

NEW HOMESTEADERS... HOW CAN WE HELP? A DRAFT PROPOSAL

For a number of years now we've talked about making a formal effort to make ourselves known to new homesteaders in the area. What follows here is a very preliminary draft of a handout to be distributed to real estate agencies, Cooperative Extension, chambers of commerce, and anyone else who might have front line contact with newcomers of our ilk.

It should be emphasized that this is all very preliminary and we need to hear suggestions, objections, reflections. Is it a good thing to do? Are there other front line folk who should receive this handout? Should it be phrased differently? Etc.?

It is our intention to publicize ourselves only locally. If anyone wants to advertise in the Mother Earth News or something, that would be his/her own venture. Likewise, we do not envision the association getting involved in land searches for new folk looking for a farm. Again, this can be done by individual members and Doug Jones, in the last newsletter, talked about organizing a "Land Access Information Center."

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TO: Those in Contact with Newcomers to St. Lawrence County
FROM: The Rural Life Association
RE: New Homesteaders, Small-Scale Farmers, Back-to-the-Landers

The Rural Life Association began in 1977 as the Natural Farmers' Association. Over the years we've maintained a membership of about 80 households. One of our purposes is to help newcomers to SLC who, like us, are intending to homestead, or to farm on a small scale, or to live as simply and self-sufficiently as possible on a piece of land.

Probably the best way we can help such folks is simply to share with them our experiences and to serve as a sounding board for their ideas and hopes, plans and intentions. A list of our experiences is wide-ranging:

- use of oxen and of horses
- wind generators, cooking and heating with wood
- owner-built homes (log, post and beam, stone, retrofitted old houses)
- strategies to earn money, both on farm and off farm (vegetables, greenhouse, dairy, yogurt, replacement heifers, beef, logging, blacksmithing, teaching, nursing, library work, etc.)
- raising our own food (gardening and putting food by; fruit and nut trees; bees and maple syrup; goats and cows; chickens and eggs; beef and pork).

Some of our specific activities/materials that might be of interest to beginning homesteaders:

- We get together four times a year, to socialize and to discuss/consider some topic of mutual interest.
- We publish a quarterly newsletter.
- We have a membership directory, compiled in summer/fall 1982, in which many of our families describe their particular situation, problems, hopes, etc.
- A number of our families have recently undertaken to work cooperatively together on each other's farms. Since the number of tasks facing a beginning homesteader is often overwhelming, we would make a special effort to organize cooperative work help for such folks. For the longer run, a newcomer might consider joining one of the on-going cooperative work groups.

If you have any questions or suggestions, or if you know of any new or potential homesteaders who might wish to make connections with us, we can be contacted through Jon and Kathy Montan, Box 246, Route 2, Canton, 379-9218 (on the O'Brian Road in Pierrepont); or Valerie Summer & David Katz, Box 57, Route 1, Hermon, 386-4393 (on the Cassidy Road in Russell); or John & Liz Scarlett, Route 2, Rossie, 324-5635 (on the S. Hammond Road in Rossie); or Carol & Bill Sutkus, Box 220, Route 1, Gouverneur, 287-3759 (off the Chub Lake Road in Hermon).

-- Bill Sutkus



ANNOUNCEMENTS



MEMBERSHIP/TELEPHONE TREE ADDITIONS/CORRECTIONS

- Ainsworths, Pink School House Road, Box 121A, Canton, 379-9323.
- Joseph and Vera Hruska, Route 1, North Lawrence, NY 12967
- Elia Filippi and Deb Goode, Box 121A, Route 1, Richville, NY 13681, 347-3665.
- Nancy and Todd Alessi, 347-3660.
- John L. Colish, 20 Cedar Street, Potsdam, NY 13676.
- Anita and Jim Crawford, Route 1, Hermon, NY 13652, 347-3603.
- Vicki and Bob Scott-Adams, Route 3, Box 335-1, Canton.

FOR SALE - Troy-Bilt 4½ HP rototiller. Price is negotiable.
H. Ashworth, Route 1, Box 161, Heuvelton, NY 13654.

MAPLE SEEDLINGS - Millions!! Free for the digging. Meadowsweet Farm on the Cassidy Road near the Canton-Russell line. 386-4393.

HOME BIRTH EDUCATION COURSE - Jill Earl will be teaching a home birth education course sometime in July. The cost for the eight-week course, including a handbook, is \$40. Anybody can take the course; you don't have to be pregnant, and you don't have to be planning a home birth. Call Jill at 769-7393 to register.

BLACKSMITHING COURSE - Ken Schwarz, who has taught summer workshops at the Scarlett farm for several years and is presently an apprentice at Historic Williamsburg, may be up in Rossie to teach another series of workshops this October...if we're lucky. The cost would be \$40 for a two-day workshop, including materials. If you are interested, call John Scarlett at 324-5635.