

Winter Greetings

Happy New Year to all our members, volunteers, and staff. First, we want to say thanks! Thank you for supporting Sholan Farms. Thanks for the positive feedback on our newsletters, apples, Christmas light show and reaching out to us when you have questions about our operations. Thanks for your shared commitment in making our community a beautiful place to live.

While the apple trees and other crops are dormant, the farm is still a busy place. I am often asked what we do during the winter. There is lots to do to get ready for the upcoming season: pruning, crop planning, budgeting, seed orders, machinery maintenance, and Apple Blossom Festival planning.

Exciting news—we are heading into our 20th year in operation. The first apple crop was harvested in the fall of 2001. In the year ahead we will be assessing our business model and fine tuning our operations to meet the growing needs of our growing community. If you have never had the time to volunteer, hopefully that will change this year. We need your help and ideas to better meet the needs of our many customers.

The business model we are using is agritourism. Simply stated, agritourism could be thought of as the crossroads of tourism and agriculture. It is further defined as a form of business that links agricultural production and/or processing with tourism in order to attract visitors onto a farm or other agricultural business for the purposes of entertaining and/or educating the visitors and generating income for the farm or business.

I believe you will agree that we have a unique farm location that, if done right, will set us ahead of other similar farms. We offer stupendous views, terrific walking and hiking trails, and recreational opportunities. We need help to develop and expand activities that will bring families and people of all ages to spend more time at Sholan Farms.

The possibilities are endless at Sholan Farms. Imagine if we had a heated farm stand, running water, and real restrooms. We need board members and committee members for various core programs; membership, tours, festival planning, trails & recreation—just to name a few. We need grant writing and fundraising committees to help enable us to continue to make improvements.

We wish you and your families a fantastic and healthy new year. We hope you will continue to support Sholan Farms in the year ahead. To find out how you can help please feel free to contact any board member. We welcome any and all suggestions.

— Joanne DiNardo, President BOD

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 their 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.

Orchard Manager—Sam Holmes

Hello All!

What a strange winter it has been so far. It feels like we have gone through all four seasons in the span of two months. Nonetheless, farmers always need to adapt and that's what we do at Sholan.

After things are nearly buttoned up following the festive season of Christmas tree sales, the focus turns to pruning. The task of pruning the thousands of apple and peach trees on the farm always looms heavily as the year turns. But, tree by tree, we get the job done.

This year, the pruning load will be lightened a bit as we removed a block of old McIntosh trees in the Southwest corner of the property. The blocks repurposing brings excitement to us as we start the planning process of what will take its place.

I will be pruning, pulling bush, and subsequently pushing brush until about mid-March when the focus will turn to preparing for the 2020 planting season. Seeds are being carefully chosen and ordered now, ready to sow as soon as the last threat of frost has passed..

There is plenty to be done between now and the first crop harvest of the year, but rest assured we will be ready as soon as that moment arrives. It doesn't seem like it looking out the window now, but it won't be long before folks of Leominster and beyond have fresh Sholan apples on the counter!

Best Regards,
Sam Holmes
Orchard Manager

Christmas Tree Update

The fourth year of Christmas Tree sales was successful overall considering a few obstacles we encountered.

Our supplier for Frasier Fir trees sold their business but did not give the new owner our contact information. We attempted to find a new supplier in Canada and the US. After talking to 24 different suppliers we decided not to order any Frasier Firs for this year. If we did find one that had trees for sale, they wanted anywhere from 20 to 50 percent more than we paid last year.

Wreath sales were very good. We sold more decorated wreaths than we have in the past. We also added decorated swags this year and sold all of them.

Christmas tree sales were somewhat disappointing, we only sold 87 percent of the trees we ordered. Sales started off very good but slowed after the first couple of weeks. The weather did not cooperate, we had to close for snow, rain and extreme cold.

Overall, we are pleased with the results for this year. We were able to make a profit and continue to bring in new customers to the farm..

—Steve Smith, Vice President BOD

“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”

—Anonymous

“A cultivated mind finds inexhaustible interest in all that surrounds it.”

—Mill

19th Apple Blossom Festival, May 16, 2020

Seems like we just had an Apple Blossom Festival and here we are beginning to plan the next one. I am pleased to announce that the very first festival chair, Jane Nowankunski is back to co-chair with me this year. She has a lot of great ideas and is anxious to begin planning.

I'm also happy to announce that all of our team leaders are back to help out this year. It seems like just when we have it all figured out things change again. People move away, vendors go out of business or organizations that once helped are no longer able to. I guess that is what keeps it interesting!

So as we start getting ready for this year we will face challenges again. I have scheduled four planning meetings for the working teams. The first will be at the GazBar Grill on Central Street in Leominster on Wednesday, February 12 at 4pm. If anyone is interested in actively participating in planning, is a team leader, or is interested in working on Silent Auction Baskets please join us. The other three meetings are listed on the back of this newsletter.

We are already off to a good start. I've heard from several food truck vendors who want to come back this year. Most of the entertainment is already planned and some new interest in helping us from students at St. Bernard's Central Catholic High School. We are always happy to get the younger generations involved.

I am looking forward to meeting with all of you and planning this year's festival.

-Patti LaGrassa, Festival Chair



Christmas Light Show

Displaying Christmas Lights at Sholan Farms was something I've wanted to do for a few years. I wanted to find some way to give back a little to the community for their support of the farm.

About four years ago I saw a musical light show while in Florida at Christmas time. I started looking into what it took to create a light display like the one I saw.

At the end of 2018 I started to get serious about creating a show. I decided I wanted to use the bandstand as a focal point.

I figured out what elements I wanted: lights on the roof, arches, lights around the openings, and mini trees. I found the sequenced songs to use and adapted them to the elements that I had chosen.

All the items I needed finally came in the first of July. Now the fun began. We built arches, the ten foot mega tree, 10 mini trees and light displays for the roof and openings on the bandstand. We wired everything up in our back yard to see how it would work and tested it for a couple of months.

Finally, just before Thanksgiving my son and I installed everything and fired it all up for real. My family and I were surprised by how many people enjoyed the show.

We had a couple of bumps along the way. The wind blew the mega tree over and a couple of things stopped working but we were able to quickly fix those problems. The biggest problem was the snow. I planned on 6 inches of snow on the ground, but we ended up with 20 plus inches right after Thanksgiving. Good thing the Sholan wind blew most of it away.

I want to say thank you to my family for their help and support and the Friends of Sholan Farms Board of Directors for allowing me to put the display at the farm.

—Steve Smith, Vice President BOD



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Sholan Farms®

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This newsletter was compiled and
edited by Patti LaGrassa

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

February 12, ABF Panning Meeting
GAZBAR Grill 4pm

March

March 11, ABF Planning Meeting &
Friends of Sholan Farms Winter Meeting
Leominster Veterans Center 5pm
refreshments will be served

April

April 8, ABF Planning Meeting, Leominster
Public Library, 1st floor small meeting
room 4 pm

May

May 13, ABF Planning Meeting, Leominster
Public Library, 1st floor small meeting
room, 4pm

May 16, Apple Blossom Festival 10-4

June

June 17, Annual Dinner, Leominster Elks
6pm

Sholan Farms Staff

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