



Deep Roots

Published in the PRESENT HOPE & DREAM of the BELOVED COMMUNITY
by the people of DEEP ROOTS AT CLAIRVAUX FARM

I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word
- Martin Luther King, Jr

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Home Again

by Tim Craig

*Hold on, to me as we go
As we roll down this unfamiliar road
And although this wave
is stringing us along
Just know you're not alone
Cause I'm gonna make this place
your home.*
-Phillip Phillips "Home"

My daughter Valeria can sing this song by heart. It is beautiful to listen to her and my heart melts every time. For now, she feels the music inside her and the lyrics are catchy. My eternal prayer is that she knows it is true - she is not alone. There will be times when it will be hard for her to know. She will hit rough patches like we all do. It is inevitable. My wife and I do our best so when she comes up for air during those times, it will be clear to her that she is home.

Home is not just a place. It is a space of belonging. We all need that. Deep Roots is focused on making sure that children of all ages have a warm place, inside and outside, that they can always know as their home. This has been the mission of Deep Roots from its beginning. Out of necessity and our pressing concern for homeless children in our area, Deep Roots has now purchased Clairvaux Farm. I will live here with my family and will be joined by several others to provide hospitality to children and their families as they come to stay with us.

As a very young child, I was given a home. I was adopted into a family where love awaited me. The third of four adopted children, I was welcomed with open arms. As I grew my school friends questioned the validity of having parents I was not born to. I

was always told that I was picked out special. As a young couple, my parents took in others; a foster child with challenging behaviors, a pregnant teen who did not have a safe home, a foreign exchange student who came to call my parents Mom and Dad long after she returned to the Philippines and until her death a few years ago.

With deep and strong roots I left Waterloo, Iowa in 1993 knowing that, however far I strayed, I could always go home. I came here to Clairvaux as a budding young radical, sure of many more things than I actually knew. I was not as social and comfortable around new people as I am these days, but children look at us with the sweetest eyes and I was taken by the circle of children here at that time. Young ones see you coming and sense your pure heart waiting to share its depths. They are not yet caught up in the guarded ways we come to know each other as adults. Their presence creates an atmosphere of sincerity. I found a community with the people of what was then Meeting Ground. To my surprise, I was home again.

I stayed at the farm for a year then moved on to other work, keeping my feet planted in these parts. I returned often to attend chapel services, bringing friends and neighbors from wherever I was living at the time. I was blessed to be able to share the warmth and oneness of community. After chapel, we would break bread in the dining hall.

[Continued on page 5...]



Candlelight service celebrating the re-opening of Clairvaux Farm on January 1 2014. There was a standing-room-only attendance and joy abounded!

Don't Stop Imagining

by Carl Mazza

"Imagination is always the fabric of social life and the dynamic of history. The influence of real needs and compulsions, of real interests and materials, is indirect because the crowd is never conscious of it.... Human beings are so made that the ones who do the crushing feel nothing; it is the person crushed who feels what is happening. Unless one has placed oneself on the side of the oppressed, to feel with them, one cannot understand.... The love of our neighbor in all its fullness simply means being able to say, 'What are you going through?'" - Simone Weil

When I was seventeen, my mother said to me: "Don't stop imagining. The day that you do is the day that you die." - Song by Youth Lagoon, "Seventeen"

Clairvaux Farm is open once again and accepting families with children who are experiencing homelessness. The Farm is a place to live, a home for those without a home, but it is not a shelter -- it is a neighborhood.

[Continued on page 7...]

Happenings at Clairvaux Farm

Clairvaux farm is once again open for families experiencing homelessness, but it is not yet at full capacity. The carpets and walls in the main Family Residence developed major mold after the building was closed up for most of last year. Since January 1, 2014 we have been working to renovate the former dormitory building as apartments for families, and this building, along with the dining hall and community building, is now ready in spite of major setbacks of cold, snow, and frozen water pipes. We are now welcoming volunteer work groups and mission trips to start removing carpet, replacing the flooring and then cleaning and painting to get the main Family Residence ready. Once the weather turns milder we expect this work to proceed rapidly.



IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO SCHEDULE A MISSION TRIP FOR THIS SPRING, SUMMER OR FALL! [See also page 5] Many weeks are still open and we need you. You will be able to make a huge difference in getting buildings ready to house families with children who are homeless and your presence will be welcome. Please contact Udo Sommerhoff for information:

Email: udo@deeprootsinc.org Cell Phone: 410-441-4026

How to contact us:

Deep Roots, Inc. PO Box 113, Earleville, MD 21919
Email: info@DeepRootsInc.org Phone: 410-441-6912

Website: www.DeepRootsInc.org

Clairvaux Farm Physical (&GPS) address:
21 Veazey Cove Rd., Earleville MD 21919

For Work Camp or Mission Trip Information:

Email: udo@deeprootsinc.org Phone: 410-441-4026

Why Deep Roots and Clairvaux Farm Are Important In My Life

by Asha C. Miller- Sowers

Throughout life we find our self searching, searching for a place we can truly be happy and call home. A place where people come together as a family no matter what race, size, religion, or gender. A place that is there for you when nothing else is. Deep Roots and Clairvaux farm are just like that. Deep Roots is a non-

Nothing can compare to that first giggle. Just like nothing can compare to the openness, and love you receive and give. It is like a piece of art that opens perspective and strength just by looking at the paint. Deep Roots and Clairvaux Farm are important to me. It is a beautiful thing to see adults, children, friends and families loving one another. It waters love and compassion in you that is so

We experience many hardships in our lives where it is a challenge to be able to stand up and keep living fearlessly, a life where we are not afraid to fall.

profit organization that brings people together for the same reasons. It is a program that enables children and adults to build long lasting relationships with each other and stay in touch no matter where they go in life. Letting children who are or have been homeless come together and be there for one another gives me such joy.

Clairvaux Farm is a community, for children and families who are presently homeless. It is one that establishes a loving community environment. Where our expressions to one another are no different than if we were blood family. We experience many hardships in our lives where it is a challenge to be able to stand up and keep living fearlessly, a life where we are not afraid to fall. The love and support that everybody gives at Clairvaux Farm creates a new reality for people who come. You receive strength from the care and relationships built loving one another like sisters and brothers. The community gives me the joy as if a baby was laughing its first laugh.

hard to breakdown. Deep Roots and Clairvaux Farm will always have space in my heart.

Doing things that are selfless helps many people. As long as are our intentions are to help others and give them tools to live a life they love is one of the best things you could do in life. And by being involved with either Deep Roots or Clairvaux Farm you have already accomplished something huge.

Clairvaux Farm and Deep Roots give you many experiences that create memories that will last for the rest of your life. That's what I love about both of them. They make me who I am today, for which I am grateful. When we feel there is no way to make something bring a smile to our face, Deep Roots and Clairvaux Farm will always prove us wrong.

I would like to dedicate this article to Michael Woolsey, who is no longer with us but will always be in many people's hearts.



Volunteers Louise Stevens and Audrey Kulick working with children at Deep Roots' Christmas Gathering in December.

Deep Roots Working Plan

by Tracey McCaw

- Provide field trips for experiences that may otherwise not be available for the children and young people.
- Become another friend/adult mentor to the children, for another safe place to reach out to when navigating their lives.
- Have volunteer families, who help chaperone our field trips and activities, become mentor families as relationships are made comfortably and connections are found from things in common, a child the same age with similar interests.
- Stay in contact with the family and the child(ren).
- To provide as many privileges as we can, specialized to each child, both school and extracurricular.
- To keep a snapfish (photo) account of pictures for the child/family to be able to access freely.
- To be part of sharing good experiences and modeling different styles of life that may help a person break the cycles of poverty and homelessness.
- Volunteers will have background checks, as this is our best way to protect the children from further traumatizing experiences.
- Lift spirits, share commitment, become community. Help the children build self-esteem, confidence and trust.
- It takes a community to raise a child well.

The following day, I visit a soup kitchen where more than 200 people, about two thirds of whom are children, come to eat four times a week. The mothers of the children seem competitive, and almost frantic, to make sure their children get their share. A child I meet, a five-year-old boy named Emmanuel, tells me he's "in kiddie garden." His mother says he hasn't started yet. "He starts next year."

"You have to remember," says one of the priests with whom I share my thoughts about these meetings, "that for this little boy whom you have met, his life is just as important, to him, as your life is to you. No matter how insufficient or how shabby it may seem to some, it is the only one he has" -- an obvious statement that upsets me deeply nonetheless.

Jonathan Kozol, Amazing Grace

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Deep Roots Mission Statement

Deep Roots works with children, who are disconnected through homelessness or other similar marginalization: connecting hearts. Our program will challenge children to envision a brighter future, to sustain healthy relationships and to navigate a course towards personal and social responsibility through better life experiences, with mentors, providing healthy life-models for all future relationships.

Deep Roots, Inc. is a non-profit 501c3 organization. All donations are deductible for tax purposes and are promptly acknowledged with a receipt. Donations may be mailed to:

Deep Roots, Inc. PO Box 113, Earleville, MD 21919
 Donations may also be made by Credit Card at our web site:
www.DeepRootsInc.org

Deep Roots in Action



Above: The challenge of learning to water ski at the Upper Chesapeake Ski Club in Elkton

Below: Renaissance Family Day in Havre de Grace, MD. The young people participated in a social event with other families doing crafts, learning archery, and being a part of the joy of belonging with other children and their parents.



by Zoe Miller [Age 15 and a former resident of Clairvaux Farm. Zoe is the secretary of Deep Roots, Inc.]

Deep Roots creates an environment where kids can feel accepted and equal. In school they say we are equal, but the truth is, everyone is being judged by what clothes we wear, where our bus stop is and so on. I too have experienced this and being homeless makes it harder. Deep Roots takes that all out and leaves us with nothing but fun and joy. Even if it's only for an hour you still feel happy when you leave.

Deep Roots has now re-opened Clairvaux Farm as a home for children and their families who are temporarily homeless. It is a place where they are equal and can have fun. A happy place. There was a woman named Patience who lived at the farm until this past year. She was a refugee and the farm took her in until the day she died. She was wonderful. I can remember being a little girl in the chapel singing and feeling like we were the same age, like there was no difference. I feel this same way but in a different way with Deep Roots. Deep Roots is important because it allows children to feel equal.



Ocean City, MD for a summer outing where the young people learned from young adults who themselves experienced homelessness as children that homelessness is temporary, and that looking forward to such things as a summer job and having their own apartment can open their imagination to the power and potential and what they can accomplish in life.

Halloween Outing [right] Speaks for itself. Kids having fun being kids!



Turner's Creek State Park, MD [two below] Deep Roots sponsors regular outings in partnership with former Congressman Wayne Gilchrest who shares with the young people the importance of appreciating the natural world, and what we can learn from it about our place in the universe especially the respect and reverence for all life, including and especially their own unique life.



The Crisis of Homelessness for Children

There is a common misconception that homelessness is an issue that only pertains to single men and women, but in reality thousands of families a year will experience homelessness. In fact, 41% of the homeless population is comprised of families. (National Alliance to End Homelessness). Homelessness is a devastating experience for families. It disrupts virtually every aspect of family life, damaging the physical and emotional health of family members, interfering with children's education and development, and frequently resulting in the separation of family members. The problem of family homelessness is not solely restricted to urban areas; rural and suburban communities are increasingly plagued by the problem.

President Obama addressed this vital issue when he stated "It is not acceptable for children and families to be without a roof over their heads in a country as wealthy as ours." (Press Conference, Feb. 2009). The issue has become even more pressing recently in light of the severe economic downturn and the ensuing loss of jobs. Recent economic turmoil will assuredly lead to more families becoming homeless, testing already strained resources for homeless families. The numbers and citations used in this report are mostly from before the economic downturn, due to the time and manpower it takes to assemble statistics concerning homelessness. With this in mind the statistics mentioned in this report most likely understate the severity of the issue. The looming and disastrous possibility of increased family homelessness makes understanding the issue immensely pertinent.

What Are the Experiences of Homeless Children?

Children experience high rates of chronic and acute health problems while homeless. The constant barrage of stressful and traumatic experiences also has profound effects on their development and ability to learn.

Experiences of Violence

- Violence plays a significant role in the lives of children.
- By age twelve, 83% of homeless children had been exposed to at least one serious violent event.
- Almost 25% have witnessed acts of violence within their families.
- 15% have seen their father hit their mother.
- 11% have seen their mother abused by a male partner.
- Children who witness violence are more likely than those who have not to exhibit frequent aggressive and antisocial behavior, increased fearfulness, higher levels of depression and anxiety, and have a greater acceptance of violence as a means of resolving conflict.

Physical Health

- Children experiencing homelessness are sick four times more often than other children. They have:
- Four times as many respiratory infections.

- Twice as many ear infections.
- Five times more gastrointestinal problems.
- Children living below the poverty line are almost twice as likely to have asthma as those living above. One in nine homeless children are reported to have asthma related health conditions.
- In one study, 69% of asthmatic children entering the New York City shelter system had visited the emergency room at least once in the past year for asthma treatment.
- They go hungry at twice the rate of other children.
- Nutritional deficiencies in homeless children often lead to high rates of overweight and obesity.

Mental Health

- Children experiencing homelessness have three times the rate of emotional and behavioral problems compared to non-homeless children.
- Among young homeless children:
 - One out of six have emotional disturbances. This is twice the rate of other children.
 - 16% of homeless preschoolers have behavior problems including severe aggression and hostility.
- Among school-age homeless children:
 - 47% have problems such as anxiety, depression, and withdrawal, compared to 18% of other school-age children.
 - 36% manifest delinquent or aggressive behavior, compared to 17% of other school-age children.

Developmental Milestones and Academic Performance

- Children experiencing homelessness are four times more likely to show delayed development. They also have twice the rate of learning disabilities as non-homeless children.
- Thanks to the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act, children experiencing homelessness have a greater chance of achieving educational stability
- 85% of homeless children and youth regularly attend school.
- However, homeless children still experience significant educational disruption:
 - Although 42% of children and youth experiencing homelessness are below the age of five, they are significantly underrepresented in pre-school programs.
 - Of homeless elementary students, only 21.5% are proficient in math and 24.4% in reading. It is even worse among high school students, where 11.4% are proficient in math and 14.6% in reading.
 - Poor students are twice as likely as non-poor students to have to repeat a grade, be expelled, get suspended from school, or drop out of high school.

Families experiencing homelessness are under considerable stress. They may stay in multiple settings



Deep Roots annual gathering at Turner's Creek State Park

throughout the time they are without a home. Many double-up in overcrowded apartments with relatives and friends. Others sleep in cars and campgrounds or send their children to stay with relatives to avoid shelter life. Once in shelter, families must quickly adjust to overcrowded, difficult, and uncomfortable circumstances. Despite the efforts of dedicated staff, many shelters are noisy and chaotic; overcrowded and lacking privacy. Homelessness also increases the likelihood that families will separate or dissolve.

- The impact of family stress during times of homelessness is not lost on children.
- 74% worry that they will have no place to live.
- 58% worry that they will have no place to sleep.
- 87% worry that something bad will happen to their family.
- Families who have experienced homelessness have much higher rates of family separation than other low-income families.
- Some separations are dictated by the shelter system. 55% of the cities surveyed by the US Conference of Mayors report that families may have to break up in order to be sheltered.
- Other Families separations result from the stress of the experience. Families may send their children to stay with relatives to avoid shelter life. One-fifth of homeless children are separated from their immediate family at some point.
- There is a strong link between foster care placement and homelessness.
- Mothers with a childhood history of foster care placement are more likely to become homeless, and they tend to become homeless at an earlier age than those who do not have a foster care history.
- Homeless children are at particularly high risk for being placed in foster care.
- 12% of homeless children have been placed in foster care, compared to 1% of other children.
- Homelessness is also a barrier to reunification for some families. At least 30% of children in foster care could return home if their parents had access to housing.

Source: The National Coalition for the Homeless www.nationalhomeless.org and the National Center on Family Homelessness www.family-homelessness.com

Why Building a Neighborhood is Vital in Ending Homelessness for a Child

By "Kathryn" (age 8)

When I was little I lived at Clairvaux Farm and I had a nice, warm bed that I slept in. Before I lived at the Farm I lived in a park and I was sleeping in a tent. At the Farm I always had enough food, but before, I had no food at all.

I met new people I've never known before and the people were very nice and playful. When I was happy I danced for them and that made them happy. It was fun for me.

Then one day there was a hayride and that's when I met my adoptive parents and they are so nice and loving and caring and they loved me and I loved them so very much!!!

Hi, this is "Kathryn's" adoptive mom. We first met "Kathryn" at the Farm, she was 18 months old. For her, Clairvaux Farm represents love, safety and security that was absent from much of her early childhood. Living in a tent in a homeless encampment is no place for a little child. When she is around the area in which she grew up, she remembers what it was like to walk the streets with her mother when it was dark and when her legs were tired. She talks about the fights she tried to break up between her family and others and she talks about what it was like to be sick in a tent when the weather was rainy and cold.

While some of the chaos of her early years is still with her today, much of conversations of her past life have been replaced by stories of positive experiences she had while living at Clairvaux Farm, the people who were nice to her there, and those who took care of her. When we visit the Farm, she carries her message of hope for a better life to other children there. Kathryn has made friends with other children who have lived at Clairvaux Farm and these friendships continue to this day.

This is "Kathryn's" adoptive dad. Kathryn's biological Mom was 12 when she became homeless and when we first met the family at the Clairvaux Farm she was 17; we also met the biological grandparents. Imagine three generations one family all homeless at the same time and place. Biological mom is still having difficulties. Her troubles stem from a very unstable childhood. Biological

mom's younger brother was taken away from their mother by the State and placed in a closed adoption. In the time space of 18 months, biological mom and Kathryn moved 22 times. Their belongings were put into white trash bags and relocated to the next place they would stay. Kathryn had no toys that she retained from each move, no baby pictures and very little food. She stayed for a time at an encampment behind Marina Park in a tent with her grandfather.

The tent had a shower curtain for a "door." Drugs, fighting, drinking and the occasional tent burning by another person living in the tent community is neither civil nor safe. This is no place for anyone to live much less a three year old girl. At Clairvaux Farm she had toys, a safe place to sleep, good food and most importantly she had the opportunity to have relationships with people who lived stable and well adjusted lives.

Many of those Kathryn met at the farm are still there for her to help support her as she grows (she is now on the honor role at school). Her success is due in large part to those healthy relationships she formed at Clairvaux Farm. Healthy relationships and community is the foundation that Kathryn needed to soar. I guess really we all need the same thing.

Clairvaux Farm was a constant – for the families who lived there, as well as for those of us who volunteered there. Some people were able to establish stability relatively quickly; others, like Kathryn's biological family, knew the Farm was there as a safety net when things fell apart. Others came back once they established stable lives to serve as volunteers and help others realize their goals and dreams of a better life. All of us who have experienced Clairvaux Farm, in whatever capacity we've been there, are the better for it.

Now when Kathryn cleans her room (with some prompting), she wants all of the clothes and toys she's outgrown to go to Clairvaux Farm so children experiencing homelessness can enjoy them and know that someone like them is thinking of them. We hope that you will join us in doing the same.



Spring, Summer & Fall Mission Trips are Welcome!

We have a full year's work plan to restore Clairvaux Farm to full operation. We began on the first of January to convert the former Dormitory Building to a family residence so we could begin housing families as quickly as possible. Struggling through the unusual cold and snow of this winter season, volunteers working under the leadership of Udo Sommerhoff accomplished major reconstruction and the building is now open for homeless families.

Our next step is to renovate the present Community Building to accommodate live-in volunteers who will oversee the program year-round. Clairvaux Farm is operating almost entirely through the dedicated efforts of a volunteer community and this housing is important to accomplish our work. In the eight months the Farm was closed at the end of last year there was significant deterioration of the Family Residence. In the closed-up building mold quickly covered the carpets and many parts of the walls. We hope to have the carpet removed soon which will open the way for cleaning, painting, and installing new flooring. We want to get this building occupied with families as soon as possible in the spring or early summer. Finally, we will tackle completion of the new education and community building which was under construction when Clairvaux Farm was closed last April.

Mission trips of youth, adults, or inter-generational are all enthusiastically welcome! Contact Udo Sommerhoff as soon as possible to reserve your week (or partial week):

Email: udo@deeprootsinc.org

Phone: 410-441-4026

Mission Trip February schedule (thus far):

- 1 Rock Presbyterian Church (Fair Hill MD)
- 9 Zion Methodist Church (Cecilton MD)
- 15 Christiana Presbyterian Church
- 22 Elkton Presbyterian Church

March 9-15: Nazareth College, Rochester NY

Home Again . . .

[Continued from page 1]

Sunday dinner was a special experience. Extra love was put into the meal and, still today, those dinners are what I picture in my mind's eye whenever I hear the word "fellowship."

While courting my wife, I brought her to the Farm on a Sunday to meet my friends here and walk the nature trail. As I had hoped, it sealed the deal and she accepted my proposal of marriage. When I graduated college, I was invited to celebrate here at the farm with a friend who was graduating from the seminary. It only made sense that this bench mark in my life be shared with those I felt closest to at the place I was most comfortable. After a few years of creating a home in Delaware for my wife's sister and daughters (newly arrived from Mexico) and having our own child, we were invited back to live and work

here at the farm. This is now our physical home. Approaching five years, we have made many new friends and my daughter is elated that children will again soon occupy the playground and dining hall with their shrills of laughter. It will be a new beginning at an old and sacred place. We have been part of the Deep Roots community for several months now and Deep Roots is a home in our hearts; a place where nary a child will ever be alone. They say "it takes a village to raise a child". It also takes a home.

*Settle down, it'll all be clear
Don't pay no mind to the demons
They fill you with fear
The trouble it might drag you down
If you get lost, you can always be
found
Just know you're not alone
Cause I'm gonna make this place
Your home* Ω

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Deep Roots, Inc. raised the money to purchase Clairvaux Farm from Meeting Ground, which had closed the facility in April, 2013. A groundswell of support allowed the purchase (\$250,000) without the need for bank financing.



To those who worked and prayed to that end, it seemed very much like a miracle, coming as it did in the midst of the Christmas season. The Cecil Whig designated the re-opening of Clairvaux Farm as one of its 13 most uplifting stories of 2013, and that story is reprinted below:

13 most uplifting stories of 2013

By JACOB OWENS
jowens@cecilwhig.com

Monday, December 30, 2013

By Jacob Owens jowens@cecilwhig.com

Clairvaux Farm saved. The Earleville farm founded more than 30 years ago to serve homeless families in Cecil County was in dire straits in March, when its then owner, Meeting Ground, was forced to sell it citing its distance from social programs. But in December, Deep Roots, a new Delaware-based non-profit that focuses on homeless children and young adults, announced it would purchase the 20-acre property and several buildings with donations for \$250,000 and no mortgage.

“So much affection, care and downright love has made the impossible possible, in the service of families in crisis. It truly is a Christmas miracle,” said Deep Roots founder Carl Mazza, who also opened the doors of the farm decades ago.

In anticipation of reopening, Clairvaux Farm gives thanks to fresh start

By Dara McBride dmcbride@cecilwhig.com | Posted: Thursday, December 26, 2013

EARLEVILLE — Warm beds and the chance for a new start are coming with the new year. On New Year’s Day those behind the reopening of Clairvaux Farm, a family homeless shelter, will welcome in the new year with a candlelight Service of Celebration. Just before Christmas, the shelter and 20-acre property at 21 Veasey Cove Road in Earleville was purchased by Deep Roots, a Delaware-based non-profit. Clairvaux Farm is expected to reopen in early 2014.

The candlelight service, which begins Wednesday at 4 p.m., will serve as an opportunity to give thanks to those who made it possible to reopen the shelter. In addition to the religious service, there will be an open house for the public from 3 to 5 p.m..

“It’s a welcoming celebration. Our goal was to at least have the farm in hand by Christmas, and we did that. So it seemed like a celebration was in order given the season,” Mazza said. Mazza is also a founder of Meeting Ground, a non-profit organization aimed at helping the homeless that decided to sell the Clairvaux Farm property in March. Mazza is now retired from Meeting Ground.

Families are already on a waiting list to come to Clairvaux Farm once it is reopened, which Mazza expects to happen within the first few weeks of 2014. Deep Roots hoped to have the farm up and running quickly, but once the property was purchased the group realized more work needed to be done to ready the property. Mazza said volunteers will be at the property almost every day to clean and make repairs until the farm can reopen.

Cecil Whig EDITORIAL: Farm of hope

Posted: Wednesday, April 10, 2013 4:00 am

Last month’s announcement that a Cecil County-based non-profit plans to close an Earleville farm that has housed homeless families for more than three decades came as a shock to many in our community.

Clairvaux Farm, a 20-acre community tucked away into the countryside off Veasey Cove Road, was home to several dozen people fighting to regain their place in society. Through the years, the farm’s success stories of individuals gaining employment and moving back into homes have been numerous and detailed in annual reports.

Meeting Ground, the farm’s owner, simply cannot afford to continue running the farm at an estimated cost of more than \$650,000 a year when its occupants are far from support services. It hopes to move its focus closer to Elkton, where it already runs four programs fighting homelessness, and where the county and state offices are located along with public transportation.

For the Rev. Carl Mazza, retired founder of Meeting Ground and original purchaser of Clairvaux Farm, though, the announcement was shocking.

Homelessness is a problem that has plagued the county, both visibly and out of sight, for as long as the farm has operated. Citizens and business owners have often told officials that the presence of homeless individuals is an obstacle for growing businesses, especially in downtown centers.

So the question becomes, how to do we help to end homelessness?

The answer is neither simple nor conclusive, but we believe one would be hard-pressed to argue that the presence of programs like Clairvaux Farm don’t help to end some people’s homelessness.

While Meeting Ground today laments the distance from the farm to urban centers, Mazza told the Whig that was exactly why the farm was selected.

“The reason we opened Clairvaux Farm was for the families and children,” he said. “Our philosophy was that homeless people needed the same community and human interaction that we all do. We had been housing families at the Wayfarers’ House on Delaware Avenue in Elkton, but the farm allowed us to bring more people together and away from the stress of life.”

He added that the farm’s real focus was children, for whom homeless is particularly devastating in the developmental period of their lives. Without the proper community and support, homelessness can be especially damaging on a child’s self confidence.

“Homelessness can be very demoralizing for a child,” Mazza said. “They move from place to place, their parents are often focused on surviving and finding work, and school is difficult to concentrate on.”

The farm, however, allowed children to get away from society’s problems, enjoy communal meals and shelter and talk with each other about ways to cope with their homelessness, Mazza said.

“We want to continue to innovate ways to better serve our homeless children,” he added.

We agree and hope that Deep Roots, a mentoring group run by former Clairvaux Farm occupants, can step in to keep the farm in operation.

Homelessness is an awful scourge that can deflate and defeat individuals. We believe Cecil County will need every option available to continue fighting the problem amidst our still recovering economy.

“Of all the preposterous assumptions of humanity over humanity, nothing exceeds most of the criticisms made on the habits of the poor by the well-housed, well-warmed, and well-fed.”

- Herman Melville

Don't Stop Imagining ...

[Continued from page 1 . . .]

It is a neighborhood because families who come to Clairvaux, along with all who are part of the community, are urged to grow as persons, each one seeking to discover who we are as individuals and who we are together. At the opening ceremony on New Year's Day, Pat Cartwright said it best when he described what we are doing as "love in search of community."

In December, as we were raising funds to purchase the Farm, a woman, who had been a resident there years ago with her family, spoke to me about her experience after being homeless. She and her husband are employed now in good jobs and their temporary homelessness is just a memory. But her two children, who were both school-aged when they lived at Clairvaux Farm, have no idea they were homeless at one time in their lives. They have memories of the Farm, to be sure, but not of the chaos and stigma which so often besets kids who have experienced homelessness. That is part of the redemption which takes place at Clairvaux; it is all about a renewal of the human heart and a recognition that the worth of a person is never defined by their circumstances.

To be sure the Clairvaux community is transitional for most. Families who come work hard with volunteers and mentors to find their way back to a safer place, no longer homeless. Providing a place of warm housing and meals, a quiet space to do homework in the evening or to write a job resume on the computer – these are all needed and offered. But as it has been said, "a cup of soup, if offered in love, may redeem a soul." It is not about *services*, as such, but caring and honest human relationships which empower the heart and will.

That mindset, to know oneself as a person with power and breadth to live abundantly, is what Clairvaux Farm is all about. The spiritual understanding of ourselves as powerful individuals and as vital parts of any community is what we want all who come to experience. Just before Christmas, when we signed the Settlement papers for Clairvaux Farm, I felt a sense of wonder that so many people had joined together to make it happen – so many who gave and sacrificed their time, talents, and resources, with such generosity, as well as those who prayed and took time to give words of encouragement. As the Psalmist once declared, no doubt with a similar

sense of the presence and power of a great unseen hand which guides human affairs, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes!" (Psalm 118:23)

Then, as the New Year turned, I took time to reflect on the journey we undertook to reclaim Clairvaux Farm for families needing an anchor for spirit as well as body. In the beginning it seemed like an unreachable dream. It looked most impossible when we thought of it in terms of "raising money," the \$250,000 we needed to come up with, and quickly.

Yet it always looked more and more possible as we worked toward our goal, not because we became suddenly rich, but rather as a growing community of dedicated people began to rally together in a solidarity of faith. That growing group of believers became our rock of assurance and the confidence that we would not fail. Was it hard work? Yes. Were there a legion of disappointments along the way? Yes. Was there any doubt in the eventual success of our cause? Never. (Well, maybe occasionally...) No one person did it all; many hundreds, all believing together, made it happen.

Now, as we are beginning a new chapter in the history of Clairvaux Farm, it is important to present a clear picture of the vision. Clairvaux Farm is foremost a place of spiritual renewal. There is a lot of talk these days about "ending homelessness." Since 1980, I have seen programs and plans come and go as to how this should happen. Yet, the problem continues to grow in our society and every year it seems to be more deeply embedded into an intransigent social malfunction -- the growing gap between *rich* and *poor*.

Strictly in terms of housing, ending homelessness for most would require a large supply of decent, affordable housing (with transportation) available for all. It would also require a *living wage* so that persons of all income levels would have access to housing with dignity, with the ability to support themselves and their families through their work. Ending homelessness can never be fully accomplished unless this spiritual undergirding of our society is strengthened: making room for all is an important concept of ancient Hebrew justice throughout the Bible: "If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an



Laurie gets to know one of the youngest participants in Deep Roots

alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you."

- Leviticus 25:35

The current emphasis on "Housing First" is important and vital for so many persons and families for whom homelessness has become almost a normal way of life. Yet, until there is enough available housing and funding so that every person in need can be helped, the problem of homelessness remains one that must be addressed through a variety of means. Yet, even if all necessary housing were immediately available, the development of the practice of neighborhood, the beloved community of which Martin Luther King, Jr. dreamed, would still be essential in reaching the goal of a society in which all persons live, by their own means, with dignity and purpose.

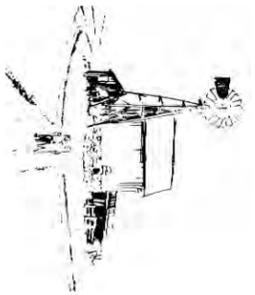
Clairvaux Farm itself is a small part of the much larger picture of a true solution. Nevertheless, its message is unique and urgently needed. To understand what that message is, we might ask why persons from all walks of life want to join to a church or a spiritual community. The need to belong, to see oneself as a vital, indispensable and unique being, contributing to the welfare of all others, is surely what it means to be human. We seek such identification because it is inherent in the human soul to be a giver, connected to others through what we call *love*. As the author M. Scott Peck defines it, love is: "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth."

Why is this spiritual dimension so necessary in the process of "ending homelessness," especially in breaking the cycle of homelessness in families and in the lives of the children who are so tragically caught up in it? One of the best examples I can give is the story of two young women who are

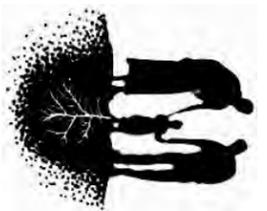
founding board members of Deep Roots. Both Laurie and Tracey were young children in families who were in residence at Clairvaux Farm in the 1980s. Both their families were caught in tragic circumstances, drawing the children into unrelenting years of chaos and insecurity.

The young girls' experience at Clairvaux Farm was life-changing for them. Both in the security of the place itself, and in the loving relationships they established there, they were able to develop insights into life and hope which served as a foundation for their growth into adulthood. And they have remained friends, supporting each other through the years, continually returning to Clairvaux Farm as volunteers and mentoring other children in the understandings they found as solutions to permanently ending homelessness in their own lives. They now have families of their own. Homelessness is something unknown to their children, some of whom are preparing to enter college. If you were to ask Tracey and Laurie about their religion, they would speak enthusiastically about the power they received in knowledge of themselves, others, and the universe itself through relationships they developed at Clairvaux Farm, their neighborhood.

As those of us in the Deep Roots community look to the future, strengthening the bonds and ties of human community is most important to us. In addition to transitional housing of homeless families, along with everything else needed to assist them in moving to permanent safe and affordable housing, Clairvaux Farm will grow as a neighborhood, extending the heartfelt realization that the world is a place of friendship, and at the core of the universe itself, as deep in the heart of every human being, is a love which is unconditional, unchanging, and ever living. Ω



Deep Roots at Clairvaux Farm



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Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

- Margaret Mead

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Deep Roots' Current Needs

Deep Roots is a non-profit mission, supported through spontaneous gifts of faith. All donations are tax deductible. We ask donors who want a tax receipt to prepare a list of items donated and their fair market value. Please bring two copies of this list when bringing donations. **At this time we have special need of:**

Ongoing Household Needs:

- Canned food of all types
- Spaghetti, macaroni
- Spaghetti sauce
- Fruit juices
- Fresh vegetables & fruit, potatoes
- Blankets
- Single bed sheets
- Children's clothing in very good condition
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels / tissues
- Cleaning supplies including mops, rug-lar & push brooms
- Bleach / Lysol / Cleanser / Window cleaners / All-purpose cleaners, etc.
- Towels & washcloths
- Trash bags (39 gallon)
- Disposable diapers, all sizes / Disposable diaper wipes

Special Immediate Needs:

- **Quality Flooring for the Family Residence Building to replace the carpet ruined by mold last summer.**
- A Gas Clothes Dryer in good condition.
- A pick-up truck in good running condition
- A van (7 or 12 passenger) in good running condition

- Children's cold medications (over the counter)
- Cat food (dry or canned) - as we always have cats who come to Clairvaux Farm one way or another to get looked after.
- Office supplies: any and all materials for general office use. Stamps!