



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. NEWSLETTER

Volume VII Number 2

FALL

September 2008

“AN AFTERNOON AT THE FARM”

Please join us for our annual meeting, featured speakers,
and tour of the farm buildings!

Sunday, September 28, 2008 - 1:30 to 3:30 pm

Ira Kettle, Apiary Inspector for the The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, will speak on “**The Role of Bees as Pollinators.**” Mr. Kettle inspects hives to assess their health and gives shows and talks to educate citizens and students. He has raised bees since 1975 and teaches beekeepers how to raise, keep, and medicate hives. **Local beekeeper, Dermot Jones**, also will talk about managing a beehive colony. Both speakers will bring display hives and equipment of beekeepers.

All of the farm buildings will be open for viewing at your leisure. We'll have picnic tables placed at several locations throughout the property for just sitting. Beverages are on us! Activities will include our Annual Business Meeting and report of activities this past year. A short tour of the farm buildings will also be given.

Here is the **agenda** for the afternoon:

1:30 pm – 2:00 pm	Annual Business Meeting - Friends of Valley Falls, Inc.
2:00 pm – 2:40 pm	“The Role of Bees as Pollinators” - Ira Kettle, State Apiary Inspector
2:40 pm – 3:00 pm	“Managing a Beehive in Your Backyard” - Dermot Jones, Beekeeper
3:00 pm - 3:30 p.m.	Tour of Farm Buildings

Nature Notes: BEES

Honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) were brought here by the colonists in the early 1600's to make honey, according to Tristram Seidler, the staff ecologist for the New England Wild Flower Society. He stated that their pollination service was recognized later. Honeybees build large colonies of 20,000 to 100,000 bees so they are able to pollinate large orchards of fields of strawberry plants, tomatoes, etc. They are one of the primary insects that help to pollinate over 80% of the world's food supply. In the last two years, beekeepers have seen about a third of the U.S. honeybee population destroyed by 'colony collapse disorder.'

There are more than 4,000 species of native bees, according to “The Status of Pollinators in North America,” a 2007 status report by the National Research Council in Washington. Since a third of our crops depend on honeybees for pollination, we need to encourage native bees by providing plants for them and avoiding the use of pesticides and herbicides. In the last 20 years, over 85% of the wild bee colonies have been decimated by the varroa destructor mite. Gardeners can assist with the health of the bee pollination by planting native plants to feed the bees. Guides to bee gardening are available: the Xerces Society's “Pollinator Conservation Handbook” and “The Wildlife Gardener's Guide” from the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

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VALLEY FALLS FARM

The key message we want to convey to you, our members and supporters, is the tremendous amount of work and time it is taking to maintain the Farm lands and buildings. We are accomplishing a lot, but we are always left with much, much more to do. Your support is needed, both financial and volunteer labor!

Work we accomplished...

We were very fortunate this summer to have had the services of **four community workers** who provided a total of 175 hours of their time. These



efforts enabled us to scrape, prime and paint the north and west exterior walls of the stable (a major job that saved us \$2,000), remove invasive plants from the swale area, as well as a large autumn olive by the roadside, trim and weed the flower and vegetable gardens, remove a large area

of debris, and install a new compost bin, constructed by Friends volunteer, **Paul Gingras**.

Thanks again go to Board member **Joe King** for the many, many hours he put into caring for the grounds around the stable and farm buildings – mowing the lawn, trimming the hedges, removing brush – neverending work – thank you, Joe. A new perennial garden was planted in the second of the two cold frames by volunteers **Betty** and **Bill Wardrop**. The garden was beautiful – and was a favored site during our Artists Day event. Thank you Betty and Bill! The herb garden was maintained again by the **Vernon Garden Club**, and eight native bushes were planted in the swale area by **Ginny Gingras**.

Work we need to do...

One building down, five to go! To give you a sense of the long to-do list, here are some of the immediate needs: The exterior walls of the five remaining outbuildings need scraping, priming and painting. The interior of the stable also needs scraping and painting. There is still one wall and some trim left to do on the farmhouse. The driveway to the rear apartment needs to be dug out and repaved. Currently small cars cannot access the driveway. On the interior of the farmhouse, the cellar needs to be cleaned and remaining debris removed and railings for the cellar stairs needs to be installed. Four windows need to be replaced in the rear apartment, and an electrical outlet for a dryer will be installed. In the area around the stable a large tree needs to be removed and the steep driveway to the stable needs shoring.

New Tenants...

In late spring we were saddened to learn that both of our tenants, Jane and Diane, would be moving. Diane has moved back to her Willimantic origins, and Jane has purchased a home in Tolland. We have found new tenants for the rear apartment, Jessica and Jen. They grew up in Vernon knowing the Valley Falls area and are thrilled to be living in the farmhouse. The front apartment is still vacant and we are seeking tenants who appreciate the area and are willing to take on some of the stewardship needs of the property.

Artists' Day at the Farm...A Fantastic Event!

We were very, very pleased by the success of our first-ever fundraising event of this scope. The artists were superb, the weather was perfect, and the day's activities ticked along like clockwork as planned. It surpassed our best expectations! About 150 folks came to stroll about the farm and visit with our 14 'plein air' artists as they painted vignettes of the farm landscape.

It was a yeoman effort by a great committee, and the results were well worth the effort. Thanks especially to Bill and Betty Wardrop for hours of gardening, and setting up the lighting for the display area; to Margaret Verdon and Mary Cross for taking care of the reception details (the fare was superb!), and making lunches for the artists; to Sally and Dennis Sullivan for making and placing the road signs, and arranging for the music; to Joe King for readying the lawns, and for taking on the role of auctioneer; to Gini King for ever-present help everywhere, and especially for her lemonade stand, a welcome stop to those making the steep climb from the parking lot; to Marilyn Steele, Ginny and Paul Gingras, Ann Letendre, and Diane Bernier for transforming the barn basement into a welcome reception area; to Sandy Yamarik for great PR, and for handling the Friends table, along with Rosemarie Gallichio and Lynn Yampanis; and to Bob Letendre, Joe Verdon, Dave Hermann for managing the parking shuttle.



Artist Doug Friday painting from the hill



Artist John MacKay paints a barn scene

And a word about our 'plein air' artists: what a wonderful, supportive group! We truly enjoyed working with them, and welcomed their many suggestions for a successful event. We were especially appreciative of their gift of time – a full day of painting while graciously welcoming visitors – and their generous donations of their auction sales.

Sally Balukas – Tolland
Jeff Blazejovsky – Vernon
Susan Bosworth – Bolton
Jane Burr – Vernon
Patricia Corbett – Wallingford
Douglas Friday – Enfield
Drew Gibson – Hebron

Linda Lascko - Vernon
John MacKay - Plantsville
Dee Romejko - Ellington
Betty Rousseau - Manchester
Sugar Sweet - Vernon
Rhea Sutter - Vernon
Ann Vaillencourt - Canterbury

If you would like to contact any of the artists, please call Ginny at 875-9865.

Lastly, we are grateful to these sponsors who contributed to the event:

Monet
Rockville Bank
Polly Cook
Sally & Dennis Sullivan

Van Gogh
Garden Barn
Ginny & Paul Gingras
Gini & Joe King
Ann & Bob Letendre

Renoir
Carroll & Ron Burke
Julie & Michael Burrey
Charlie's
Gail Faherty
Joyce Milliken

Monet \$100 Van Gogh \$50 Renoir \$25

UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Business Meeting and "An Afternoon at the Farm"

September 28, 2008
1:30 – 3:30 pm



Ira Kettle with beehive display

★ Hear presentations by Ira Kettle, Apiary Inspector for the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, and Dermot Jones, Beekeeper

★ Tour the farm buildings

Limited parking is available by the red barn; otherwise use the Valley Falls parking lot.

Mushroom Foray in Valley Falls Park

September 27, 2008 at 1:00 pm

**With all the rain, it's been a plentiful year for mushrooms. Come see what we can find!
Irene Gay will lead the walk; meet in the parking lot.**

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