

News  
letter  
Fall  
2011



# Spring Lake Ranch

Therapeutic Community  
*Working Toward Wellness*

Cuttingsville & Rutland, Vermont

Founded in 1932 by Wayne & Elizabeth Sarcka

## Annual Report Edition

### *Applying the Ranch Experience—Allison Bassi's Story*

When Allison Bassi somewhat casually took a job at the Ranch in 1998, she had no idea the experience would shape her life's work. Nor did she have an inkling the Ranch would help shape the many lives she has touched in the years since.

For two years, Allison lived with a group of Ranchers, leading work crews during the day, often supporting the crew leader by modifying activities, and leading recreational activities weekends and evenings. As she observed growth in the residents, she saw it in herself. "I was challenged by the work. I was more of a private person. But here I was, living communally with people who needed me. I realized I could develop relationships with people who struggled."

Allison made other discoveries. "It wasn't about sympathy. It wasn't about feeling sorry. I was amazed at what people could do considering the challenges they faced. It blew my mind how they survived, worked on themselves, how strong they were."

Allison next took a job as outreach and case manager with a Manhattan, N.Y. agency for the homeless mentally ill. It was a turning point for her. "During this job, I decided what I wanted to do." She was filled with admiration for the profoundly destitute. "They had nothing but their community. So it was even more unbelievable and inspiring



working with them." The experience opened her eyes to the bigger picture, and Allison began moving toward system reform. "When people have no family or money, their obstacles seem insurmountable. People are shuffled and treated like animals. I wanted to make changes in how the mentally ill are treated. This was my new passion."

Moving to a Long Island, N.Y. day drop-in center for adults with mental health disorders, Allison worked in vocational training and advocacy. More than ever, she drew on the Ranch principal of healing through work. "I was supporting people by finding them meaningful work in the community. They would make friends and form relationships through work. It was a question of helping people discover their strengths." Her voice warms with emotion as she says, "They don't have to be looking in from the outside, being on the outskirts. The idea is that they can have a rich, full life."

Currently, Allison is Program Coordinator for Co-occurring Services at First Step Sarasota (FLA). Her long-ago Ranch job continues to affect her view of the possible. "Some programs are based on the idea that when you're diagnosed, that's it – your life is pretty much destined to be medication and groups and doctor visits. I don't agree. I'm helping people find work – which really

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means, to find meaning. It's not just about targeting problems, it's about recognizing strengths. It's believing that people can break through and not be confined by a diagnosis."

One such person is a woman in her mid-20s, hospitalized on and off in state hospitals for years, and diagnosed with schizo-affective disorder. "No one ever trusted her to do anything but attend group therapy," says Allison, who helped the woman get a paying job at a local plant nursery. The woman is proving herself an excellent worker. And she has graduated from

the program. "Working gave her the confidence to see something through. She is not doing drugs. And she has never before had more than three months of sobriety."

Allison now has a Masters in Public Health, with a focus on Behavioral Health Policy and Management, and she sits on the Board of Directors of the Sarasota County NAMI. The next step for her, she says, is getting into politics as a mental health advocate. She has traveled far from the Ranch, but she took a vital piece of the Ranch with her. And now, Allison will take it even further.

## *Yale Psychiatry Residents Experience Resident Life at SLR*

On a Saturday in May, Carla Marienfeld, a psychiatry resident at Yale, found herself in the unusual position of learning how to build a bed from a Ranch resident who could have been her patient. "I was working alongside people and they were able to teach me," she says of her experience on the Wood Shop work crew. "Were they a resident? Staff? I couldn't tell. The dynamic mattered, not the hierarchy. I was getting to know people as people."

Carla was one of seven Yale psychiatry residents spending the weekend at the Ranch, a visit during which encounters like this were both spontaneous and nurtured. The weekend visit, initiated and organized for the second year by Yale psychiatry resident Sarah Mourra, aims to expose visitors to an alternate model of care.

"It's a chance for them to see a non-hospital model in action," says Alice McGarey-Martin, SLR Marketing and Outreach Director, who coordinates the weekends from the Ranch side.



"Here, barriers between staff and residents are broken down, and because we live together 24/7, it's more normalized than a hospital or a psychiatrist seeing someone in their office for 20 to 50 minutes. We see the whole of someone's life, we have all that information."

*Yale continued on page 3*

*Yale continued from page 2*

Nor was it by chance that the visitors were students at the brink of their careers and not psychiatrists comfortably entrenched in practices of three decades. “If young doctors coming into practice see this model, the impression will be simple but profound,” Alice says.

The SLR approach, in which work and community are crucial parts of the healing process, is a treatment style that psychiatry residents don’t normally see. Says Sarah, “It’s something we don’t typically see in out-patient settings, in hospitals or ER’s.” Carla adds, “At Yale, we’re not exposed to a long-term environment that uses the entire living and working space for therapy. We see



in-patient units that use skill-building activities, but it’s not as integrated and extensive as at SLR.”

What the visitors experienced impressed them. “We saw a model that minimized the power dynamic and emphasized people’s strengths not illnesses, and how one person can contribute to the whole,” Sarah says.

One highlight for both visitors was what Alice describes as Saturday night’s “hot” contra dance, during which Ranchers taught steps to many of their guests. Says Sarah, “It was just really fun! And a perfect example of how there are no distinctions made between

staff and residents – and how there’s no need to make that distinction. We connected with people with mental health issues as people, not patients.” Another highlight was the roundtable discussion. Sarah reflects, “We had a chance to ask residents what they look for in a psychiatrist. We rarely have the opportunity to ask our patients about that in such a straightforward and casual way.”

Both visitors left the Ranch inspired to use the insights gleaned there in their professional lives. “Many psychiatry residents feel frustrated with a system where finances dictate care,” Carla says. “The doctor makes treatment decisions based on the fact that the patient only has one to two days in the hospital. That’s not long enough for us to help. At the Ranch, you have time to try different things and see which works. And you’re doing this in a protected environment. So if it doesn’t work, there are lots of eyes and ears.”

The weekend caused Sarah to reflect on the patient-doctor interaction. “For me, visits to the Ranch reinforce the importance of incorporating the principles of egalitarian listening and trying to understand the patient’s perspective, while emphasizing strengths and minimizing weaknesses.” Sarah feels that such a residential setting could be helpful for certain patients. “The stigma of mental illness can sometimes be as toxic as the illness itself,” she says. “So community is a powerful intervention.”

Adds Carla, “It’s good to know that places like this do exist.”

## Hearing Voices Group Training Hosted at Spring Lake Ranch

It happens at night, says Josh, a House Advisor at the Ranch. Nighttime is often when residents distressed by hearing voices approach him for help. Until recently, Josh was unsure if he should respond with his gut. “My natural instinct was to be curious, to ask what the voices were saying,” says Josh, who also sensed that a deeper investigation of where the voices were coming from might help residents manage them.

Josh’s instincts were confirmed when he took part in a three-day, intensive Hearing Voices Group Facilitation Training at the Ranch. Designed to prepare participants to facilitate their own Hearing Voices support groups, the training was attended by 25 people, including SLR staff and residents, and participants from programs throughout the Northeast. Co-leaders were Jacqui Dillon, National Chair of the Hearing Voices Network in England, and Gail A. Hornstein, Professor of Psychology at Mount Holyoke College, herself a founder of one of the first Hearing Voices support groups in America.

The support groups offer voice hearers, often for the first time, a safe space in which they feel accepted and comfortable sharing their experiences. Within the supportive atmosphere, they are encouraged to think about their voices – look them in the eye, so to speak, rather than run from them – examining what they are saying, as well as what symbolic meaning they may have. Group members also share coping strategies for effectively managing voices, with the hope that this will help them gain greater control of their lives.

At the Ranch training, participants were carefully drawn from three groups: mental health practitioners; workers in the mental health system who have

*Hearing Voices continued on page 4*

*Hearing Voices continued from page 3*

personal experience with emotional distress; and voice hearers. The three groups working together is a key feature of the training, says Professor Hornstein. “For mental health practitioners, it is often the first time in their lives they are working collegially with people they would otherwise consider patients,” she says. The idea behind the exposure is that those with lived experience of voices have much to teach those whose knowledge comes primarily from books or the classroom.

Josh did indeed learn a great deal about hearing voices. For him, the training’s most memorable moments came during one of the many small-group activities. He was in a group of three, each group structured so that it included a voice hearer. One person played an interviewer; another a job-seeker; the third person was the voice – “whispering unpleasant things to the person being interviewed,” recalls Josh. “I was surprised – I had an idea what it was like – but it really was so incredibly distracting and hard to engage in this relatively simple transaction [the interview].”

C. J., a House Advisor at the Ranch, also took the training. As a voice hearer, her perspective was different. She grew up in a family of voice hearers; it was something she never talked about with outsiders. “If I saw a certain look in their face, I knew I couldn’t talk to them about the voices,” she remembers. However, family members leading productive, creative lives modeled for her the optimistic view that, “You can live and work with it,” says C.J. For the most part, however, her voices remained a deeply held secret.

Later, at the Ranch, she found a similar silence among residents. “Most don’t talk about it to me,” she says. “They’ve been told – long ago, in different settings – that these things are inappropriate or wrong.” For C.J.,

the support groups offer an openness bound to be therapeutic. “It was the idea of working with the voices, being able to talk about them in an open forum. Because if you can’t talk about it, there’s stigma and fear,” she says. “Being with peers who don’t judge you, who you know are going through the same thing, is very relaxing.”

Ranchers who participated in the training found it compatible with what SLR has been about since its inception: sharing the wide diversity of life’s experiences, both internal and external, in an open, accepting and thoughtful way so that people grow in understanding and compassion for each other. The group sessions were not about therapists treating patients or clients, but rather, people trying to learn about life from each other.

Both Josh and C.J. had a chance to put the approach into practice immediately, and felt their post-training responses to residents in need were more sensitive and helpful. “During the first afternoon of the training, a person approached me with very distressing emotions,” Josh says. “The training helped me be more patient, curious, accepting – more open – I let it develop, showing a wealth of compassion and openness. I spent 60 minutes walking around with this person, listening and acknowledging what they were hearing.”

“Before, I was very nervous about talking about hearing voices with everybody,” C.J. reflects. “I had the desire to relate, but didn’t know if talking about it was appropriate. Now I feel more competent – I’ve learned ways to respond.”

Soon after the training, a resident approached her in the grip of strong feelings erupting in voices. C.J. talked with him about the voices, and found that this helped. “He seemed really happy to talk about the topic he wanted

to talk about. And it was wonderful to get insight into his complex internal world.”

*Professor Hornstein stresses that while human connection and compassion are crucial ingredients for families and mental health staff seeking to help voice hearers, the specific techniques developed by the Hearing Voices Network must be acquired in a formal training like the one offered at the Ranch in June. Voice hearing and other deeply distressing experiences are often the result of trauma, and it can be a complex and lengthy process to work through the issues that first led to the development of the voices. There is growing interest in the US for using HVN’s approach, and active efforts are underway to offer training and support in many more places in this country so the network can expand and grow to meet the enormous demand.*

## Hurricane Irene



Hurricane Irene brought historic flooding to Vermont, leaving many towns cut off from the outside world as roads and bridges were washed away. Fortunately, our Ranch community and physical plant held up very well during the storm and its aftermath. We were able to maintain generator power for three days until regular power was resumed. On the first morning after the storm, when we were still stranded, our signature work program functioned fully. The entire Ranch and Rutland Program staff pulled together and carried on the work of the organization. A special thank you to John Freeman, our Physical Plant Manager, and all who kept us fed and functioning in the storm’s aftermath.

# Learning to Believe in Myself

## A Resident Perspective

I first arrived at the Ranch in February of 2010. I don't remember much of what happened because I was still in a state of shock. I was diagnosed with Bipolar disorder in 2001 and since that time have had three very severe and debilitating episodes. The beginning of 2010 was number three, and anyone who has any experience with Bipolar Disorder knows that it takes a toll on you physically, mentally, and emotionally. For the first time in my adulthood, I recognized what I was up against, and cautiously accepted

the outstretched hand that was SLR wanting to help.

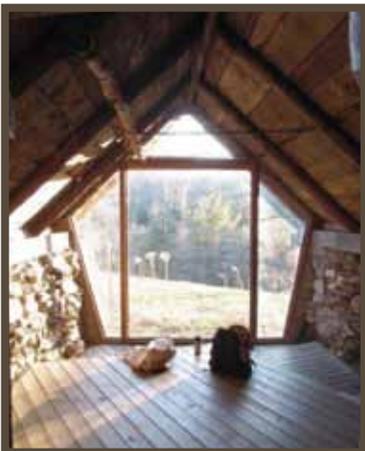
My stay at the Ranch afforded me the peace and quiet to work on myself and come to terms with what I had to do to get better. Far away from the pressures and demands of the life I had known, there were no outside distractions. In fact, one of the best parts of the Ranch was that with all of the excess life stressors having been stripped away, I could focus on myself and see what abilities and capabilities I

still had going for me. I took a personal inventory, and tried my best to hone my assets, and forget the negativity that I left behind. The staff at the Ranch, as "in tune" as they are, helped to bring these qualities to the surface. Little by little, I began to improve and a lot of my improvements were noticed first by staff and peers. Fortunately, time was on my side, and I needed time to heal, so I continued to participate the best I could until ultimately I was ready to make the transition to the Rutland "Aftercare" Program.

### Imperfect Being

Spectral being, I plead.  
You have kept me alive.  
Sacrificed so I could live  
But when I bow my head,  
I wonder if I am worth it.

I could never have made it through  
the tides  
Without the strong swimmers, alive  
and passed,  
who kept me away from the  
currents,  
away from the surf.  
Without family, the pod of deep  
swimmers  
who schooled around, like whales,  
keeping me afloat



I was not assured a place in this life  
insane and scarred,  
sometimes  
loving and wise

In the wild, tribal times,  
I might have made it,  
but in this world,  
I do not know

Spectrum of overarching light,  
You have brought me along to my  
life's start

But I will never forget,  
through years of struggle,  
how you brought me home  
again and again

Imperfect being,  
I want you to know  
my love,  
gratitude  
and determination to fight  
as you have  
to live for the first time

*Sarah – Ranch Program Resident*

After I arrived in the Rutland Program was when I truly began to notice the changes and the progress I had made myself. I was assigned two counselors at first to help me navigate my new surroundings and insure that my transition was a smooth one. Things were coming together for me and I began to seek employment. While outwardly I was motivated to succeed, beneath the surface I lacked the confidence to make it in a 9 to 5 job surrounded by strangers. This was the point where I really feel that my recovery began; the time when it was suggested to me that I work as an intern back up at The Ranch.

I was reluctant at first. After all, I grew up in New Jersey, knew very little about ranching, and hadn't worked in such a meaningful setting ever before. But one thing that I knew that I could bring to the table was compassion. I also believe strongly that people can recover from mental illness and go on to lead happy and fulfilling lives as productive members of society. If nothing else, I told myself that I would serve as a living example for others at the Ranch, that recovery is possible, because I myself was determined to make it.

*Resident Perspective continued on page 6*

## Board Notes

### Welcome to our new Trustees:

Jim Alic  
Linda Berryhill  
Walter Harrison  
Muffie Milens

### Welcome to our new Members:

Dana Foster  
William Toby Horn  
Nelson Jaquay  
Jonathan and  
Helena-Boon Kerner  
Gary Margolis, Ph.D  
Ramsey Yoder

### New "Friends of SLR" Group:

The board has approved the creation of a new group, "Friends of Spring Lake Ranch." Those selected for this group have volunteered to be active advocates and contributors to SLR but are not able to serve as Members or Trustees. We welcome our inaugural group of "Friends":

Joan Geyer  
Dr. Irwin Sollinger  
Lynn Tobin

### Resident Perspective continued from page 5

The staff up there was way ahead of me. I believe that they knew just what I was capable of and when I rose to meet those demands, they were not shy about placing new challenges in front of me. My internship consisted of many things; not even the smallest of tasks I considered to be menial because everything had a greater purpose. By working hand in hand with others, I was able to see other people's recovery processes in action and became "other-centered" rather than stuck worrying about myself. For me, the bonds that we form when working side-by-side with others was what it was all about. Stigmas are dissolved and it is one

human being connecting with another; a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to grow spiritually and help lead others who may be in the dark themselves to the light.

I cannot say enough about how much this internship meant to me. My confidence built in a way that I never knew was possible. I had held many "jobs" prior to my illness, I am college educated and at one point was high functioning. But this new feeling was not a cockiness that I may have mistaken for confidence in the past. This was something that satisfied me on a much deeper level than that. I now have a tremendous respect for

## Uncle Sam's Race for Freedom

### First Annual 4th of July Relay Race

On the 4th of July this year, the front lawn was the epicenter for a Ranch and



Rutland Program relay race. The day started with people signing in at the check-in station where they found out which team they would be on. The Ranch was a sea of color with everyone wearing their hand-painted team t-shirts. Each team was made up of spectators, event participants, and photographers. In total, we had six teams, three from the Ranch and three from the Rutland Program. The relay race started at the lake with canoeing and swimming, then a run down to the main house, a scenic bike ride down the road and back, a relaxing walk, and last but certainly not least, partners tied their ankles together for the always-fun three-legged race.

For the spectators, we had several fun contests, including naming each race, designing the trophy, guessing the order of the team finishes and predicting the winning team. At the closing ceremonies, Uncle Sam himself was there to give out awards. The winning team, the Green Iguanas, received the wonderfully crafted trophy.



The 4th of July here at the Ranch was an exciting and jovial time for all involved! A very special thanks to everyone on the Hill and in the Rutland Program who came together to make this a great day!

Ashley Potter, Recreation Coordinator



each and every one who works at the Ranch, because most of them have dedicated their lives to this line of work. It was their guidance that led me to believe in myself enough to complete this internship, which for me was the true turning point in my recovery from something that could have potentially sidelined me for years. I am back and applying to Masters Programs in psychology after only 18 months and by this time next year, hope to be well on my way to a career in this field. I will always be grateful to "The Ranch" for providing me this opportunity.

Rutland Program Resident

## It Is What It Is

A mortal comes upon a rock and says,  
"It is what it is -- rock,  
a rock will never change."

The rock then replies,  
"mortal, 'it is what it is'  
is not a statement, what it means is  
change and evolution.

In your life I will appear to not change,  
but by no means does that make me  
immortal,  
you will not see the change with your  
eyes  
or feel them with your hands, yet they  
will be.

The rain will erode me, the wind will  
wear me.  
I will become smaller stones; then I will  
become sand.  
Then, when the universe comes to an end  
I will be in a million pieces.

In another life you will say the same  
thing.  
And so with that mortal I stand  
corrected.  
We are both right: 'it is what it is,' to you  
is a fact;  
for me it is change and evolution."

*Emily – former Ranch Resident*

## Adventure Group

The Adventure Group is the third in a series of evening group activities intended to help residents develop better coping skills, self-awareness and interpersonal relation skills.

Wednesday nights at the Ranch are filled with adventure! Each Wednesday at 6:30, everyone is invited to come over to the Greenhouse for Adventure Group, an experiential learning-based activity that has been attracting an average of eight to nine residents since its start at the beginning of August. During our first meeting, residents worked to create a Full Value Contract which was broken down into the following parts: Be Here; Be Safe; Be Honest; Set Goals; Care for Self and Others; and Let Go and Move On. Everyone worked together to figure out what each element means for our group, so we would have guidelines to work around during our various activities. Each activity, although not announced as such, is designed to help improve social and emotional skills for everyone involved.

*Ashley Potter,  
Recreation Coordinator*

## Staff Notes

All of us at Spring Lake Ranch wish the best to Jim Taggart, his wife Susan, and their children James, Harrison and Maureen. Thank you for all the energy and enthusiasm you gave to improving the lives of residents at the Ranch and in the Rutland Program.

We are happy to announce that Kimberly Eckhardt, who has been a Rutland Program Advisor since 2007, has accepted the Rutland Program Assistant Director position. The RP has also added two new advisors recently. We welcome Matt Whitcomb and Lynn Dorsky.

Tom Conry, who first worked at the Ranch as a House Advisor in 1990, and returned in May for a second stint, has become our new Personnel Director.

The Maintenance crew said farewell to Jim Bauer in August and welcome to Steve Gaissert, our new Maintenance staff.

## Barb's Biscuits

*In my travels across the country, I always order a biscuit whenever offered the choice; hoping to find a biscuit to stand up to this recipe. Sad to say it has not happened yet. It is safe to say I am a biscuit snob!*

*Barbara Favreau, Chef Manager*



2 cups white flour  
1 tablespoon baking powder  
2 tablespoons sugar  
1 teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon cream of tartar  
7/8 cup sour cream  
½ cup vegetable shortening (Crisco)  
1/8 cup milk

Mix dry ingredients in a bowl.

Add ½ cup shortening and mix until crumbly and pea-size pieces form.

Add 7/8 cup sour cream and 1/8 cup milk and mix lightly, turn out onto a floured board and fold over 4 or 5 times. Pat to 1½" thick and cut with floured biscuit cutter or small round glass.

Place on ungreased cookie sheet ½" apart.

Bake at 425° for 15-18 minutes. Serve with butter and maple syrup or chicken and gravy.

# Back on the farm

It is good to be back as the Ranch Farmer after fourteen years in other pursuits. I returned at the end of January and started right in on getting things up and rolling again. We spent the winter months taking care of animals, pruning apple trees and helping with sugaring. In early spring, we got our baby chicks and baby turkeys. We started making repairs on barns and outbuildings that needed improvements. The haying season started off very slowly due to rain, but in the end, we managed to put 3,300 bales into the barns. I have sent seven cows and six pigs to be processed for meat for the community. The turkeys will be sent off shortly and brought back in time for Thanksgiving.



The Ranch farm crews have been really great. The daily groups are larger than they used to be and we are able to accomplish a lot. Residents seem to be enjoying taking care of the animals, working on fences, mucking out stalls, and helping with the haying. The dedication and enthusiasm of the farm staff helped make my transition easy. I have been fortunate to have Doug from our Rutland Program as farm assistant. Doug started in May and has been wonderful to work



with. He is competent and skilled, and has made the haying experience enjoyable for both of us.

We are now transitioning from summer activities to fall, which will mean improving the fences and getting our farm buildings ready for the winter months. One of my hopes for the upcoming year is to be able to meet the Ranch's need for high-quality meat and poultry. In closing, I want to thank Becki Bates for all the support she has given me since I returned.

*Paddy Martin, Farm Manager*



## Woods Crew - Sometimes

This year has been characterized by a few things and resulted in some aesthetic small but significant changes. I reflect with pride on our moderation which translated into therapeutic experiences that challenged us without overextending our offerings. Most recently, our aspirations led us to rebuild rock walls and reclaim overgrown spaces. Along with our lawn mowing efforts were a variety of landscaping challenges that taught us



tasks remains straightforward – cutting, splitting and stacking wood. While technically simple, these most predictable

In addition to these undertakings, we put a lot of energy into generating firewood for this year. This is likely the most consistent job we complete each year, as the series of

tasks remains straightforward – cutting, splitting and stacking wood. While technically simple, these most predictable



# Celebrating the Work of The Gardens Crew

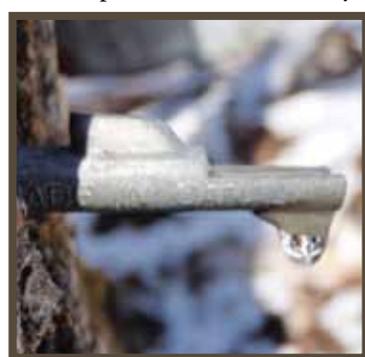
I tend to get philosophical when I sit down to write a report on the past year. The fall is a time of changes, of endings and beginnings; this inspires me to think about the impact of our work on the world, on others and on ourselves. One thing in particular I've been thinking about lately and which I talked about before Harvest Dinner (the "Super Bowl" of Spring Lake Ranch holidays, by some accounts), is how the nature of our work sometimes asks us to be unique and creative individuals and sometimes asks us to be just another pair of hands. Sometimes we're problem-solving how to cut down a tree and other times we're part of a group, tossing the wood from one place to the next. We're figuring out how to fix the hay equipment and the next day we're stacking the hay onto trucks. Both kinds of work matter. It feels good to be part of something bigger than yourself, and it also feels good to have the



## Small is Significant

three months of our year often provide a satisfaction to crew members that is always rewarding to see.

Sugaring season was all we could hope for. We had very consistent sap runs and a great overall yield. The nearly 800 gallons we made came through many people's endurance and flexibility. The spirit of community is evidenced most profoundly at this time –



where everyone extends themselves and lends to the effort.

All in all, another year of good work alongside some wonderful people. We look forward to next year and all of its opportunities.

*Doug Patton, Woods Department Head*

responsibility of applying your own skills and ideas to a job. It's great to go out and pick the zucchini, and it's great to find the best zucchini cheddar bread recipe and bake it up for Harvest Dinner. Which is one reason I love Harvest Dinner: it provides a chance to celebrate the work of the community and the contributions of individuals.

But this is my chance to celebrate the work of the Gardens crew. We had a great growing season, beginning with planting onions in February, going right through

*Garden continued on page 12*

# A Year of Changes and Progress

**Jim Taggart has stepped down as our Executive Director to pursue new challenges.** Jim joined Spring Lake Ranch four years ago and successfully led our organization through a very challenging period due to the severe economic downturn. His leadership, passion and energy will be missed. Jim enjoyed the many relationships he formed with our residents, families, staff and colleagues during his tenure. We thank Jim for his service and commitment, and wish him success with all his future endeavors.

**We have started our search for a new Executive Director** and will be conducting interviews by the time you read this message. A combined search committee of staff and Board members is behind this effort and they have presented a new look at credentials and experience requirements that the Board has approved. We hope the process to be complete by the end of the year.

**Steve Sebastian, in his new role as Development Director, raised \$282,000** which enabled us to provide financial assistance to 17 families. He inspired the Board and staff to introduce SLR to their personal contacts, which resulted in gifts from 120 new donors.

**The Admissions and Outreach team was successful in keeping our average census high** - we served 79 individuals at the Ranch in Cuttingsville. At the same time, the admissions process was refined to make it more accessible to families in need of Ranch services. Developing contacts with professionals who make referrals and keeping them informed of program developments was another important focus of this team.

**Ongoing family surveys and exit surveys for residents** are providing important information on what we are doing well and what areas of our program need improvements.

**The Rutland Program, which served 74 individuals this year,** worked to expand program offerings in many directions.

Men's and women's support groups were added to help residents develop interpersonal and coping skills. Inipi, a challenging nature-based program, was initiated to help residents transitioning from the Ranch to Rutland stay focused on their inner strengths. With a growing census, the Rutland Program staff is expanding. Consequently, staff training and clarification of job responsibilities, both goals of the Strategic Plan, were developed.

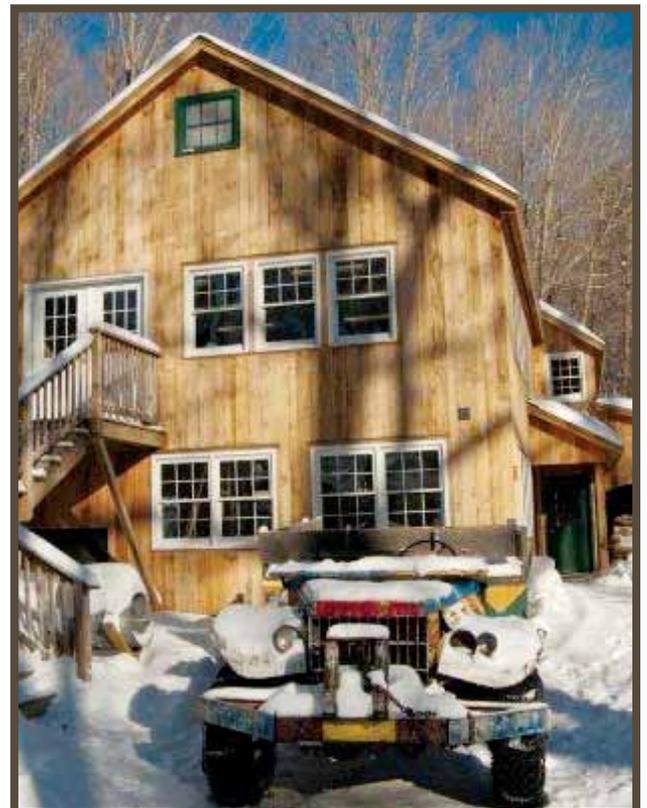
**At the Ranch, our Resident Services Team** created a new avenue for supervision and support of the advising teams. Family surveys pointed to the need for more communication between families and our psychiatrist. Resident Services quickly responded by providing expanded opportunities for this. Residents have access to a host of private therapists in Rutland with a broad range of expertise. Resident Services met with many of those therapists to improve our ability to make appropriate referrals and to foster communication between the Ranch team and residents' therapists.

**Working together and becoming part of the community** remains at the center of the therapeutic programs Spring Lake Ranch offers. At the Ranch, work crews produced 800 gallons of maple syrup, tons of fresh fruit and vegetables, furniture for resident bedrooms, 3000 bales of hay and beef, pork and poultry for our meals. The interpersonal exchanges and growth that take place in residents while they work and solve problems alongside others is even more valuable than the output of useful products. Since 1932, this vibrant, accepting and ever-changing community has continued to provide the context and culture through which residents thrive.

**With the goal of treating the whole person — body, mind and soul —** this year we were able to expand the variety of program activities that take place outside the work program. Horsemanship classes, personal fitness training, library night, hearing voices groups, song-writing workshops, coping skills groups, yoga, basketball night, Hauschka artistic therapy, and an adventure group were among the many afternoon and evening offerings that residents took advantage of.

**Keeping our many buildings and grounds safe, functioning properly,** upgraded and maintained with great attention to detail continues to be ably managed by our team of physical plant staff.

**This year we formalized an internship program for residents** in the Rutland Program which created five paid positions which last for six months. This currently includes positions working with farm crew, maintenance, woods crew, garden crew and shop crew.



## Support and Challenge

Work is a powerful medium. For most of us, it is a big part of how we interact with our world. It offers opportunities for social contact, accomplishment, and a sense of purpose. The Ranch Work Program is built around shared, meaningful, practical work with concrete results and a connection to the natural world. It offers structure, challenges, and support. There are opportunities to build relationships and self-esteem. Every task involves problem-solving and communication with others.

Our Work Program is an incredibly flexible tool that can be adapted to meet the needs of each resident. Challenges can be modulated and individualized. For the person who is struggling, this can mean adding additional supports such as personalized wake-up calls, one-on-one coaching, or altering the nature of the work. For people who are ready for more challenge, it can mean raised expectations surrounding work or communication, independent projects, and leadership opportunities.

There are times when a member of the Rutland Program is looking for a bridge between the Work Program and competitive employment. For residents who have been solid participants in the Work Program, we've developed a few internship opportunities. These are 20-hour-per-week jobs working with a Ranch Work Department for a modest wage. While the Work Program needs to flex to respond to the needs of all residents, the internships ask the resident to flex to meet the demands of the job. While at first glance this might sound like we're putting the needs of the work before the needs of the resident, in fact, at this point in their journey, this is an appropriate expectation. Indeed, it is a key way internships provide that bridge to competitive employment where demands are usually non-negotiable.

The internship process begins with the resident identifying vocational objectives, exploring successes and struggles they've experienced on work crew and in previous

work environments, and setting goals for the internship experience. As they do so, common themes emerge. Often people identify stress management, self-



confidence, communication, leadership, and sobriety as things they need to work on. Sometimes people identify specific skills, such as carpentry or auto mechanics that they'd like to work on.

Supports include daily contact with the Department Head and/or other Work Program staff and monthly evaluation meetings that engage the resident in thoughtful conversation about goals. Support also comes from that amorphous thing the Ranch provides... a sense of purpose, of belonging, of community.

*Becki Bates, Program Director*

## Admission and Outreach

In the past year, we had a constant flow of new residents integrating into the community while a constant flow exited to the Rutland Program and beyond. We admitted 72 residents to the Ranch and 20 to the Rutland Program. We finished the year with an average census of 26, which exceeded our goal.

In an age when so many calls go directly to voice recordings and menu choices, we personally answer hundreds of phone calls – seven days a week, at all hours of the day. Our priority is to give families time to tell their story and offer them a compassionate personal connection from the start.

The tour and 24-hour visit continue to be a critical part of our admission process. Visitors see each work area and interact with residents and staff along the way. When we take families around to the shop crew, they see residents and staff working together making furniture for the Ranch, and they get a direct experience of the value of our Work Program. As we tour them through the Main House, residences, hoop house, Sugar House, sewing room, pottery shop, gym and farm buildings, it is easy to tell they are impressed by the facilities and the setting. We Admissions staff see the relief that many families experience when they sit down for lunch

in the dining room and realize that this is a place where their loved one can be *part of* an engaging and challenging community rather than continuing to be isolated and *apart from life*.

Building networks, forging new relationships and maintaining connections with hundreds of professionals, hospitals, psychiatrists, educational consultants and other programs that make referrals to the Ranch are the other activities that keep the Admissions office busy. We had a steady stream of professionals visit the Ranch throughout the year. We exhibited at 12 events, this year shifting our strategy to attending more regional conferences rather than larger national events. Advertising on the Internet and on public radio was continued. Our outreach visits took us to hospitals and programs in Florida, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and California. Improvements to our system of tracking referral calls have given us a clearer idea of which hospitals or programs make multiple referrals. This has helped us prioritize our outreach visits and has added many new professionals to our mailing list.

*Alice McGarey-Martin,  
Outreach Director*

*Garden continued from page 9*

to September, when those same onions won a blue ribbon at the State Fair. We produced beautiful corn, beans, summer squash and zucchini. The squash and zucchini did too well; we try to time our second planting so it kicks in when the first dies back, but they have overlapped, leading to ridiculous amounts of squash. We have been delighted by potatoes, disappointed by tomatoes, overwhelmed by weeds and charmed by peas. Our peppers are plentiful and our blueberries were bountiful. We have been swimming in pesto, with a bumper crop of basil grown in our greenhouse. We anticipate selling it at the Winter Farmer's market, well into the season. The pesto tastes delicious, which is no surprise, since our garlic also won first prize at the fair.

It's difficult to write about farming without thinking about our friends in the neighborhood and the state whose farms were destroyed for the season and in one case destroyed for good by Tropical Storm Irene. The Ranch has gone to help our neighbors with flood cleanup and that will continue to be a part of our work. I spoke with a friend at the Farmer's Market

who lost this year's crop, and she shrugged philosophically and said, "Farming is not for brittle people." When talking with a friend who lost her farm forever when the Mill River diverted into their field, she said she was feeling lost without vegetables, they didn't even have anything to cook up that night for dinner. I offered her some of our zucchini, but she declined, saying that they were desperate, "but not THAT desperate."

In addition to producing a productive and delicious garden this year, Gardens crew has spent a lot of time in our kitchen. A full census over the winter meant finding meaningful work for a lot of people and much of that time was spent cooking for the Ranch: baking bread, preparing soups for lunch, and making dessert. A lot of people on the crew love to cook, and it's a great skill to have when living independently. Following recipes, working as part of the group, and literally tasting the fruits of your labor provide satisfying work. We also worked on a number of creative projects, both to sell at the Farmer's Market and to make the Ranch even more beautiful. We made a quilt and raffled it off to raise money

for the financial aid program. We made lovely beads out of newspaper and sold them at the market to drape over a mantle or tree. We are still working on braided wool rugs that are as beautiful as they are problematic. The most important thing is that we are working together as the resilient community we are, and as the creative individuals we also are.

*Lisa Gardner,  
Gardens Department Head*



## *Rutland Program Update*

### *Brussels Sprouts - Friend or Foe?*

Growing up, I was never forced to try Brussels sprouts. My mother did not like them, and assumed on my behalf that I would not like them either. Not seeing anything wrong with maintaining this assumption, I insist that I do not like Brussels sprouts. The fact that I've not tried them seems to be a lack of proof for some folks who require that I try one before I can know that I don't like it. I find that odd.



This year, in the Rutland Program, I've discovered that most people have their own personal Brussels sprout. And, as a staff, we are challenging those assumptions of other staff members and clients alike. As a result, we have

added many new programs and outlets to our repertoire in order to challenge assumptions and inspire growth.

We started off simply, easing folks into the idea of new and exciting activity.

Lynette started a knitting group, where not only could you learn to knit, but you started by hand making the needles! Gifts were made, creativity and society were enjoyed, and anxiety was released. We followed closely on the heels of knitting with bigger and bolder steps. Steve introduced the Inipi program, which has allowed participants to journey outside themselves, and get more in touch with the physical world surrounding

them. This program is still evolving, with two classes weekly, with folks participating at their own pace, creating objects to tell their own stories and learning a new sense of community.

*Rutland Program continued on page 13*

*Rutland Program continued from page 12*

We can't tell any story of change without including Beatrice Birch, and the impact her Hauschka Artistic Therapy has had on our program. Never has so much angst been brought about by clay spheres! Bea works with clients and staff, in group and individual settings, challenging our notions of how and why, forcing us to look within ourselves for new answers all the time. Additionally, the Inipi program has spawned the drumming circle, and Bea has brought to us another facilitator for a singing group. There's also the horsemanship program, where our regular attendees are conquering fears (their own and the horses) and improving communication skills. Also, a men's social skills group was begun this summer, to coincide with our women's friendship circle. Both groups facilitate the learning of communication skills in a safe, structured environment. And one can just imagine the skill sets taught in Andy's canoe-building class: teamwork, reliability, woodworking, and humor. In addition, our intern, Lillian, has started a WRAP group, helping participants develop a toolbox of emergency skills. Finally, our newest addition is the breakfast group, which gets everyone off to a healthy start and a more accomplished day.

These are all simple things in and of themselves, but when you see someone whom you had to require to participate, now ask to join something new, you come to realize that they are breaking down their own assumptions about their capabilities and desires, and stepping outside themselves to see what else the world can offer them.

Who knows what Brussels sprouts will be slain in the Rutland Program in the year to come? I can say, oddly enough, that I don't mind Brussels sprouts. And I think clients are coming to that same realization regarding their own Brussels sprouts, and growing as a result.

*Kimberly Eckhardt, Rutland Program Assistant Director*

## Development - A Year In Review

As I reflect on my first year as Development Director, a number of thoughts come to mind: the challenges of fundraising in an uncertain economy, the many changes that have taken place over the past year at Spring Lake Ranch, but most of all, what a very rewarding experience it has been. In my role, I have been fortunate to meet and talk to so many wonderful current and former families, residents and staff. I've also gained an even deeper appreciation for the important work that takes place here and this special community that makes it all possible.

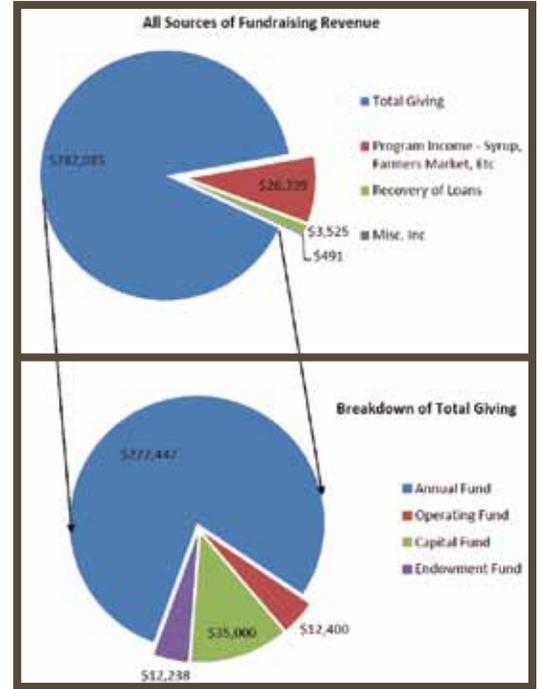
We had a successful fundraising year thanks to a generous response to our fall and spring appeals. We raised \$222,447 for our Annual Fund which represents a 24 percent increase and the second highest amount raised over the past ten years. Total Giving this year was \$282,085, up 14 percent. Maple syrup and farmer's market sales contributed \$26,339 to our Sarcka Scholarship Fund. Because of the generosity of our donors, we were able to offer financial aid to 17 families who otherwise would not have been able to afford our program.

The estates of Hester Sirjane and Mary Calwell left bequests totaling \$12,400. The Sirjane family affiliation with SLR goes back to our earliest founding days. Mary was a former resident from the 1960s. We are grateful that they included SLR in their planned giving to our Endowment Fund.

A special "thank you" to Fred and Mary Godley and family for their very generous response to our spring appeal. We are also grateful to Hal Field for his very generous donation in memory of his daughter Anne, in support of our future Rutland Program development.

One of our goals this year was to give families and friends opportunities to support SLR in different ways. I was truly moved by the response we received. The Geyer family along with former SLR House Advisor Allison Bassi volunteered to use their contacts to help us organize

an outreach event in Sarasota, FL. New member George Nostrand was the event's keynote speaker and his message was very well received. George then volunteered to share his story as a former Rancher in our spring appeal letter.



Nine volunteers helped us with fundraising by forwarding our appeal letter along with personal notes to their family, friends and colleagues. They introduced SLR to over 120 people and brought in \$10,000 in first-time donations. We reconnected with David Hopkins who appreciated what the Ranch did for him when he was a resident in the 1980s. He wanted to give back in some way. We featured his inspirational story in our spring newsletter. Other families volunteered to give their time to participate in our family survey. Their feedback and insights are extremely valuable.

A big thank you goes out to Alice who has supported me during this transition period and to the Development Committee and volunteers who guided and assisted our efforts. Our development program will need to play an increasingly vital role in supporting families and residents in need as well as in our operations going forward. I am looking forward to this upcoming year and to helping us reach our important goals.

*Steve Sebastian, Development Director*

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Spring Lake Ranch is a non-profit, therapeutic work community in the Green Mountains of Vermont,  
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