

# Ridgetop Runner

## Connecting the Farm School Community

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Edited by Patrick Farmer (farmerfive@yahoo.com)

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### It's an Old Athol Tradition...

Rural communities throughout New England are steeped in the venerable traditions of both their Yankee forebears and the waves of immigrants that followed their rough footpaths to build new lives among these wooded hills. For Athol, however, the most famous tradition in town has nothing to do with stuffy Puritan ancestors or centuries-old customs. Let Boston have its silly marathon; Athol has the River Rat Race. Drawing hundreds of canoeists and thousands of spectators, the five-mile River Rat Race is the biggest event of the year for Athol, and the 45th annual race takes place this weekend, April 12-13. The festivities begin with the River Rat Promenade, a parade through Main Street on Saturday morning. This is accompanied by a carnival in Lord Pond Plaza, better known as the home of Mt. Video and Ocean State Job Lot, and a pancake breakfast in Athol Town Hall. For racers, all these fun and games are just something to keep the anxiety from building up too much before the starting cannon booms at 1 p.m. sharp. This year, the Farm School will be proudly represented in the canoe race by two student farmers, Mike Tebaldi and Patrick Farmer, so come down to the bottom of the hill and cheer them off from the starting point above the Main Street bridge. Once the canoes are out of sight, check out the array of local goods, food, art, and souvenirs available around town. Details about the event, including the professional and kayak races on Sunday, are available online: <http://www.riverratrace.com>. If you only hang out in Athol once in your life, make sure it's for the River Rat Race.



**Karen**

by Fiona Wilson

Karen grew up in south Boston. Quincy, to be precise. Throughout her life, there has always been a garden. Some were on the rooftops of city apartment buildings, and some were small flower gardens in her backyard. Karen likes the way gardens inspire her artistic side. She came to Maggie's Farm because she wants to live out her dream of being a farmer. She is hoping she can buy a farm up in northern Maine, after she leaves Maggie's. Being in the field and letting the soil sift through her hands feels sacred to her. "Here you are actually in contact with the land," she says. "It feeds my soul."



**Nate**

by Perry Holmes

This is Nate's second year working at the Maggie's farm program. He found out about this place from Patrick Connors, the director at the Farm School, who worked with his partner in Santa Cruz. Growing up in Weston MA. Nate's father had a flower garden. He became interested in gardening when, after college, he worked on a farm for two summers. He loves to harvest and he is excited to teach the new students. He also likes to work hard. "It's cool to connect all the elements of the farm."