

FALL NEWSLETTER

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OUR MISSION

To perpetuate the legacy of Helen and Scott Nearing. The Good Life Center, through its programming and preservation of the historic Forest Farm homestead, advocates for simple and sustainable living skills, social and economic justice, organic gardening and the non-exploitation of animals.

Greetings from the Good Life Center!

After a wonderful summer at Forest Farm we are pleased to present to you our Fall e-newsletter. Some highlights since our last issue include securing our first large grant, \$21,000 from the Quimby Foundation. Alex & Jeanie kept the house & gardens looking their best while hosting over 1,000 visitors this season. A new solar array has been donated and is being installed, which will provide the farm with nearly 100% of its power needs. And we have launched a new website, which provides more content, including videos from our speaker series, and better ease of use!

From all of us at the GLC, we wish you happy holidays!

Josh Saltmarsh, Editor & Board Chair

Finding the Good Life

by Sam Adels

Modern times feel dizzyingly complex right now. I struggle to remember to breath through the torrent of endless news cycles, shiny screens, and screaming heads vying for our non-stop attention.

Before I discovered the teachings of Helen and Scott Nearing, the rigors of my young, urban existence were leading me towards a breaking point. Luckily, my partner Claire and I found the Good Life Center, packed our bags, and left the monotonous hum in our rear-view mirror. The Good Life center provided the life-sabbatical we were looking for. Helen and Scott Nearing broke from the status quo in favor of a permanent life-sabbatical. Along they way they showed thousands upon thousands the joys and possibilities of living simply. By caring more and wasting less, they exemplified a way to grow, physically and spiritually, which serves as a call to any modern ramblers searching for a better path.

Claire and I spent six months in 2015 living the good life as the resident stewards at Forest Farm, learning from Helen and Scott, and keeping their message alive. Ever since we have heeded their call to live deliberately and connect with the Earth, while minimizing cruelty and harm to the environment.

Tending Helen and Scott's garden connected us to the soil and taught us how to find physical and emotional nourishment from growing food. Learning their tricks took our own organic gardening to the next level and inspired me to teach others. I found a wonderful job

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in the Hudson Valley as a garden educator in elementary schools, teaching students how to grow food in their school gardens. Through this work I directly connect students to the land, and show them that they can have a personal relationship to nature and to the food they eat. I find gratification in nurturing students in this way and I feel the presence of Helen and Scott in my work.



We feel inextricably connected to life on Earth, and cannot justify exploiting animals for food. We came to the Good Life Center as vegetarians, but we have since taken up a vegan diet. How and what to eat is an extremely personal choice. We follow Helen and Scott's lead in believing that the future of the world is vegetarian. With so many cruelty-free food alternatives available, we cannot in good conscience participate in an industry that treats animals as commodities and violently subjugates and kills them, at great expense to the environment. A plant-based diet has us feeling healthier than ever before.

Our time as stewards of the Good Life Center, in Harborside, Maine forever changed us, and propelled us on our path. We are forever grateful to Helen and Scott and all those who keep their memory and philosophy present. May Helen and Scott continue to lift us all for generations to come.

The Nearings Lasting Influence

by Martin Spahn

Any cross cultural experience is an encounter with "the other" and the experience of a Peace Corps volunteer in a small West African village is this experience to a maximum degree.

When Pam and I returned to the U.S., I began to read the political and social criticism of Nobel Laureate, Noam Chomsky, while seeking to reintegrate into American society and to fulfill the 3rd Goal of Peace Corps; "To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans." Pam was especially impressed with the familial and village intimacy as well as the nearness of this way of life to a Henry David Thoreau kind of ideal. I found the freedom and spiritual simplicity profoundly powerful and empowering.

Enter the Nearings with *Living the Good Life, How to Live Sanely and Simply in a Troubled World*. We read it; it had been given to us by other RPCVs and we said to ourselves, this is it. We can do this. Little did we know that our lives were yet to become even more closely linked. Pam finished her Masters in Forest Hydrology at Oregon State, and we needed a next step. She is fiercely and proudly a daughter of New England, yet we had no means of returning without a job. Then, one day, while reading the classifieds in "High Country News," we saw an add for the position of resident steward at Forest Farm, which was then in the hands of the Trust for Public Land.

Our year in Harborside was all we hoped it would be and more. We sold \$10,000 worth of Nearing books, gave tours to 2,000 visitors, grew most of our own food on a 50ft. X 50ft. plot, became part of the sauna community, joined the GLC family, and welcomed the birth of our first child, George.

Pam and I went on to found and run St. Martin de Tours Organic CSA farm in Palermo, Maine. We returned to the land like Helen and Scott, and so many others they influenced. Yes, Helen and Scott have been influential in our life. Long may they continue to influence our world, showing us a good life as well as how to live sanely and simply in a troubled world.

Martin L. Spahn is a cashier for Hannaford and lives in Hallowell, Maine. He and Pamela J. Lombard were the second Resident Stewards at Forest Farm, 1997-1998. He is currently seeking to be ordained a deacon in the Roman Catholic Church and can be reached at martin.spahn@maine.edu.

Grid Tied Solar at Forest Farm

by **David Zachow**

In a few weeks Forest Farm will be generating even more clean renewable energy thanks to the donation of a used 3KW PV (photovoltaic) system. This additional PV equipment is being installed thanks to the generosity of Elizabeth Hill & Joe Hall, a family from Brooksville ME, and Revision Energy, who will install the system at no cost. When the new system goes on line in late December, Forest Farm will have quadrupled its renewable energy generation and be close to having a net zero energy footprint.

How it works:

Both of the PV systems supplying energy to the farm are grid tied. A grid tied PV system does not require batteries, and is exceptionally simple in design and operation.

When the sun shines on the solar modules, DC (direct current) electricity is generated. This DC electricity is then turned into AC (alternating current) electricity by an Inverter. The AC electricity produced is then used for any electrical loads on the farm.



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The Inverter is also the interconnection point with the utility power grid and seamlessly sends excess electrical energy back into the utility grid. When Forest Farm produces more electricity than it needs, the utility “credits” FF for its excess production. At night or on overcast days, Forest Farm can use its energy “credits” for any electrical loads.

Here are a few interesting facts about PV modules and grid tied systems:

- PV modules have no moving parts to wear out or break. The only things moving in a PV module are electrons when the sun shines.
- PV modules are tested to withstand the impact of 1” hailstones without breaking or being damaged.
- A PV module has a lifespan of more 25 years. Many PV modules in systems over 30 years old are still generating electricity.
- It takes less than a year for a PV module to generate the electricity equal to all the energy required to manufacture it. That means the next 25 to 50 years of electrical generation are all clean, green, non polluting electricity!

Scott would have loved it! And so do the visitors and resident stewards at Forest Farm. We'll give updates and more pictures about the PV system in future newsletters. Stay tuned.

A Homesteaders Journey

by Molly Mercer

It's the little moments that guided me to my homesteading journey, and it's the same type of little connective moments that keep me here. My first memory of homesteading is with my little dolls. The tiny moss-covered caves inside the rock wall marking the property's edge is where they wanted to live—barefoot and with leaves for their handmade clothing, with the sunlit glint on the moss nearby beckoning a child to rest.

Often, too, my parents would walk with me outside, naming all the things. My grandmother took me on long wildflower walks, and here I gathered names and ideas and memories. My Dad kept a few animals and tinkered a little with ideas about how to hack the system, bartering hay with neighbors in exchange for their help in haying the field, learning to harvest wood with the workhorse, dreaming about building a windmill. He got mad when, shortly after my first child was born, I made plans to build my little forest cabin on a remote, landlocked parcel in western Maine. He had it in his mind that I might go to lawyering, and besides, the Nearings, who were an influence on me at the time, weren't a good example to follow. They had a nest egg to start with after all and so it would be harder for other young people to follow that lead, he reasoned. He wouldn't let it go and even after more than 20

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years of mostly modern homesteading under my belt, he still can get worked up over it. But he did understand following your heart, and what can a parent want for a child but that, really, so he got on board eventually.

It brings a smile to me, knowing how ironic it is that, in so many ways, he guided me here, every bit as much as the Nearings and my childhood dolls! What brings us to homesteading truly, is an insatiable urging to live a more authentic and connected life, and what brings us to that urging are connective experiences; experiences that break us open with wonder and joy, love, and heartache.

[To continue reading the full story of Molly's homesteading journey, please visit our website!](#)

Stewarding the Good Life

by Jeanie Kirk

This is an amended version of article that originally appeared in the [Bangor Daily News Homestead Section](#) on 9/15/17.

Although both Helen and Scott have been gone for many years, one of the things that this year's resident stewards, Jeanie Kirk and Alex Page, noticed almost immediately when they landed in Harborside in June was that the Nearings' spirit and philosophy remain palpable in Forest Farm. Their home is still a place where people come to pay their respects, to learn more about simple, sustainable living skills and to immerse themselves in the peace of the homestead that has become a pilgrimage spot for seekers who have found or who are still looking for their own version of the good life.

But while the visitors are there, they may find that their bodies are fed along with their spirits. Jeanie and Alex were happy to keep up the Nearing's tradition of nourishment. Most tours wound through the Nearings' walled garden and the land around it, where the couple enthusiastically offered samples of crisp green beans, sweet and tart husk cherries and early golden apples to visitors.

Jeanie specifically loved the chance to do such a deep dive on the Nearings. She said, "I love how this garden for them was the physical manifestation of their ethos."

For Jeanie and Alex, both 33, finding their way to Forest Farm happened more because of serendipity than strategy. In fact, they had never heard of the Nearings before last September, when they came to visit a friend who lives in Blue Hill. They had just gotten married, and were taking a short honeymoon in Maine before returning to their regularly scheduled lives in Portland, Oregon, where Jeanie worked as a grant writer and Alex as a transit planner for a non-profit organization. They had planned a day at the beach, but it was raining, and their friend told them about Forest Farm.

It was a special experience, they said. It was Common Ground Fair weekend, and no other visitors were there. They wandered through the homestead that Helen and Scott Nearing

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had built overlooking Spirit Cove and Penobscot Bay. Jeanie snapped a photo of a poem that Helen had written in 1992, just a few years before her death at age 91.

“Though all is constantly changing, nothing is lost in the universe,” she wrote in the poem. “Everyone who feels I love adds to the heavenly glow. The love that has been felt all through the ages, everywhere, all through time ... what a shining! Love once felt has its place. Love is the source, love the goal, and love the method of attainment.”



Something in the words and in the feeling of the place stayed with the couple, and after they returned to Oregon, she held on to that. In January, Jeanie learned that the Good Life Center was looking for seasonal residents and it didn't take much mulling it over before deciding to send in an application email.

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"I know a good thing when I see it," Warren Berkowitz said. Warren is the farm manager and a board member of the Good Life Center, who also was a longtime friend of the Nearings. "We're looking for people who are generous in terms of their spirit."

And he figured he had found that in Jeanie and Alex. The couple was interested in learning more about organic gardening, in doing more homesteading, and in learning more about the Nearings. And they were willing to welcome the visitors, usually 1,000 in a season, who come to Forest Farm. At home in Portland, they live in a rented house fairly close to the urban heart of the city, but like many people there they dabbled in growing their own food.



They have chickens, fruit trees and a garden plot, but were eager to come to Maine to figure out how they could push their own gardening envelope. Still, there were some sacrifices involved. Alex had to decide if he was willing to quit his job to come to Forest Farm, which would pay a lot but not in dollars.

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"We asked different people we trust, and across the board, people said it sounds like you can't turn it down," Jeanie said, who was able to work remotely from Maine for her job.

For Alex, it was both a difficult and a financially scary decision to quit his job. "It was like you are doing something absolutely crazy," he said. "I said to Jeanie, maybe because it's crazy, that's why we should do it."

They packed up their Subaru and drove across the country to start working at the farm in June. Here, living in the place that was built by the Nearings, making pickles on their old cookstove, having access to their library and tending the garden that Helen and Scott Nearing began, Jeanie and Alex comfortably settled into their roles. They could routinely be found down at the cove fetching seaweed to enrich the compost piles, swimming in the chilly water there, planting and weeding, harvesting and cooking, and, always, listening to the stories their visitors told about the Nearings.

"People are coming to pay homage," Alex said. "It's been really interesting to me to dig into the visitor's knowledge about the Nearings. That's been really beautiful," said Jeanie.

When they go home to Oregon in October, Jeanie and Alex are taking a lot of Maine with them. For one thing, they now know more organic gardening techniques and feel more confident about their own skills. They may turn dreams of having a greenhouse of their own into a reality. But that's not all, they said.

"I think Helen and Scott espoused a lot of the good life principles that we've been trying to work into our lives," Jeanie said. "We have new role models, in a way. We are anxious to begin to apply our learning here to our own life."

Alex said that one of his Forest Farm takeaways will be the image of Scott Nearing planting apple trees into his 90s. Those trees weren't planted just for personal benefit and enrichment.

"It's about giving back," the steward said.

Thank you to Bob Jones

from the Board of Directors

A big thank you to Bob Jones, long time volunteer, board member, and board chair. Bob decided to step off the board this fall in order to shift his time to other interests in his life after many years of service helping the GLC both in public and behind the scenes.

From all of us on the board, and the GLC community, thank you for your service!

Make a Contribution

The Board of the GLC would like to thank the many people who have contributed to the GLC this past year. Your donations and in kind contributions help us to continue the important work of inspiring people from all over the world to 'live a good life' and to 'live simply and sanely in our troubled world,' as Helen and Scott inspired us to do for so many years.

Thank you for your generous donations that allow us to provide educational programming and to maintain the buildings and grounds at Forest Farm. We are looking into the future and hope to improve the public access to the Nearing library and to continue to digitize video and audio recordings of the Nearings for future generations. We need your financial help as we plan to expand our educational outreach to local public schools and colleges. We hope you will continue to support the GLC in the future!

Many people contributed in a variety of ways to assist the GLC in its mission to maintain and preserve the historic grounds and buildings of Forest Farm. Tony of Penobscot cut down trees that were a threat to damage the greenhouse. Jack from Blue Hill helped to secure the roof vent from the composting toilet. Nicole from Blue Hill volunteered in the garden as part of the Maine Master Gardener Program. Phil from Blue Hill led the apple pruning workshop. Elizabeth and Joe from Brooksville donated the solar panels. Four workers from Revision Energy Company volunteered their time to install ten solar panels. Caleb from Vermont fixed the screen door and helped Board members David Zachow and Warren Berkowitz build the base for the solar array. Speakers traveled from all over the state to Forest Farm to give interesting and provocative talks on Monday nights.

These are just some of the ways people can volunteer their time and assist the GLC to achieve its mission. We welcome you to consider ways that you can use your many talents and skills to advance the mission and activities of the GLC. Let us know if you would like to be a volunteer.

[CLICK HERE TO MAKE A DONATION](#)

Financial contributions help to keep Forest Farm open to the public, keep Nearing publications in print, help fund our homestead restoration projects and support outreach programs like our Monday Night Lecture Series.

The Good Life Center is a non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible.

Thank you for your support!