

THE FARM INSTITUTE

HERE'S A RECIPE FOR FUN: TAKE A GROUP OF CHILDREN, LET THEM LOOSE ON THE FARM INSTITUTE AT KATAMA FARM, and teach them to harvest chickens, milk dairy goats, plant seeds, even make pickles and pesto sauce.

The FARM (Food, Agriculture and Resource Management) in Edgartown on Martha's Vineyard is a place where an iPod or video game will not be missed, where children learn to appreciate the land and their own abilities as they tend crops and animals, and taste and sell their abundant produce to local restaurants and farmer's markets.

"We're really trying to connect children and our community to the farms that feed them," says executive director Matthew Goldfarb, who oversees FARM programs. "A vital piece is for children to understand what it takes to care for the land, care for animals, and how that comes back to them. So it's just building on that ethic and awareness."

One program, Read for Seeds, is designed to connect children to the land and to those people living on the island who go hungry. Kids conduct a book drive to raise money for potato seeds, then plant them. FARM educators give lessons in the schools on hunger and agriculture, and the students harvest the potatoes and bring them to the local food pantry.

"They learn that we do live in a beautiful place, but every day there is a population who is not sure where their food is coming from," Goldfarb says. "So they learn about production and the need to feed the community."

The FARM Institute was founded in 2000 by four people concerned that local youth agricultural programs were disband-



Matthew Goldfarb, with some of his young farmers, was previously a teacher and farm manager at the Quaker School in West Branch, Iowa.

ing, leaving little opportunity for children to participate in and appreciate the heritage of farming on the Vineyard, says Goldfarb. Three of the four—Sam Feldman, Glenn Hearn, and Mike Kidder—are members of the board of directors.

"They all had this shared awareness of a need in the community, and they were willing to respond and act and do something about it," says Goldfarb, who was a biology teacher and farm manager at the Quaker School in West Branch, Iowa, before coming to the island two years ago.

Two of the founders pledged the money to get the FARM Institute up and running for the first five years, covering 90 percent of the operating expenses. Today, those founders donate 15 percent of the annual operating costs, with proceeds from programs, events, and sales of farm produce covering 55 percent, and grants and other

fundraising covering the rest.

A staff of six full-time workers, 25 seasonal employees, and hundreds of volunteers keep the farm running year-round, whether it's harvesting turkeys for Thanksgiving (order early, Goldfarb advises), shearing sheep for yarn to sell, or caring for the flock of guinea hens.

As a way to grow the kind of work the FARM Institute does, Goldfarb helped found the Farm-Based Education Association, which offers support and advocacy for existing organizations and those trying to get started throughout the country.

"Part of our vision is to be a resource so all communities can find a way to have farm-based education in their own backyard," he says.

The FARM Institute:
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