

Ridgetop Runner

Connecting the Farm School Community

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Softball Series Continues

Maggie's Hardy Kiwis defend their victory over the PVS Sentinels this Friday, June 6th, at 6 p.m., when the game moves to Silver Lake Park in downtown Athol. Come for the softball and the barbeque to celebrate the completion of the spring season at Sentinel Elm Farm. To get to the park from Main St. in Athol, take a left on Crescent St. just before the Starrett Tools factory, then bear immediately left on Fish St. Look for the yellow gate of the park turnoff and head to the diamond closest to the cemetery.



Jennifer

by Grady S. MacPhee and Tristan Söderlund

Jennifer is a lawyer from California who loves artichokes. As a lawyer many of her clients are people who own big production farms. Since she visits them a few times a year she has a good sense of the ups and downs of these huge production farms, but she wants to see what it is like on a small local organic farm. As a child she grew up in a very agricultural area of Washington State. Even though her family had a small vegetable garden when she was little, she really didn't start getting into gardening until she moved to California where she had a house complete with an orchard. In Washington, she had a garden, too. The things she likes most about gardening are the "fundamental and basicness of it." She wants to learn from coming here to Maggie's Farm how to grow plants; she wants to learn how to grow plants because everyone needs food.

Be Kind and Work Hard

The Program for Visiting Schools wraps up its spring season this week with another old friend, the Mission Hill School. From 1st through 3rd grades these students from Roxbury come to Sentinel Elm Farm for one-day visits, and from 4th grade onward they stay for the full three-day session. The motto on their school banner, "Be Kind and Work Hard," fits perfectly with the philosophy of the Farm School, so their experience on the ridgetop complements their education in the classroom.

All the same, the 7th graders staying for the first half of the week were less than thrilled to be sharing the space with 3rd graders on Tuesday. "It's like stepping on babies!" one exasperated student complained. "They're everywhere I want to be, and they want to see *everything*." Of course, the 7th graders all remembered coming to the farm as younger students themselves, and none of them seemed any less eager than the 3rd graders to touch, taste, and smell everything the farm has to offer. During free time, a handful of junior high students were huddled around the newborn chicks under the heat lamp, each delicately holding one small bird.

"It weighs almost nothing," one girl marveled, "like holding just a crumpled up piece of paper in your hand."

"They're so soft and cute," another cooed. "Don't be surprised if one of them comes home in my suitcase."

"Come on Keisha, your mom would kill you if you brought a bird into the house!"

The kids laughed, but they recalled the time in kindergarten when they had watched chicks hatch right in their classroom. The PVS staff had brought in the eggs and set up the incubators. If these kids cannot grow up on the farm, we can at least bring the farm to them.