

Message from the President

"To everything there is a season," says Ecclesiastes. Life is full of change, and it is up to us to welcome this dynamic.

In retrospect, 2016 was by far our most challenging year; winter freeze with minus 15 degrees, a rainy bloom, draught, a well that went dry, staffing challenges, and pest pressures. Despite the many obstacles, our experience and resilience enables us to manage through each situation.

In the 16 years we have been operating Sholan Farms, my understanding of farm operation has grown exponentially. I am talking more with friends about the value of knowing where your food comes from and supporting small, local farms. I was raised on a farm and always realized that farming was labor intensive, but there is a big difference between a theoretical understanding and a practical one.

I am proud of the work that we have done to bring people to Sholan Farms and to enhance the natural beauty of the land. Many thanks to Friends members and volunteers, fellow board members, and all who have made so many contributions. The board (present and past) has honored its mission to preserve, promote, and protect the farm. I am very respectful of the hard work and dedication of this group. We continued to make progress, which will position the farm for success in years to come.

To the numerous volunteers, many of whom we see each time we call, a heartfelt thank you. To the City of Leominster, thank you for enabling us to be the partner organization to make a difference at Sholan Farms. Finally, to the community, we ask for your continued involvement, including membership and support of Sholan Farms, to keep it a viable asset. We will continue to advocate for its maintenance, protection, and preservation. We look to everyone to work toward the goal of keeping Sholan Farms the treasure it is. May your investment of time and talent be an equal partner to your enjoyment of Sholan Farms.

I often run into people who ask what they can do to help Sholan Farms to remain the natural treasure of our city. The best answer I can give is to get involved. We need volunteers to plan, help with festivals, fundraise, maintain trails, prune trees, help with planting, trim weeds, general maintenance, and maintain the Memory Garden. We will do our best to keep you informed of the many opportunities. If you see something that needs fixing or cleaning up on the farm and you are willing to help do it, please send us a note and let us know. We can send out a request for additional volunteers to assist you in getting the job done.

The Friends of Sholan Farms seeks passionate, energetic individuals who are interested in putting their leadership skills into action. Join our dynamic and effective Board of Directors in providing strategic direction, governance, fiduciary oversight, and ensuring resources for the organization. To qualify as a board member, you must be a member in good standing of the Friends of Sholan Farms and have volunteered in a leadership position over the past two years.

The Friends of Shoaln Farms is a volunteer organization that assists with programs, maintenance, farming, and preservation of Sholan Farms. The farm is owned by the City of Leominster and is protected under an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) and Conservation Restriction (CR). As a city owned property, Sholan Farms belongs to us all. We encourage you to visit the farm and enjoy the beauty and tranquility that is Sholan Farms.

—Joanne DiNardo, President

Board of Directors

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Special thanks to the Friends' Board of Directors who volunteer their time throughout the year to make Sholan Farms succeed. A sincere thanks goes to family members who have also given of their time and support the board members which enabled them to make such a commitment to Sholan Farms.

Thank You All

Sholan Farms Community Gardens

Calling all gardeners—This year, Sholan Farms will be hosting a multi-plot community garden that will be open to community members. The plots will be awarded on a first come basis. The community garden is being planned, coordinated, developed, and managed by The Friends of Sholan Farms. For more information about Sholan Farms Community Gardens contact:

Joe LeBlanc at 978-534-8471, daljoe@verizon.net or
communitygardens@sholanfarms.com or Sholan Farms 978-840-3276

Planting is planned for May 27 & 28—weather and soil conditions permitting. Registration will be announced at a later date.

Christmas Trees

As many of you know, Bart's Farm started selling Christmas trees at Sholan Farms three years ago. The plan was for them to establish the business then turn it over to the Friends of Sholan Farms. Mike Meehan worked with Frank and Beverly Bartolomeo during the 2015 Christmas season to understand the workings of the business.

This past year was the first year we would be responsible for the Christmas tree sales. After Labor Day we started talking to the tree suppliers, making the transition from Bart's Farm to Friends of Sholan Farms. Working with Frank and Beverly, we planned out the logistics for the start of the season. After speaking with Frank, and reviewing the previous year's sales, we decided to purchase 500 trees (a mix of Frasier and Balsam Fir). We ordered trees with varying heights of between 4 and 12 feet.

By early November, Frank delivered all of the equipment we would need: tree shaker, balers, lights, decorations, tree drill, hand saws and a chain saw.

We also made renovations to the farm stand to provide extra warmth and cut down the wind blowing through the building. The north wall of the farm stand was insulated and new barn siding was installed to hide the insulation and cover the gaps in the attic. Leominster Center for Technical Education Electrical students installed a new heater and repaired any light poles that needed attention.

Just before Thanksgiving the building was decorated, lights and a Christmas tree were added to the gazebo and a photo spot was set up by the yellow storage building.

The trees were delivered just before Thanksgiving and we started selling them the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Sales continued until we closed on December 18th.

Overall, we are very pleased with how this first year went. We were able to sell 97% of the trees we ordered. We were able to continue selling apples well past the end of October due to tree customers coming to the farm stand. It was surprising to learn that many of the people we sold trees to had never come to the farm for apple picking. Hopefully, we will gain some new apple season customers due to this new venture of selling Christmas trees!

—Steve Smith, Vice President

Sholan Farms

Winter Thoughts from Mike

I love winter time on the farm. Nice and cold, crisp, and quiet. It is a welcome change of pace from the hustle and bustle of the rest of the year. Can you believe last year? What a hullabaloo!! Frost, drought, light crops (or non-existent like the peaches!!), new business, on and on. But, we made it! Stronger than ever! Many, many thanks to all who helped us through the craziness!

Speaking of new business, thanks a million to all those who helped out with the Christmas Tree Shop. After a long vegetable and apple harvest, I know volunteering more of your time was not really tops on your list (especially on a cold November/December day!!), but you came through when we needed it, and I can't thank you enough.

Anyway, we are pruning the orchard at this time, if anyone wants to come out and break a sweat with us, or just drop by to say hi! The orchard is a beautiful place for a hike. Come on up!

I am very much looking forward to the coming year, and will be spending some time over the next couple of months planning it out. New crops, new markets, new strategies, it's all in the works! If you want to be part of it, give me a call any time. Thanks everyone, see you at the farm!

—Mike Meehan, Farm Manager

Apple Blossom Festival

It seems like we just finished our work for 2016 and already it's time to start thinking about the first event of 2017. Last years festival was a huge success. We made a lot of changes and there were a few lessons learned. We try to bring in more attractions, entertainment, and improvements each year. We added a 50/50 raffle, a children's obstacle course from Fanelli Amusements that the kids really enjoyed. Our craft show was the largest ever with over 50 participants. We had great entertainment all day long. Some things worked, some not so much! We all learn from our mistakes though!

Planning has already begun and I've started contacting team leaders from last year. I'm so happy that everyone is willing to come back to help. This is a huge undertaking and it would not come together without all of you. If anyone has any fresh ideas please let me know. We want to continue to plan an event that draws a crowd and keeps people coming back to Sholan Farms. Our first planning meeting is Wednesday, February 1, 2017, at 1 pm at Leominster Public Library. You are all welcome to attend. If you can't make the meeting please give me a call (978-514-4473) with your ideas.

In Remembrance

Former board member and founding member Gil Tremblay recently passed away. Gil will be deeply missed at Sholan Farms. He was a valued volunteer and we echo the community's sentiments of this loss. For the past 16 years Gil volunteered to help make Sholan Farms the treasure it is today. He and Carol became founding charter members in 2001. He served on the board from 2003 to 2005. He helped clean out the old barn, offered advise on the business plan, helped with fundraising and festivals, and kept his red pen ready for all publications and offered steady encouragement. We are grateful for his time and service. He will be missed.





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About Our Organization

The Friends of Sholan Farms is a non-profit corporation that relies solely on the support of its members, sponsors and volunteers. We are formed under the 501(c)3 statutes and all donations are a tax write-off. Founded in 2001.

Calendar Notes

- February** Wednesday, February 1, 1 pm , Leominster Public Library, ABF planning meeting
- March** Wednesday, March 8, 5 pm, Leominster Veterans Center, ABF planning meeting, followed by FOSF Winter meeting (refreshments will be served)
- April** Wednesday, April 5, 1 pm, Leominster Public Library, ABF planning meeting
- May** Wednesday, May 3, 1 pm, Leominster Public Library, ABF Planning Meeting,
Saturday, May 20, Apple Blossom Festival
- June** June 21, Monoosnock Country Club Friends Annual Meeting
- July** U-Pick Raspberries and Blueberries

