



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. Newsletter

www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org

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SPRING 2024

Heritage Center Opens Saturday, June 8

We hope to see you as we celebrate our second season! The Friends of Valley Falls are excited to announce that the Farm and Heritage

Center opens for the season on Saturday, June 8, which is also CT Open House Day.

The grounds and buildings will be open from 1-4 pm and a special docent-led tour of the Heritage Center will be from 2-3 pm. Self-guided tours of the buildings can be taken throughout the afternoon and John Maston will be at the stable to talk about the rewards of beekeeping. Valley Falls Farm has a long history of raising bees and harvesting honey in beehives on the property.

Those visiting on opening day will receive a free packet of seeds to plant (while supplies last). Visitors are also welcome to stroll the eight-acre property, bring a picnic,

and listen to the recently-restored vintage jukebox located in the stable. Please remember that the farm is located on a hillside, so wear sturdy footwear.



The weather was picture perfect during the last year's Heritage Center opening.

To help support the Heritage Center and its programs, Valley Falls T-shirts, notecards and posters will be for sale. Checks and cash only, please. Membership information will also be available.

Following opening day on June 8, the Heritage Center and Farm will be open **every Sunday**

thereafter from June 16 to September 8, 1 to 4 pm.

Admission is free; donations are always welcome. Address is **300 Valley Falls Road** with limited parking at the Red Barn Welcome Center and additional parking at Valley Falls Park. 📍

Thank You to Our New Volunteers!

We've been busy this winter contacting those of you who expressed interest in being a volunteer at the Heritage Center when you visited last summer. As a result, we have some great new volunteers who plan to serve as tour guides, greeters, and grounds assistants. But more help is needed! If you'd like to be a volunteer, we'd love to have you. No minimum number of hours needed, and our docent training class in May can help you become a Heritage Center expert!



Vernon resident Lynn Lusardi serves as Volunteer Coordinator for the Friends. Thank you, Lynn!

Interested in more details? Contact Volunteer Coordinator Lynn Lusardi by phone or email at (860) 930-2451 or llusardi9@gmail.com. 📍

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Some Words From the Board of Directors

WE'RE LOOKING AHEAD TO THE NEW SEASON!

We are so excited to be preparing for the coming season! The Valley Falls Heritage Center will open June 8, and our popular spring history and nature walks in Valley Falls Park will be held May 5 and May 19. (See page 4 for more details.)

For those who were not able to visit the Center last year, we look forward to seeing you! There are six buildings to explore, filled with items once used on Valley Falls Farm. For our repeat visitors, you're always welcome! We're adding new programs and special exhibits, and the beautiful grounds are perfect for a picnic lunch, reading a book, or just enjoying nature.

WE'RE STAYING IN TOUCH!

We've been working on keeping in touch with you, thanks to our Communications Committee. In the coming months, the **website** will have a new donor button and an updated look! It will keep you current on events and the archives will still have the same content and extensive history about the Valley Falls Farm and Valley Falls Park. Kevin Schmelter of KS Web Services will be doing the work.

Have you noticed expanded online presence of our **Facebook** page? Check it out at The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc., Vernon CT.

The online **e-newsletter** is published quarterly. If you don't receive it and would like to do so contact Janice Fournier at fournijs@gmail.com. And lastly, we continue to publish this newsletter twice a year for those of you that enjoy reading newsprint.

DONOR ALERT!

Do you make your annual donation to the Friends automatically through your retirement or so-called "wealth" fund? For a few of these contributions we are unable to obtain the name of the donor. We value your support! We'd like to be able to thank you and to recognize your contribution in the Annual Report. If you do donate through a fund and have not received a 'thank you' note from us, please contact Treasurer Bob Letendre at bobletendr@aol.com or 860-875-4623.

Lastly, we thank you for your support as we remain committed to preserving the history and natural beauty of Valley Falls Farm and its Heritage Center, and to sharing this unique property with you, our members, and with our local community.

The Board of Directors, Friends of Valley Falls 



Volunteer Spotlight – Northford Timber Framers

The Friends of Valley Falls is very grateful to the Northford Timber Framers for lending their skills and time to help preserve the Red Barn at Valley Falls Farm and Heritage Center.

After The Friends secured funding to evaluate the structural integrity of the barn, Cirrus Structural Engineering of Columbia found significant cracks in several beams and recommended temporary repairs so the roof could safely handle winter snows. A temporary fix would involve installing “come-alongs” from eave to eave at the base of each truss.

Coming to the rescue was Northford Timber Framers. Vernon Town Engineer Dave Smith, president of the volunteer group, coordinated a team that spent a chilly December day installing gears and cables to stabilize the structure.

As a result of these skilled volunteers, the barn survived another New England winter! And more good news - the Town Council recently approved \$25,000 to permanently repair the beams. The money was appropriated from the Town’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.

The Friends have an agreement with the Town, that allows use of the Red Barn as part of the Valley Falls Farm and Heritage Center. The FVF, a non-profit group, owns the white farmhouse and buildings across the street. The 1911 barn now serves as a welcome center and includes historic farm exhibits, a restroom and parking area. This collaboration is a great example of working together to preserve a historical treasure.




Dave Smith, also Vernon’s Town Engineer, joins other Northford Timber Framers to secure the barn roof. Dave is president of the volunteer group. To see more photos of the group working on the barn, visit the FVF Facebook page.

Who are the Northford Timber Framers?

Members teach timber framing to others, rehabilitate old structures and build new ones. Dave Smith, who has been with the group for 22 years, estimates the volunteers have donated over \$100,000 to local charities, including Organ Transplantation and Veteran and Service Member support

programs. The group recently applied for non-profit status to make it easier to receive donations for the local and regional charities they support.

A three-day Introduction class to timber framing will be held April 26-28. Those interested in the class or seeking info about the group can visit: www.northfordtimberframers.com. 


A Peek in the Stable: The Wooden Chairs



Vintage wood chairs originally donated by the Grange in 1995.

Those who have been to Valley Falls Farm and Heritage Center may have seen the beautiful wooden folding chairs we use for events. They originally came from the Vernon Grange and just recently, while

going through some family records, Nancy Strong came across a 1995 letter written by former FVF President Carol Burke to Geraldine Strong (Nancy’s mother and former Grange President). The letter thanks the Grange for the donated chairs, and outlines how the Friends should care for them.

It’s great to know that the Friends are continuing their mission of preserving history, and we thank the Grange for their generosity. These chairs will be in the stable when the Heritage Center opens for the season on June 8. 



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc.
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Calendar of Events - Join Us!

Three Spring Walks in Valley Falls Park - 300 Valley Falls Road, Vernon. Meet at the pavilion:

- *Sunday May 5, 8-10 am* - **BIRD WALK**: led by Denise Animani, a lecturer with UConn's Department of Allied Health Services and Director of the Diagnostic Genetic Sciences Program. Bring binoculars and bird ID apps, if you wish.
- *Sunday May 19, 10-11 am* - **WILDFLOWER WALK**: led by Dr. Carol Hatch, retired pediatric neurologist and experienced gardener; bring flower ID apps, if you wish.
- *Sunday May 19, 1 pm* - **HISTORY WALK: "ROCKS, RAILS & INDUSTRY"**: led by Don Sierakowski, long time educator and member of Vernon Historical Society and Vernon Historical Properties Commission.



Guide Denise Animani (far right) greets those arriving for last spring's bird walk.

Saturday, June 8, 1 - 4 pm - **VALLEY FALLS HERITAGE CENTER OPENING DAY**: (open every Sunday thereafter from June 16 to September 8, 1 to 4 pm.) Self-guided tours in six buildings; docent-led tours at 2 pm. Make your first stop at the Welcome Center in the Red Barn to sign-in and get your tour guide. Park at Valley Falls Park; limited parking available at the Red Barn parking area.

All events are free of charge. Cancellations due to weather will be posted one hour before start time on our Facebook page (The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc., Vernon CT). 