

Ridgetop Runner

Connecting the Farm School Community

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Softball Season Opener

Waiting all winter, some have doubted this moment would ever come, but after much anticipation the legendary Farm School Softball Series is about to begin. Next Friday, May 2, the Sentinels from the Program for Visiting Schools will face the Hardy Kiwis of Maggie's Farm at Davenport Diamond, the hayfield along the driveway of the Holmes' house in North Orange. The first pitch is scheduled for 5:30 p.m., so lend a hand to help everyone finish chores in time for the game. Drinks and a delicious barbeque dinner will be provided for fans and players alike. Make it a point to be there and root for the home team!



Bonny

by Kaethe Bea

"I have always known I want a year off before going to college," Bonnie says. She got interested in agriculture during her environmental science class in high school, but she found out about the Maggie's Farm program from a family friend, the soil professor at UMass. Before Bonnie's family moved to Acton, Mass., when she was twelve, she already had a flower and vegetable garden. "I like working hard," Bonnie says. She is looking forward to being outside and doing work. She is most excited about growing vegetables and learning how to make cheese. Her favorite vegetable is a beet, not just normal beets but, "Roasted beets with feta cheese in a mint salad," she specifies.

Lambing with Comm. Prep

"Something's wrong with one of the sheep," whispers Eric, wide-eyed behind his round glasses. "I think she's in labor!" While tempered with trust in the Sentinel Elm staff, the urgency in his voice is unmistakable, and by the time we've dashed to the sheep pen the birth seems imminent. Eric rejoins the eight other seventh-graders kneeling in a hushed semicircle a few feet away from the ewe. "We came in to pet the sheep," explains one of his classmates, Darius, "then we heard this moaning sound and saw the sheep lie down on the ground and start kind of pushing with her stomach." Moving his hands up and down his sides, he tries to demonstrate the contractions. "Yeah," chimes in Mikhail, "and all the other sheep they lined up single file in a circle around her, maybe to protect her while she's vulnerable to predators and stuff."

It's a sharp observation, and the kids seem to take note of everything as they continue to watch the ewe with patience. The students are visiting from Community Preparatory School in South Providence, Rhode Island, a unique private school serving primarily low-income students in grades 3 through 8. The local business community and private donors fund most of the students, who in turn are required to challenge themselves with lofty personal and educational goals. Through hard work and diligence, the program works wonders. Almost all students are accepted into exclusive college prep schools and four-fifths of them continue their education at the university level.

For now, however, they're just regular twelve-year-olds in awe at the miracle of birth. With a final push and little help from the staff, the ewe delivers a beautiful black lamb. It blinks its eyes at this new world, while the kids stare with it at a future of endless possibility.

