



Member's Bi-annual Newsletter

05/17/2018

Please be informed that if you are receiving this newsletter, you have signed-up or have been included as a member because of your or your organization's support and/or interest of/in the Ayers Foundation (AYERS).

Greetings from Haversham, as we are still in the midst of spring that has not really sprung, except for the drops that continue to come!

This year has emerged to be another year full of challenges that in the context of growing began with a persistent strain of powdery mildew that requires daily attention to manage and contain. On the economic front, there are state variables like the purchasing power of the dollar and budgetary constraints that are impacting the rate and implementation of planned developments – more on that below; however, thanks to some of our benefactors, we continue to forge-on and bring our mission to bear on communities around the state, Eastern CT, and even in the Capital itself....

As I write, the Hillendale Food Hub – a project of the Ayers Foundation – is up to 12 partner farms. Some of these farms are not fully active and conduct business with the Hub intermittently when they have surplus or simply need to move a specialty product. I should also mention that we are now registered with the State of RI as DBA “The Farmers’ Community Food Hub”. This new name was conceived by the BOD and is more inclusive with a new slogan, “Local Farms Growing Healthy Communities” that nicely captures the many benefits our social enterprise imparts on the food economy and educational community.

As 2018 ramps-up, the Ayers Foundation continues to evolve and find new ways and means to carry-out its mission. We are always looking for people and organizations who/that share our passion for real food system change and resetting the clock of food ecology. Working with folks to help mainstream Americans better understand the origin of food by first understanding how our ancestors produced, gathered, prepared, and consumed it is a priority; body movement being not mutually exclusive. Helping others grasp the health implications of eating from a shorter and more intimate supply chain is

essential if we are to successfully distinguish food by its origin instead of the brand, the calories it contains, price, or any other market driven force.

The Ayers Foundation continues to seek and sustain relationships that enhance the operating mission of its partners and incubate/facilitate the establishment of likeminded or synergistic organizations. As usual, all of our projects and programs foster community wellness, particularly in the context of food sovereignty, holistic nutrition, and environmental literacy.

Some news worth highlighting follows:

- Ayers is still looking to build its membership through its newly developed tiered membership program (<http://www.ayers-foundation.org/membership/>) that is now posted on website
- Fundraiser (Paint Nite at the Lucky House on Route 3 in Ashaway, RI) happening on June 10th (see <https://www.facebook.com/events/241457299926255/>) - come try your hand with colors and crafts and support a good cause!
- In our third year of collaboration with Feed the Streets USA, Ayers and the Hub (partner farms) handle the logistics and grow the food that helps feed thousands of food insecure people per year. This community engagement and “call-to-action” is designed to relieve hunger while inspiring both the providers and receivers to play their part in transforming our food system and lives – ***the experiences we have and our perception of them can be empowering.***
- Collaborations with the Westerly-based Transition Academy and Wakefield-based Bradley School afford opportunities to support students on the autistic spectrum.
 - Students come to farm 1-2 times per week and spend 1-2 hours performing various farm chores.
 - Students learn how to care for chickens, care for plants, process fuelwood, along with the development and refinement of other life skills.
 - This weekly schedule for developmentally challenged students provides a multi-sensory, therapeutic approach toward integrating them into the workforce.
- New Collaboration with the Goff School:
 - Marked the first opportunity of working with inner city kids
 - Helped Science teacher with technical assistance in the construction of their first school gardens

- Gave presentation to 125 middle school students on contrasting industrial food and agriculture to small scale, distributed food and ag.
 - Conducted transplanting workshop with 125 students to help prepare plants for further transplanting into newly built gardens
- Farmers' Community Food Hub (a project of the Ayers Foundation) now boasts twelve partner farms. Newest producers include the Ever Breeze Farm with their rabbits and other products in the pipeline, Arcadian Fields, and Emmert's Aquaponics.
 - Aquaponics is an increasingly popular growing system that combines the raising of fish with the growing of crops in a symbiotic manner.
 - This kind of system is suitable to rural and urban environments and can be a prolific producer of food per square foot – a useful metric in determining efficiency.
- Food Hub on track to achieving yet a new record of aggregating and bringing to market 80,000 lb. of fresh, mostly organic food in 2018 – the positive impact on our partner farms is palpable and helping to fuel expansion & growth.
- BOD continues to evolve a 3–year Strategic Plan and will provide a summary when complete. This plan will steer our public charity in a direction that helps cement its role in RI, CT and the communities it serves.
- Historical foundation at Hillandale Farm is fully restored and will be the site of the Hobart B. Ayers Meeting House, which will provide cold & dry storage, processing & farm retail space, a memorial of Hobart's life work as a dairyman and mechanical engineer, as well as some history on agriculture in the greater Westerly area.
 - Deposit on timber frame has been made
 - Funding for the construction of Meeting House itself has been stalled
 - Funding for landscaping and outdoor pizza/bread oven area has been largely secured –work to begin in the fall.
- Existing collaborations (please see <http://www.ayers-foundation.org/participants/>) continue to evolve and even expand benefitting the participants and the communities they serve.
- Second sustainable forestry Intensive conducted in December, 2017 at The Greene School on school forestlands with Environmental Science Teacher and students.

- In the interest of your health, we continue to work with one of our partner farms to promote their product as well as their excellence, transparency, and integrity in farming grass and raising beef cattle.
 - The principles have been working diligently to expose the unethical, inhumane practices within the domestic livestock industry, ones that can and have profoundly affected the health of animals, land, and people.
 - One NYT story by Dan Hakim already published and more to follow, including Op Editorials – potentially very disruptive, fomenting positive change

Representing our Board of Directors and the entire staff, I want to thank you for your support in helping AYERS move our cause and agenda forward. It is through like minds and an esprit de corps that great things happen!

With highest regards,

Maxson B. Hence
President
AYERSfoundation
www.ayers-foundation.org