of years. Personality traits are associated with each of the animals, and just like we Westerners take our monthly zodiac sign traits to heart, so do Easterners with their animals. That the animals hold court for a full year and only resurface a dozen years later lends extra importance to their presence.

Here is a description of the signs with the associated birth years going back to 1923 (from the website [lifestyleasia.com](http://lifestyleasia.com)).

### Rat

Birth years: 1912, 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, 2020

Characteristics: Family-oriented, frugal and quick-witted, the Rat is also known to have a good sense of humour and is optimistic. They are a delight to have around and cleverly adapt to any situation.

### Ox

Birth years: 1913, 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009, 2021

Characteristics: Steadfast, relentless and hardworking, an Ox values integrity above everything else. They are always loyal and dependable. There is a chance they might be taken for granted by others due to these qualities and may feel sidelined at times but they always keep going and are rewarded in the end.

### Tiger

Birth years: 1914, 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010, 2022

Characteristics: Passionate and high on energy, the tiger is an impulsive romantic who loves taking risks. The majestic persona also mirrors a huge ego. Not afraid to make mistakes, the tiger doesn't shy away from trying new things.

### Rabbit

Birth years: 1915, 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011, 2023

Characteristics: The rabbit hates conflict of any kind and is very affable in nature. Being social creatures that they are, they look for attention and are great in relationships. A rabbit is also known to be even-tempered and artistic.

Continued on page 41 ...



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### Dragon

Birth years: 1916, 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012, 2024

Characteristics: The Chinese consider Dragons to be great leaders. Enthusiastic, result-oriented and independent, they are one of the most popular animals in the zodiac.

### Snake

Birth years: 1917, 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013, 2025

Characteristics: The Snake is mysterious and can be warm and open but also cold and secretive. Highly intuitive, and compassionate but only to those who unlock this side of them.

### Horse

Birth years: 1918, 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002, 2014, 2026

Characteristics: Carefree and wild, people born in the Year of Horse seldom turn an adventure down. They also like to experiment and surround themselves with many people. They have an infectious energy and can sometimes put people off with their slightly imposing opinions.

### Goat/Sheep

Birth years: 1919, 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015, 2027

Characteristics: The Goat has a mild temperament and is known to have a kind heart but do not mistake it to be a pushover for they value their independence and hate compromising.

### Monkey

Birth years: 1920, 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016, 2028

Characteristics: The Monkey has an innate ability to lead and is found to be really good at problem-solving. They have a tendency to seek an opportunity which is new and exciting and therefore sometimes stray from their partners.

### Rooster

Birth years: 1921, 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005, 2017, 2029

Characteristics: Flexible and resilient especially in uncomfortable situations, the Rooster loves things to be perfect. They are bound by duty and pride.

### Dog

Birth years: 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018, 2030

Characteristics: Faithful to the core, those born in the Dog years love to do what is expected of them and love to honor their commitments. They are also very detail-oriented, selfless, and giving.

### Pig

Birth years: 1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019, 2031

Characteristics: Kind and lovable, Pigs like to keep their circle tight. Usually non-confrontational, they do not shy away from a fight if they are convinced that they are right.

### The five elements

Besides the influence of the animals in their birth year, the Chinese Zodiac is also rooted in five elements that are considered influencing energies. They are Metal, Water, Wood, Fire, and Earth. Understanding these characteristics and the seasons they best embody also plays into one's fate per the Zodiac.

**Metal** is rigid and unmovable. It symbolizes strength and a penchant towards making and obeying rules. Its season is autumn.

**Water** is creative and full of free-flowing energy. Those under its influence are considered calm and forward-thinking, but can also be destructive. Its season is winter.

**Wood** is warm, nurturing, and encourages growth. Its season is spring.

**Fire** is impulsive, passionate, and full of life, with a tendency to be aggressive. Its season is summer.

**Earth** is dependable, balanced, and consistent. It has both yin and yang energies and so transitions between seasons.

Determining which element relates to you is simple, per this chart:  
**Metal:** The last digit of your birth year is 0 or 1  
**Water:** The last digit of your birth year is 2 or 3  
**Wood:** The last digit of your birth year is 4 or 5  
**Fire:** The last digit of your birth year is 6 or 7  
**Earth:** The last digit of your birth year is 8 or 9

Continued on next page ...





Image: istockphoto.com  
contributor kotoffei

Each animal sign has a fixed element, as well. They are:

- Tiger and Rabbit – Wood
- Snake and Horse – Fire
- Ox, Dragon, Sheep, and Dog – Earth
- Monkey and Rooster – Metal
- Pig and Rat – Water

#### And there's more!

Let's stay focused on the Year of the Rabbit and those of you who are also Rabbit years. Here's how your element plays into your personality traits:

- Water Rabbits are kind and can readily adjust to various situations, but they can waffle in their decisions.
- Wood Rabbits are quick-witted and flamboyant, but can be selfish and shrewd.
- Fire Rabbits are smart, flexible, and have a range of interests, but can also be opinionated.
- Earth Rabbits are straightforward, ambitious, and hard-working, but can be reserved.
- Metal Rabbits are amiable and enthusiastic, but can be conservative.

#### What about 2023?

With all of this in play, how can predictions be made about how an animal sign will play out in people's

lives over the course of a year, much less a lifetime? That's the fun part. It can be interpreted on so many levels. These summaries are only part of the picture. For the Chinese, each animal has a long cultural and historical significance that plays into what will happen when their years come up.

Getting back to the race that determined the order of the animals in the zodiac, the story goes that part of the terrain to cross was a wide river. The rabbit, it's told, hopped from stone to stone but fell farther and farther behind. It managed to land on a log that was carried by the current and swept the rabbit to shore in a lucky break. This gives the rabbit a legacy as being opportune, and waiting for just the right time to leap into action. The rabbit is also associated with the moon, as the Chinese say a shadow on the moon portrays a rabbit pounding a pestle of the elixir of life for the moon goddess.

If you're a Rabbit and this is your Year, you'll want to do more than sit at the alert with your big eyes and ears and whiskers twitching. Check out what [chinesenewyear.net](http://chinesenewyear.net) has to say about all things related to your finances, health, love life, and more.

If you want to have fun with the Chinese New Year and the Year of the Rabbit, tap into what the rabbit means to you. Cut out pictures of rabbits and make a collage. Look for rabbits on your walks and notice where they are and what they're

doing. Rethink your relationship with rabbits and your garden. Read stories and poems about rabbits (*Watership Down* by Richard Adams is one of my favorites!). Say "Rabbit, Rabbit" on the first day of every month (this is an English superstition said to bring good luck).

While the Chinese New Year officially kicked off on January 22, it's traditionally celebrated for several weeks, through the appearance of the full moon on February 9. Through New Year's and through the year, enjoy foods considered to bring good luck, like dumplings and spring rolls. Wear red, pink, purple or blue, which are lucky colors associated with the Rabbit. Send greetings and good wishes to Rabbit Year people you know. Think Rabbit thoughts.

Happy Year of the Rabbit! •



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# The Kent Flower Market



By Pom Shillingford  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Regular readers will know I am a bit of a stuck record regarding the importance of finding local seasonal flowers. Firstly, flowers are no different from fruits and vegetables. They ALWAYS grow, look, smell, last – and even taste – better in season. However, even more importantly, out-of-season, flown-from-afar flowers come with enormous environmental costs to our planet and the communities that grow them.

While 80% of the flowers purchased in the US still come from abroad, awareness of the ecological and social cost of these, a desire to return to flowers as they used to be grown back in our grandmothers' day, the influence of social media and the impact of Covid on supply chains has led to the appearance of many local flower growers in our neighborhood and across the country.

Full confession, I am one of those new growers, albeit in a small and more sporadically seasonal way. I

focus on three specific crops at different times of the year. Many growers, even here in the Northwest Corner, will be aiming for crops at least nine months of the year. While I might not have hoop houses and the multiple succession plantings in common with them, I'm fairly sure of one thing we can agree on; we all got into flower growing because we loved growing flowers, not because we had any desire to become über sales people. Ask any of us what's the least favorite part of growing cut flowers and it's not the weather, nor the pests, not even the physically backbreaking nature of the endeavor, but the actual selling of them.

## Flowers changing hands

While there are multiple options as to how flower farmers can get their perishable beauties into the hands of their customers: CSAs, subscriptions, farmstands, farmers markets, wholesale and secondary outlets – all of them come with a mix of cost, skill, time or volume commitment which many growers cannot meet.

So welcome to this fray Jeb Breece, the brains and brilliance behind the Kent Flower Market. Now a full-time

resident in Salisbury, CT, Breece was originally a weekender in Kent who, in the summer of 2019, driven by the urge to grow something, he wasn't particularly fussed what, persuaded Megan Haney at the Marble Valley Farm in Kent to let him grow one row of flowers to sell alongside her vegetables and herbs on the farmstand there. While the growing experience proved to be one thing, realizing just how hard it is to actually sell flowers was eye-opening for him.

## Flower farmers' greatest dilemma

Breece had – and still has – no intention of becoming a full-time flower farmer. He has an entirely separate full-time career in finance and a young family to keep him busy. However, the following summer in the depths of the 2020 Covid pandemic, a conversation with the then manager of Kent Barns, Hiram Williams, about how to give the community the

Continued on next page ...



opportunity to gather together sewed the seed from which the Kent Flower Market grew.

"It is so important to support our local farm economy in any way we can," says Breece. "From my experience at Marble Valley, I had realized the flower farmer's greatest dilemma was often how much time it takes to sell flowers, particularly at their busiest time of year when time is the last thing they have to spare. I also appreciated that it is often the case of boom or bust with flowers – too much one day, not enough the next," said Breece. "The idea was that in taking the financial risk by buying directly whatever flowers they have available – sometimes in quantities too small, sometimes too large for them to shift otherwise ensuring they weren't going to waste – and then me selling these on through the Market, it would make life a lot easier for farmers. At the same time, having a flower market in the Square at Kent Barns would give the community a fo-

cal point around which to gather at a time when desperation levels to be out and about were at an all-time high."

Two birds, one stone? It was worth a shot.

### A huge success

And so, on Saturday September 19, 2020, with the help of its owners, Natalie and Greg Randall, the market was set up on the stoop of RT Facts. It was a huge success. So much so, in 2021 the Kent Flower Market became a regular part of Kent Barns' Second Saturdays from May to October. In 2022, the market again ran once a month from May to September, along with a special holiday opening in November.

As well as supporting flower farmers with its flower bar and grab-'n-go arrangements of seasonal flowers each month, Breece began to invite a handful of small local businesses and flower-related merchants to join him each month. Also added to the offerings were a series of related workshops on flower arranging, tablescaping, container growing and flower pressing, along with book signings and even a flower-related art opening at one of the Kent Barns galleries.

"I'm really keen to support small local business and drive demand toward them. The Market offers great exposure for them and, along with the workshops, introduces customers who would otherwise be unaware of them," says Breece. "At the same time these draw in new visitors to Kent who perhaps otherwise would not have visited the area."

Plans for 2023 include more of the same. The roster of flower farmers and growers supplying their blooms to the Market continues to grow. To date these include Anderson Acres, Loam Flower Design Co, Tiny Hearts, Matri Farm, Hudson Valley Flower Farm, Blue Monday Flowers, Falls Village Flower Farm, English Garden Grown, Geer Mountain Farm, The Secret Dahlia Lady, Marble Valley Farm, and Le Jardin Flower Farm. The line-up of merchants and workshops will include past favorites as well as new faces.

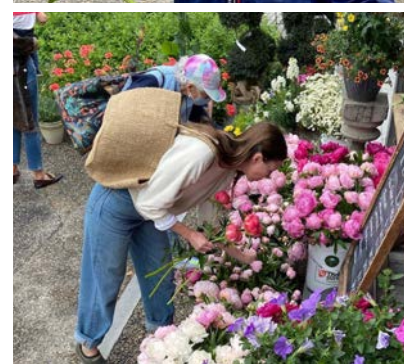


For local flower farmers, seasonal flower lovers and even those looking to be connected to growers at any point in the season, the Kent Flower Market is fast becoming an indispensable resource. Breece might not ever have imagined quite such a flower-filled life back in those pre-pandemic days. However, it is clear his plan to help local flower farmers looks only to be growing from strength to strength. ●

*In 2023, the Kent Flower Market will take place on the Saturday before Mother's Day in May and from then, on the second Saturday each month through September. The Market is open from 10am to 1pm and is located on the front steps of RT Facts in Kent Barns. 8 Old Barns Road, Kent, CT.*

*To sign up for workshops and for more information, visit [www.kentflowermarket.com](http://www.kentflowermarket.com) or follow Kent Flower Market on Instagram @kentflowermarket*

*Pom Shillingford is an obsessive gardener originally from England and now based in Salisbury, CT. She offers seasonal cut flowers through English Garden Grown. Find her on Instagram @english\_garden\_grown.*







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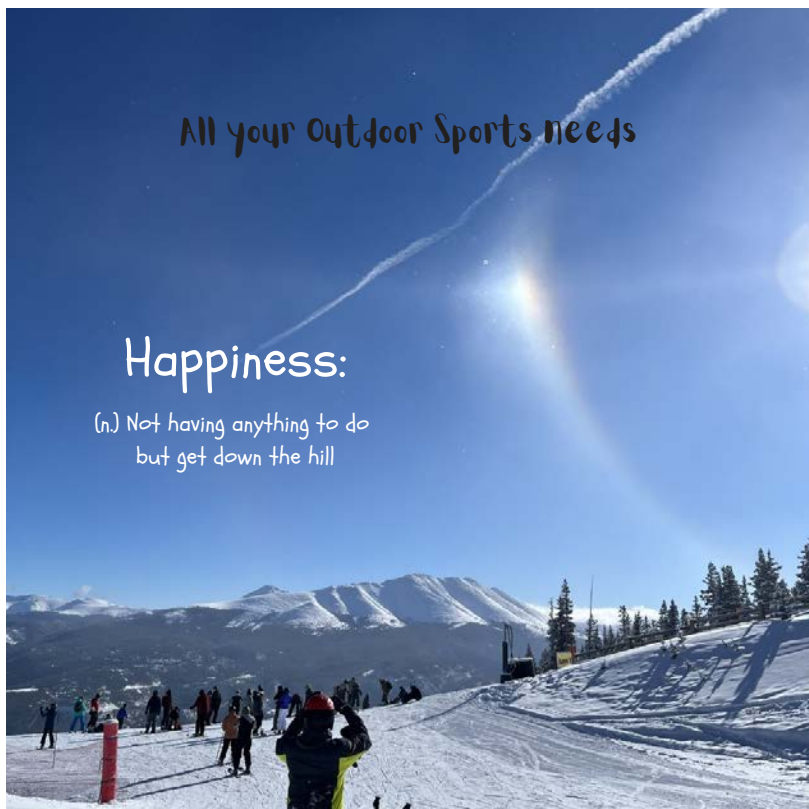
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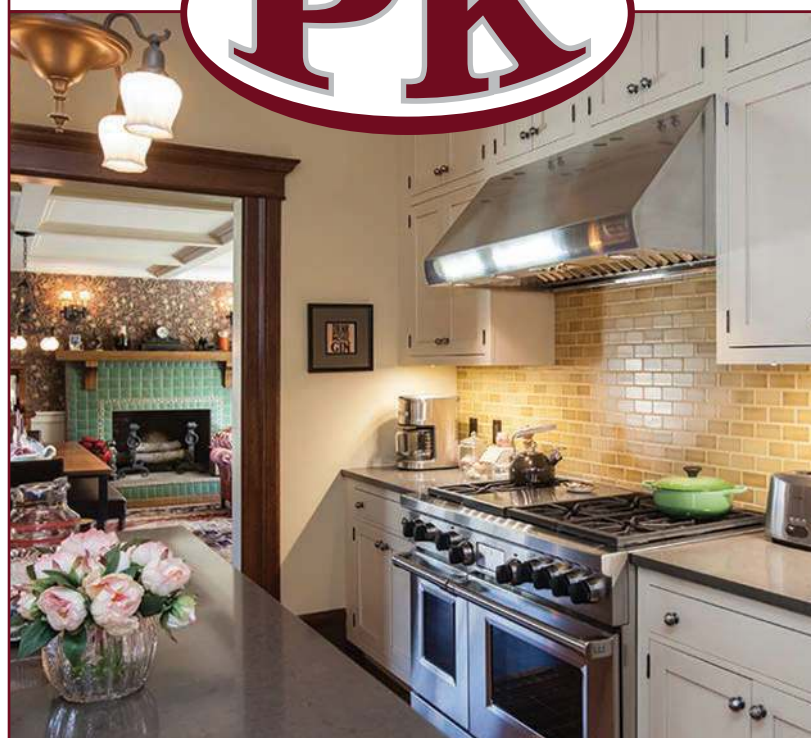
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# FARMING UPDATE

*A look at some key issues that are impacting farming in 2023*

By Regina Molaro  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Agriculture is a major industry in the US and an important sector for the Hudson Valley region. The many farms scattered across the area harvest crops, which feed our communities and contribute to the Hudson Valley's local economy. These locally-grown foods often land at local farmers markets such as Migliorelli Farm Stands in Red Hook and Rhinebeck as well as shops such as The Epicurean in Rhinecliff, all in New York. The bounty is also used to supply ingredients to farm-to-table restaurants such as The Amsterdam in Rhinebeck and Grazin' Farm-To-Table: Direct – an organic diner in Hudson.

According to the USDA, the US agriculture sector extends beyond the farm business to include a range of farm-related industries. In 2021, agriculture, food, and related industries contributed 5.4% to US gross domestic product and provided 10.5% of US employment; Americans' expenditures on food amounted to 12% of household budgets on average.

The USDA's Economic Research Service defines gross cash farm income (GCFI) as annual income before expenses. It includes cash receipts, farm-related cash income, and government farm program payments. In 2022, the USDA forecasted GCFI at \$600 billion.

There are lots of factors impacting the farming industry – from animal vaccines to water waste and difficulty attracting new farmers to the industry. Read on to uncover some key issues that are impacting the industry and some solutions that may improve farm-related businesses within the next few years.

## Trend report

The *Trends Transforming the Agriculture Industry Outlook In 2023* report was created by Team Linchpin – digital marketing strategists that help businesses identify and solve digital marketing and website experience problems that limit business growth. The team identified these topics, which they believe will continue to impact farming in the years to come.

## Animal vaccines

Vaccines are an incredible human accomplishment and continue to be applied to many areas of agriculture. Efforts are being made to help provide even more access to animal vaccines. In the US, officials are concerned about the spread of vaccine-preventable illnesses in livestock. As a result, they're trying to set up a bank to combat foot-and-mouth disease. They're concerned there are only about 1.75 million doses on hand. Officials hope to receive the desired 25 million doses via a vaccine bank.

## Attracting new people

Another issue is attracting new people to farming. Many graduates who enter farming programs accrue a great deal of debt once they finish their studies. The average age of the country's current farmers is 60 years-old. Farmers want to work closely with young people for mutual benefits. They also want to think about retirement. Helping young people discover how rewarding agriculture can be is essential to future success. Officials are working to help them reduce debt and find a place in this all important sector.

"Farmers don't have a level playing field. We are competing with Pennsylvania, which has a lower minimum wage, lower taxes, and less expensive workman's compensation insurance. The mandatory overtime for farms will discourage H-2A and H2-B workers from working in New York, and instead they can go to another



Photo: istockphoto.com contributor Willard

state to work on one farm rather than working at two in New York. In addition, land in the Hudson Valley is very costly, making it difficult for young people who would like to farm," said Sue Adams, vice president of Adams Greenhouses – a five-acre operation in Poughkeepsie.

Adams is also an author, award-winning container designer, president of New York State Flower Industries, and a graduate of Cornell University. She also serves on the New England Floriculture Board and is a member of American Farm Bureau Federation.

"There are not enough animal processing facilities locally and they are too expensive for small farmers to utilize. Because there are so few, they are often booked out way in advance, and it is very difficult for farmers to even process their livestock," added John Beatty of The Little Beatty Farm in Woodbury, CT. Beatty, in addition to being a Manhattan attorney, raises a flock of traditional 1927 "kindly" Fine Fleece Shetland sheep and laying hens.

## Increased income for small farmers

Large farm operations constitute less than half of all farms in America. Yet these farms are expected to continue to rise. Experts who watch the farm industry closely anticipate that such farms will experience growth and income of about 9.3%, compared to the previous year. Small farms help power the rest of the sector and bring much-desired food to many parts of the country and the world. This increased income should help farmers pay their bills and provide additional capital to invest in new equipment.

## Crop monitoring and other technologies

Just as technology has transformed many areas of the economy, it will continue to impact farming. According to officials at the Federal

Continued on next page ...



Communications Commission, over 24 million Americans lack access to broadband internet. Farmers are increasingly discovering new ways to use broadband and other forms of technology. A farmer can now use apps to monitor crops daily. Less expensive drones also deliver supplies where and when they're needed.

Agricultural drones are easier to fly and it's easier to understand the data they provide. These drones also respond well in changing weather conditions. Extremely localized weather data is also being offered. Thanks to this technology, farmers have more detailed predictions about the state of local weather. This helps them determine what should be planted in any given timeframe and if crops should be harvested if weather conditions change.

Lightweight graphene is also being used to provide even more data about field and soil conditions. This kind of "plant tattoo" can help scientists and farmers work together to decide how best to use soils and breed better plants with higher yields, and ones that are better able to survive under less-than-ideal conditions.

### Focus on tariffs

Beyond growing and sharing their supply locally, many farmers sell to other regions of the world. America's government has chosen this method to push forth specific global policies to influence policy in other regions of the world. They recognize that such efforts may cause problems for farmers in the US. This explains why the government has provided a \$16 billion package to help offset the worst effects of this problem. It is unclear what effects subsidies and tariffs will have on farmers' income. These funds should continue to impact the world of agriculture this year, the next few years, and beyond.

### Food safety

Food safety is a significant concern for farmers and all who are involved in agriculture. Farmers need to be aware of the potential for contamination



Photo: istockphoto.com contributor jacoblund

as they work in the fields and transport food. A problem, such as an e. coli outbreak, can lead to severe costs that farmers must be prepared to absorb. Experts estimate that such expenses vary by the kind of farm and the type of material being grown and produced.

Furthermore, these costs may continue to grow as farmers face increased regulations. Therefore, it's imperative for all those who are involved in farming to be aware of all upcoming laws that may impact their current farming methods. Doing so can help ward off potential problems and protect all their products from contamination.

### Hemp production

The 2018 Farm Bill has made it legal for farmers to produce and sell various forms of hemp, which has applications ranging from textiles to health foods, animal feed, rope, fuel, and beyond. According to a recent Proficient Market Insights report, Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global Industrial Hemp market size is estimated to be worth US \$1358.8 million in 2022 and is forecast to a readjusted size of US \$3259.5 million by 2028.

### Interaction with clients

Direct interaction with clients is important for all businesses. The same is true for farmers. Farmers have increasingly understood the need to speak to their consumers directly. Using social media makes this process easier. Farmers can create a website to help people find them. This has been beneficial to farmers.

For example, those who run farms that grow pick-your-own crops want to ensure that anyone visiting them understands which crops are available. Past studies indicate that 40% of all farmers are on Facebook. Many others use social media, such as Twitter and Instagram, to connect with people locally and worldwide. Social media accounts can also further illustrate the vital role farmers have in the region's economy and community. When consumers know who is growing their food, it makes them feel more connected to the land.

### Corn takes center stage

Corn has long been one of the most popular of all American crops. It continues to assume a significant role in American agriculture. The USDA cited that US corn growers intended to plant 89.5 million acres in 2022, down 4% from last year. A recent Grain Stocks report by the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), revealed that Corn stocks totaled 7.85 billion bushels, up 2% from the same time last year. The corn grown in the US helps to feed communities worldwide. Foreign governments and the people they serve will continue to rely on this US crop to help them feed their people.

### Water use

Water is the foundation of many crops in the US and worldwide. Water access continues to be one of the many issues farmers will face this coming year. Agriculture consumes 80% of all water use in America.

Farmers are looking for ways to help them reduce water consumption for their crops. In many instances, they're choosing to harvest more water in their fields. They're also reusing their water. For example, using so-called "dirty water" can help provide water for their animals, which can then be used to help water crops.

Food has always been a key driver in the Hudson Valley. Hopefully, initiatives will be made to address the issues that are currently hindering the farming industry. Beyond attracting a new generation of farmers, we must continue to utilize the government and technology to solve some of the challenges in everything from food production to processing, distribution, marketing, and consumption.

The Hudson Valley enjoys a long agricultural history – from the tenant farming of the 1700s to the farm-to-table movement and sustainable agriculture practices of today. Plenty of residents and tourists enjoy shopping the region's many farms and farmers markets, eating at the bounty of restaurants, and visiting pick-your-own destinations. Let's continue to adapt and plant the seeds of success, so we can keep this industry thriving.

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JACUTERIE is an artisanal charcuterie company in the Hudson Valley in New York. Founded in 2012 by Jack Peele at Herondale Farm, JACUTERIE continues to grow and add new styles of charcuterie every year. “We operate out of our own USDA-inspected facility, where we specialize in European-style dry cured salami, whole muscle charcuterie, and small batches of fresh sausages to sell locally and online. We also provide USDA-inspected fresh sausage and salami production for small local farms,” shared Jack Peele. When asked what sets their business apart, Jack shared, “While we take our inspiration for flavors from across the globe, all our products are made locally in the Hudson Valley, sourcing our meats and other ingredients from as many local sources as possible.” When it comes to the most rewarding part of their job, Jack and his team shared that it is providing quality European-style cured meats, sausages, and more, but all made locally, from local ingredients, to support as many local small businesses and farms as they can. Looking to the coming year and beyond, Jack shared, “We are always searching for new flavors and styles to make – as well as new small farms and producers to work with.”



## Little Apple Cidery

Orchard bar offering hard and fresh ciders. 178 Orchard Lane, Hillsdale, NY. [ron@littleapplecidery.com](mailto:ron@littleapplecidery.com). [littleapplecidery.com](http://littleapplecidery.com)

Ron Bixby shared, “Little Apple Cidery started in 2015 next to our Certified Organic apple orchard which we acquired in 1980. Orchard Bar opened in 2020 at the height of the COVID pandemic. People flocked to it because it was one of the few, safe outdoor activity spaces.” Ron continued, “We make a variety of hard- and fresh cider in season that are available for purchase at the Cidery or Orchard Bar.” They also do events and private parties, but those are booked well in advance. “It’s a great place for families with children and dogs, bicycle clubs, and hikers.” The Cidery has a beautiful orchard located on Orchard Lane in Hillsdale where people can relax and enjoy themselves, meet local people, and have a good time while tasting a wide range of ciders and light food plates. “Customers call us an under the radar diamond in the rough.” When asked about the most rewarding part of the Orchard, Ron shared, “The Cidery is a dream come true for me and I love the people I work with, Hayley and Lisa, as well as meeting new people every day.” Looking forward, Ron shared, “We are growing our business to become a go-to destination and expanding the distribution of our hard ciders. We also hope to engage in more collaborations with other local businesses.”



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## Cooper's Daughter Spirits

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Cooper's Daughter Spirits is a woman-owned and family-operated distillery, cooperage, and apple orchard, which was founded in 2017. The name of the distillery tells the story of a father and daughter who combined their passions to create a business together. Cooper's Daughter makes farm-to-bottle bourbons, whiskies, vodkas, and liqueurs. All Cooper's Daughter Spirits are naturally infused or cask finished with local ingredients. At the distillery, the Cocktail Barn & Garden is open every Friday-Sunday for farm-to-glass cocktails/mocktails and food trucks. As for what sets Cooper's Daughter Spirits apart is that they use 100% real ingredients sourced from the Hudson Valley to make their premium spirits. “Our one-of-a-kind Black Walnut Bourbon is made with tree syrup tapped from local groves,” shared Sophie Newsome. “The most rewarding thing about being in business is being able to work directly with local farms using organic and regenerative practices. They provide us with the inspiration to create our spirits and flavors,” shared Sophie. Cooper's Daughter recently purchased an orchard in Red Hook, NY. Moving forward the hope is to rehabilitate as many of the 50-year-old apple trees as possible and to make vodka from the apples. Cooper's Daughter plans to begin renovations on the existing farmstand and build a production facility.



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Amily Rubin and Les Baum shared, “Friends and family went crazy over our Roasted and Spiced Pumpkin Seeds and Hickory and Cherry Wood Smoked Sea Salt. With the encouragement of the organizers of the Copake Hillsdale Farmer's Market (CHFM) we brought our wares out – that was six years ago. Thank you to CHFM for all the support!” They make Roasted and Spiced Pumpkin Seeds and Hickory and Cherry Wood Smoked Sea Salt. The seeds are great in salads, soups, or just for snacking. The Smoked Sea Salt adds a smoky flavor to anything you cook – meats, poultry, fish, soups, and sweets too – top off those chocolate chip cookies! “What’s unique to us is that we make all our products in small batches. The most rewarding part for us is that selling our wares at the Copake Hillsdale Farmer's Market is a joy and wonderful social and community building time for us. We enjoy getting to know other vendors, trying their products, and getting feedback and ideas from our customers who enjoy trying out recipes with our products. Looking ahead, we are looking forward to being in more farm and specialty stores throughout the Hudson Valley and beyond. Please feel free to reach out to us and let us know about your favorite local market.”



## INSURING YOUR WORLD

Animals, animals, animals! They all come with very interesting insurance implications. Liability is the first issue that one must consider when raising cattle, sheep, horses or goats. All homeowners policies allow "one large animal" such as a horse or cow and "two small animals" such as sheep or goats. Once you begin getting more than one or two, your homeowners liability may not respond to a claim. What type of claims you might ask, could animals create? How about the horse or cow that kicks an innocent bystander or the ram or billy goat that runs a small child over while the child is petting the animal? Injuries are typically minor yet they can be very serious and cause a large lawsuit. Another example of an animal-related claim is if the animal gets out on a public road and damages an oncoming car or gets into someone's prize flower garden causing extensive property damage. You can bet that there will be a property damage claim presented to the animal owner soon after the damage happens. If you don't have the right coverage, the owner will be paying out-of-pocket. Lastly, let's discuss the person that raises and sells animals for profit and makes over \$10,000 to get a property tax exemption. If you are filing a Schedule F with your income tax you should know that any buildings that you are using to raise these animals will NOT BE COVERED under a homeowners policy due to an exclusion in all homeowners policies. One has to have a farmowners or commercial property policy to be covered in such a situation should there be a fire or related loss. As we have written in the past, folks don't plan to fail – they fail to plan!



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## Ways to increase shell strength in chicken eggs

- Improving diet: A healthier diet will naturally lead to healthier, stronger eggs.
- Offering supplemental calcium: Providing an extra source of calcium, such as calcium-enriched grit, can help hens get enough of this essential mineral. Dark, leafy greens offered as enrichment forage can also be a great source of calcium.
- Lowering stress: If the flock has been stressed, that can cause hormone imbalances and anxiety that affects hens' laying abilities.
- Keeping cool: Taking steps to keep chickens cool during the hottest months can improve egg quality. Extra ventilation, abundant fresh water, positioning the coop in shade, and providing ice blocks for enrichment.
- Improving overall health: Ensuring hens are healthy overall is always good for laying productivity and strong eggs. Keep birds at the proper weight, provide suitable enrichment, offer nutritious feed, and take other steps for a wholly healthy flock.
- Medication: If an individual hen has thyroid or other hormone problems, or may have an injury or infection, appropriate medication can speed her healing and improve egg quality.
- Cleaning the coop: Removing excess feces regularly will lower ammonia levels, and improved ventilation will keep the birds more comfortable.
- Provide plenty of water: Not only do hens need an abundant source of water, that water should be as fresh and clean as possible.
- Deworming: Regular deworming keeps the chickens in better digestive balance so they make the most of their feed, leading to healthier, stronger eggs.
- Consulting a veterinarian: If any hen begins laying soft eggs with greater frequency or if there are other noticeable changes in egg production, it is imperative to consult a veterinarian immediately. While an occasional weak eggshell is normal, an ongoing or widespread condition will require further treatment.

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## What is a working cat?

At Dutchess County SPCA, we take in cats of all kinds – house cats, strays, and often feral cats and kittens. Most of the time, it is possible to rehabilitate unsocialized cats – young feral kittens or cats who didn't receive enough human contact – and turn them into house cats. But sometimes it isn't possible. If a cat is not socialized at an early age, they will never be happy living with humans and cannot be managed in a home. They are not adoptable as house cats. Unless the cat can be returned to the territory where they came from and we know that territory is safe and someone is there to provide food and shelter for them, these cats become working cats. They can live happily in a barn or warehouse, and in exchange for food, shelter and vet care, they provide the critical service of rodent control. In other words, they work for a living. People who adopt working cats sign a contract in which they promise to provide for the cat's essential needs. They know they will never be able to curl up in front of the TV with these cats, but these free spirits will be the best four-footed employees they can hope for. If introduced to the environment properly, working cats will stay put – why wouldn't they when they have food, warmth, and plenty of live mouse toys? Some of our working cats have been at their jobs for 12 years. When a cat can't be a pet, and if they have no safe place to live, a nice warm barn with a human looking out for them from a distance is the best possible lifestyle for them.

By Lynne Meloccaro,  
Executive Director of Dutchess County SPCA

Dutchess County SPCA provides services to the community including affordable payment plans for veterinary care, safety-net pet housing, pet food pantries, free rabies clinics, and pet retention assistance.

For more information: [www.dcpsca.org](http://www.dcpsca.org)



## Let's talk "Doodles"

It seems that everyone has a doodle dog. Cavapoo, Labradoodle, Aussiedoodle. The list goes on and on. Those cute faces, curly hair, who can resist. As a groomer I have found that to maintain those beautiful locks, daily brushing is a must to prevent matting. I recommend investing in a metal comb and a slicker brush. Start this maintenance when they are a puppy. When brushing, do not let your puppy play or bite the comb/brush. Start with small blocks of time, then increase as your puppy gets used to it. Positive reinforcement helps make this a good experience. As your puppy grows, the texture of their hair will change, so might the way you have your groomer clip them. Matting occurs mostly where there is friction (where the hair rubs together). Wearing a harness, collar, walking (under front legs and chest), scratching, leaving your dog wet will also contribute to matting. We are all busy and daily brushing may not be possible. Work with your groomer to get that clip that is easy to maintain and keeps that cute appearance and schedule regular grooming appointments.

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