he Vermont we know and love is under great pressure. We’ve all seen the changes: the cow pasture down the road that is now rows of identical houses, and the woods where you hunted with your dad that are now gone, developed and posted with no-trespassing signs. U.S. Census data for 2000 show that rural communities are absorbing 40 percent of Vermont’s population growth, resulting in the loss of valuable farmland, forest and wildlife habitat. But the picture is not totally grim. Sprawl is not inevitable; in fact, great efforts are being made all over Vermont to support and strengthen the connections between our communities and the working landscape so we can grow and prosper.

Owners of country stores and restaurants are working with neighboring farmers, in growing numbers, to serve their customers with steadily more Vermont-grown products. Communities have signed agreements with landowners to create and protect hiking trails through private farmland. As each new growing season begins, increasing numbers of Vermonters are paying local farmers up front to purchase a season’s worth of produce, cheese and meat—whose profits go directly to the people who are working the land.

This publication, produced by the Vermont Forum on Sprawl, highlights the innovative efforts that are providing real ways for all Vermonters to make a lasting difference in their community, and for the landscape we love.
Community Supported Agriculture

Bringing Your Dinner Back to the Land

For much of the world, the New England small farm symbolizes our region. This treasured piece of Vermont's traditional landscape is also an essential part of our working landscape—yet the Vermont small farm has become an endangered species. The same is true across the country. As farming becomes concentrated in giant agribusiness operations, the vast majority of us grow more and more separated from the sources of our food. While in 1930, 25 percent of Americans participated directly in agriculture, that number is now less than 1.5 percent.

And even though most of us today would not welcome being tied to agricultural life, we all lose when our region loses small farms. Not only do we see the growing clutter and fading beauty of our landscape; we also lose the ability to buy and enjoy locally grown food, to know how our food is grown and what's in it, and to know the people who produce it.

One method that is helping some Vermont small farms grow their business today, while also enabling their neighbors to discover the joys of fresh local food, is Community Supported Agriculture.

"CSA" operations typically offer annual or seasonal memberships, or shares, for a fee. Shareholders can come to the farm on a regular basis, during growing season, to pick or pick up a batch of freshly grown produce, herbs, or other farm products.

To learn more, we spoke with two local CSA farmers.

**Low Costs & Just-Picked Produce**

Will and Judy Stevens run the Golden Russet Farm in Shoreham, 12 miles west of Middlebury, while Jinny Cleland operates Four Springs Farm in Royalton. The shares that customers purchase on each farm range in cost from $120 for a fall share—enough vegetables each week from October through December for two hungry

**How You Can Support CSA Farming**

Remember that how you spend your food dollar does make a difference. "If we each made a concerted effort to reallocate just 10 percent of what we spend on food annually to buying local products, it would mean an additional $132 million annually to Vermont's agricultural economy," says Leon Graves, Vermont's former commissioner of agriculture.

• Become a member of your nearest CSA.
• Buy a share for yourself, or as a gift for someone else.
• Tell your friends about local CSAs!

Contact a CSA and volunteer your time. Talk with your local CSA farmers about how they might better serve your needs. Most CSA farmers are approachable and interested in learning how to better serve their communities.

Talk with a local farmer about starting a CSA if one does not exist near you.

Above: A CSA share provides fresh picked produce every week—bread, meat and cheese can also be available. Right: Jinny Cleland owner of Four Springs Farm, and Joey Flint plant melons for the CSA.

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How to Locate the Nearest CSA

- Ask at a local food co-op.
- Read community bulletin boards.
- Go to your local farmer’s market and ask around.
- Stop by a local farm and ask a farmer.
- Best of all, contact NOFA of Vermont. The Northeast Organic Farming Association is a non-profit group of consumers, gardeners, and farmers working together to strengthen local, organic agriculture in Vermont. They have a running list of CSA farms and information on how to start a CSA in your community. Visit NOFA on the Web at www.nofavt.org.

See back cover to find more contact information for the businesses highlighted in this story.

How does a CSA benefit its community? Here are a few ways:

- Supports Farmland: CSAs provide economic support for preserving active farmland.
- Provides Fresh & Healthy Food: These farms provide their shareholders with delicious, fresh food at very fair prices. Not only is seasonal cooking delicious but there are many health benefits to eating in tune with the seasons.
- Shows People How Their Food is Grown: CSA members know how their food is grown, and they know it comes from land close to their homes. They are now linked to the health of their landscape. Many CSAs provide newsletters with their weekly share packages, detailing events that mark the agricultural year, farmers’ methods, recipes, and canning tips. Members gain a sense of the work that goes into producing and transporting food.
- A Link to Life on the Farm: CSA members develop relationships with farmers. They see what the farmer’s life is like. CSA farmers generally want their members to come by “to feel the farm,” said Jinny Cleland. Both Golden Russet and Four Springs farms host pumpkin-picking days, work projects, and parties for their members.
- Strengthens Local Communities: CSA members also connect with each other. “Most of our customers are professionals who come out to the farm in suits,” Judy Stevens told us. “We do get some dairy farmers, too.” People whose paths might never otherwise meet find themselves harvesting vegetables side by side.
- A Chance to Give: CSA members often have the chance to share the wealth—to donate a weekly portion of their share to a low-income family or to a local food bank, either for a whole season or on the weeks they can’t use their own.

Workers at the Golden Russet Farm take a break.

LEON GRAVES
Former VT Commissioner of Agriculture

adults—to $275-$420 for a full-season share (June through October). An additional $50-$70 per season buys delivery. These two CSAs provide vegetables and fruits; others may also offer meat, dairy products, flowers, and baked goods.

Many CSAs also offer discounts to members who pledge consistent amounts of time to help out at the farm or making deliveries. Consider how much you’d spend at a grocery store buying top-quality produce each season, and you may begin to see the beauty of this bargain.

For Golden Russet Farm, the 50-70 CSA shares they sell each year have added stability to their business. Jinny Cleland agreed, noting that when she sells her fruits and vegetables through a market, up to a third of her costs are related to sales and marketing. In contrast, CSA advance purchases allow her to “concentrate on growing the crop,” she says, which “results in better yields of higher quality,” as well as reduced risk and less waste of unsold food.

The net result of buying food through a CSA is that the consumer spends less to get high-quality produce, while lower production and marketing costs mean higher profits for the farmer. For both farmers and their neighbors, it’s a win-win solution.

A Profit Center for the Farm

But CSA shares account for only one-fifth of the overall revenue on Golden Russet Farm. The rest comes from farmer’s market, food co-op, and restaurant sales, and from Judy Stevens’ greenhouse plant business. CSA shares make up a similar portion of the business for Four Springs, whose other ventures include wholesale and retail marketing of produce and greenhouse plants, along with sales of poultry, baked goods, and her budding “farm-vacation project,” through which Jinny Cleland hopes to offer urbanites a genuine farming experience on their holidays.

These farmers say that, of all the ways they make money, the CSA shares pull in revenue at the highest profit margin, with the lowest hassle. In other words, Community Supported Agriculture helps to push the precarious institution of the small farm in a positive direction—toward long-term business health and well-being.
Country Stores and Community
How Local Stores Are Earning Your Business—And Why It Matters Where You’ll Shop Today

You need to pick up some things for dinner tonight. You could go out to the chain supermarket—where you’d rush through selecting items trucked here from thousands of miles away, and hope the checkout lines aren’t too long. Like just about everyone there, you would feel eager to pile your shopping bags in the car and get home.

Or you could try your local country or general store. In many Vermont communities, this still means walking into a historic building in the center of your town, where you might be greeted by neighbors and by a storekeeper who has dedicated their life to this business. You could buy meat, poultry and produce from area farms; you may even bump into one of the farmers on a delivery run. You might linger for a few well-enjoyed minutes, discussing town politics or arranging the car pool for next week’s soccer game.

At their best, Vermont’s country stores are much more than just easy places to grab chips, soda and gas. They are their towns’ meeting places, and they directly support working farms and forests by selling local produce and Vermont products. This case study highlights two country stores, to show how much local businesses like these can do for Vermont’s people and landscape—and why supporting them is more important than we often realize.

The Centers of Two Communities
The Richmond Corner Market and the Taftsville Country Store are examples of two different paths to country-store success. In Richmond, a small town 15 minutes outside Burlington, local commuters shop at the Corner Market in the evenings, along with contractors on lunch break and the occasional tourist during the day. The market has large meat, dairy, and local produce departments, and sells many Vermont-made products.

In contrast, Taftsville lies between two major Vermont tourist destinations, Quechee and Woodstock—and two thirds of the Taftsville Country Store’s revenue comes through tourism and mail-order business. It specializes in Vermont gift products, Vermont cheese and gourmet foods, and wine. The store has a post office, and stocks basic grocery items for the small local population.

But in both stores, local folks converge to exchange information. Whose daughter is available to baby-sit? Who wants to make a group trip to the movies on Thursday? Whose development proposal has come before the Planning Commission? Each country store gives townspeople a welcoming place to discuss and shape the governing and social life of their town.

Bringing Local Produce to Local People
The Richmond Corner Market works directly with local farmers to supply its clientele with local cheese, meats and produce—and the response from the customers has been overwhelming. The market has built its business through detailed customer feedback: people ask for a product and Kris Rup, the store manager, tries hard to get it, when possible, from a local producer. Store specials are designed around the community’s events and values, including the reward of a free sandwich every month to each student on the local school honor roll.

Yet not long ago, Richmond people could hardly buy any local produce in town. That’s when, together with owner Aaron Millen, Kris put together a plan to take advantage of what she calls the store’s “great location, population base, and lack of any real competition in organics or deli and meat.”

“We wanted changes to be slow and gradual in the beginning,” Kris says. “I made sure I had a feel for what the customers were looking for.” Then she began to expand her produce department, “without a refrigerated case, focusing on the less-perishable items and basic items—keeping the supply and quality consistent.

“I tried to talk to a lot of customers to get their feedback. It’s a small community—they were ready and waiting with their input!”

Over time, Kris found she had “a quirky clientele that was willing to spend the money” on specialty produce items and local and organic produce, “even if it didn’t look very pretty.” This revenue allowed her to invest in a refrigerated case, and to forge relationships with area farmers to expand the amount of fresh local produce.

Lately Kris has learned she can improve her business by marketing local products. With the Vermont Forum on Sprawl, she has developed a display above her produce case that features photos of the local farmers who supply her produce, and information about their local farms. She says this boosts sales by making explicit the bond that can grow between people and the producers of
Though he does not stock many grocery items, he does look to feature items with local appeal, such as his new wine department.

Two-thirds of the Taftsville store’s revenue comes from tourism and mail-order sales of Vermont-made gift products. Each year, 1,600 inquiries pour in from around the world via the store’s Web site. And even though local people spend a proportionally modest amount here, they contribute to the store’s success—just by stopping in for mail, small items, or to chat. Part of the store’s draw for tourists is the traditional, small-town country store atmosphere they find here.

“Our main promotional angle is that we are a country store specializing in gourmet Vermont products,” Charlie says. He believes in this—and he finds that it sells. “There has been an explosion in the specialty foods industry in the last 10 years. Carrying so many Vermont products has just been the natural evolution of the store.”

In 1957 the store’s catalog was already selling Vermont cheese, syrup, and honey to New Yorkers. Now its Web site sells more than one ton of Cabot cheese per year, along with Fort Maidust by Phyllis Fox of Woodstock, Maufette by Karen’s Food Co. of Rutland, pancake mixes made under the store’s own label, and much else that says “Vermont” to customers all over the world. Sixty-two percent of the store’s total sales still come from Vermont-made products.

Charlie has dreamed for years of adding a produce case to his store, but he isn’t sure it could generate enough business to justify the investment. “Produce involves a large initial expenditure, on refrigeration, on payroll and then your inventory goes bad so quickly—I just can’t figure out how to make it profitable,” he says. “I’ve tried selling local corn. One day it will sell out and the next day I’ll only sell three ears and then the rest is not fresh any longer, so I’ve got to throw it out.”

Still, Charlie has not given up on this idea entirely. He plans to keep researching it for the future and can look at the success in Richmond as a potential model.

What Charlie Wilson and his store give back to the Taftsville community reaches well beyond the economic stimulus of selling Vermont-made products that increase the market share of area businesses. Within the last decade, using the store as their headquarters—and, at times, Wilson as their spokesperson—villagers have organized themselves to push through community initiatives. They’ve obtained federal money to improve their town green, they’ve successfully petitioned to put the town on the national historic register, and they’ve blocked the U.S. Postal Service from moving the local post office from the store to a location out of town.

“Look at it,” Wilson marvels. “One hundred and sixty years later, and people are still stopping in to pick up their mail, a newspaper, something to eat, and little local gossip. The smiles are on us.”

**Here’s What You Can Do**

Next time you head to the store, whether for vegetables or a birthday gift, consider your options—and think about where you’d prefer your dollars to go. If you’d like to help support the small, local producers that keep our landscape open and healthy, and if you’d like to help keep your community strong and vibrant, then support your local country store and buy Vermont products.

Here are some suggestions from the proprietors of the Richmond Corner Market and the Taftsville Country Store:

- **Ask and you shall receive.** If you ask your local store’s proprietor for the things you’d like to be able to buy there, they’ll know there is a market for those items.
- **Gift-shopping: try local first.** When you need a gift, try the country store. People everywhere love Vermont products—and through your purchase, both you and your gift’s recipient will be supporting local businesses and producers.
- **Relax—and enjoy!** Think, for just a moment, about why shopping at a country store is more pleasant than a big chain. Then walk, bike or drive on down and enjoy the experience.
- **Contact the VT Alliance of Independent Country Stores** to find a country store near you. See back cover to find more contact information for the businesses highlighted in this story.
Thriving by Diversifying
How Three Vermont Farms Became “Farm Destinations”

As they struggle to survive falling milk prices, droughts, and the pressures of a food industry that’s geared toward large, one-crop operations, some Vermont farmers are finding new ways to capitalize on the powerful appeal their farms and land hold for the public. While still producing food, they are also becoming destinations—learning, recreation, and entertainment resources—for a variety of visitors, from tourists to members of their own communities.

Here are the stories of three Vermont families who each found a way to keep their beloved farm open and strong, by sharing it.

Marketing Farm, Trails & Habitat

“Come experience the beauty of Vermont in the winter,” invites the Web site of the Swenson Farm in Fairlee. “Wander at your own pace over miles of trails through beautiful woods and open fields, all part of an active dairy farm. Be sure to visit the cows and calves!” The site also invites visitors to bring picnics, and build a fire in a pit that overlooks the Connecticut River from this Upper Valley farm.

Three years ago, Melanie and Bob Swenson found an innovative way to diversify their business and share their farming experience with the public. The Swensons decided to support their first love, farming, through their second, snowshoeing through the farm’s back acreage.

The family built trails on 210 acres of their land, including Sawyer Mountain. They sprinkled the trails with benches, bought snowshoes in every size to rent, and named the new business Sawyer Mountain Snowshoe Trails at Swenson Farm. One trail passes right by the heifer barn and calf hutch, where people can see and visit with the animals, and the Swensons make sure visitors see a clean operation.

“The facilities and animals have always been kept clean,” Melanie explains. “We really want to represent the best of the Vermont dairy industry to people.”

The Swensons also organized their large collection of antique farm tools into a museum. Today, their attraction for visitors is much more than just snowshoeing: they offer a rich experience of their whole farm environment.

Local families have become patrons, and neighboring inn owners recommend the farm to their guests. Cabot Creamery donated cheese snacks for trailside refreshment. To encourage neighboring residents to return often, the Swensons offered a season pass. Bob and Melanie work hard to help people appreciate their visit here, always leaving time for questions at the end of each tour.

“Once a group from Cape Cod came and saw a calf being born,” Melanie remembers. “It was the highlight of their vacation.”

Visitors also learn about the wild animals that live in the back acres. The Swensons tell about habitats, and hand out identification cards for animal tracks.

This year, the Swensons broke trail on another 40 acres of land, for a total of eight miles of trail on 250 acres. They offer discounts for school and scouting groups, and over the summers they’ve used their roadside corn stand to promote special events such as senior citizens’ day and ladies’ day. For the future, the family hopes that higher prices for the milk of their 90 cows will enable them to advertise more, as they work to build a solidly diverse business.

Doing, Showing & Teaching Organic Cheesemaking

Since 1999, Rob and Linda Dimmick have welcomed visitors to Neighborly Farms in Randolph, their organic dairy farm and cheese factory. Rob grew up on the property and took it over in 1990—but in 1993, plummeting milk prices forced him to sell his herd. For the next six years, he and Linda sold corn and hay to other farms while searching for a way to bring back the dairy operation.

They learned that organic milk prices were relatively stable. After they tried chemical-free dairying with a new herd, Rob saw the health it brought to his cows. The Dimmicks decided to expand their new business.

“The community used to be totally agriculture-oriented—even non-farmers were very connected to local farming. However, over the 17 years I’ve lived in Vermont I’ve seen the community become totally detached from agriculture. Some of our neighbors don’t even know what we’re doing on the farm.”

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Neighborly Farms, Randolph

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new through value-added production and agritourism: they built a cheese factory on site, with viewing and tasting rooms. Linda welcomed this opportunity to teach the public what life on the farm had taught her. “The community used to be totally agriculture-oriented—even non-farmers were very connected to local farming,” she reflects. “However, over the 17 years I’ve lived in Vermont I’ve seen the community become totally detached from agriculture. Some of our neighbors don’t even know what we’re doing on the farm.”

The Dimmicks added a farm store, where they offer a wide range of Vermont products along with their cheese. Their days Neighborly Farm’s cheeses are also sold around the region, at food co-ops and markets. They have also been recognized and appreciated for their contribution to the local community. “Our neighbors don’t even know what we’re doing on the farm. ‘No ad in the newspaper can give you what signs can give you,’ says John Adams. Even so, each September thousands of people come to the farm for hayrides, tours, and a petting farm at the Fall Harvest Festival. Neighboring schools are encouraged to make their own fundraiser a part of the event. Over the last three years, the Adams donated more than $12,000 from Christmas tree sales to the Vermont Respite House. John and Scott go on the radio—on AM 1230, each Thursday morning at 8:20—to tell the listeners what is happening on the farm. This year the farm opened a farmers market, which Kim, a greenhouse specialist, has developed as a cut flower and herb plot. Kim has developed a monthly e-newsletter, and Scott continues to develop new relationships with other farms by distributing high quality cheeses.

With even all the marketing savvy they’ve learned through hard work and creativity, the Adams’ mission remains the same: to keep their land open and profitable, to develop new relationships with other farmers, to connect the community to present-day life on a Vermont family farm.

### Doing It All in a Fast-Growing Town

To most Vermonters, Williston today means suburban development and supermarkets. Yet John and Peggy Adams have kept their local farm open, thriving, and beautiful. They are working hard to look at, with help from their son Scott, a business graduate from UVM, and daughter Kim, a greenhouse specialist.

Visitors drop by the Adams Farm Market to pick apples, find the perfect pumpkin, or enjoy a cup of hot cider. The family realizes they’ll have to expand their business. Their revenues rebounded after the recent freeze destroyed their entire apple crop, and a late frost the following year did the same. The family’s most persistent obstacle in growing on the farm has been the restrictions placed on the site and location of signage they’re allowed. They would like to see some flexibility for farmers.

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John and Peggy bought this family dairy farm in 1969, and planted 20 varieties of apple trees. But after Hurricane Hugo in 1992 destroyed their entire apple crop, and a late frost the following year did the same, the Adams realized that relying on a single source of revenue was just too risky.

The family planted eight acres of fruit and vegetable fields, and started selling its harvest from their barn. In 1994, with their produce thriving, the Adams opened a new farm stand, and Governor Dean came to cut the ribbon. Then a new Hannaford’s store in town drew away 40 percent of the Adams’ produce business. Their revenues rebounded after the novelty of a new supermarket faded—but the family realized they’d have to expand their clientele.

They added produce from other local farms, along with local crafts and Vermont specialty food products. For local customers, they began to carry staples like milk, eggs, and bread. In order to expand their season to include early spring, the Adams built two greenhouses, and began to sell bedding plants, hanging baskets and patio pots. Kim now offers outdoor floral design advice at events like weddings, along with spring gardening and design seminars. That’s helped draw people to the farm in early spring, a time when business had always been slow.

Today, most of the Adams’ customers are local people. Business spikes during tourist season and community events, and the farm’s Internet gift sales are on the rise. The family’s most persistent obstacle in drawing people to the farm has been the restrictions placed on the site and location of signage they’re allowed. They would like to see some flexibility for farmers.

“Now ad in the newspaper can give you what signs can give you,” says John Adams. Even so, each September thousands of people come to the farm for hayrides, tours, and a petting farm at the Fall Harvest Festival. Neighboring schools are encouraged to make their own fundraisers a part of the event. Over the last three years, the Adams donated more than $12,000 from Christmas tree sales to the Vermont Respite House. John and Scott go on the radio—on AM 1230, each Thursday morning at 8:20—to tell the listeners what is happening on the farm. This year the farm opened a farmers market, which Kim, a greenhouse specialist, has developed as a cut flower and herb plot. Kim has developed a monthly e-newsletter, and Scott continues to develop new relationships with other farms by distributing high quality products.

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### What Can You Do?

Here are some ways you can help Vermont farms make new connections with the public:

- **Make your own connections with farms that invite visitors.** Hire their land (with permission, of course), taste their cheeses and fruits, learn how they produce their food.
- **Shop at a farmstand near you.** Buy local foods sold at your grocery. Every dollar you spend counts.
- **Take every opportunity to educate yourself about the food you eat.** Where does it come from? How was it grown? Read labels, ask your grocer, check out a book at the library. Best of all, ask a farmer!
- **To learn more about farms in your area, visit [www.vermontfarms.org](http://www.vermontfarms.org).** This site, run by the Vermont Farm Bureau, has lots of info about Vermont farms open to the public, along with links to other key agritourism-related sites: [Vermont’s official maple Web site](http://www.vtmaple.org) [The Vermont Apple Promotion Board](http://www.vermontapples.org) [The Vermont Cheese Council](http://www.vtcheese.com) [The Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing](http://www.t-1-800-vermont.com)

See back cover to find more contact information for the businesses highlighted in this story.
Proprietor Barbara Cook says that even though it costs her slightly more to buy fresh local food, her net costs are actually less. That’s because of “shrinkage”—the portion of food that must be discarded because of poor quality or spoilage. As much as one third of a shipment of non-local produce can fall victim to shrinkage; because locally grown fruits and vegetables are fresher and much less-traveled, Scrumptious can use far more of each shipment.

After she opened her cafe, Cook at first bought local produce only from Digger’s Mirth at the Intervale Farm. Now she also buys at the Burlington Farmer’s Market and directly from other area farms. She has further expanded her sources by joining the Vermont Fresh Network, which connects restaurants and chefs with neighboring food producers.

“My food tastes better with fresh ingredients,” Cook explains. “Diners recognize the difference, and we sell out more quickly. I would get even more local products if they were available.”

But getting more local produce isn’t always easy. Just as small farms can have a difficult time working with large buyers, small restaurants like Scrumptious can be “last on the list” for food producers. For example, one of Cook’s original suppliers stopped selling to her once it landed an account with the new City Market in Burlington.

“I only need small amounts, so my business can slip past certain distributors,” Cook says. “For the longest time I couldn’t get anyone to sell me dairy and eggs, since I’m too small.”

The sensible answer may be to connect small producers with small buyers—and this is happening more often around Vermont. But it’s a slow process, as small businesses often have scant resources for finding and marketing to each other.

Another major issue is distribution. Traditional food distributors carry food by the truckload, and an enormous majority of
Vermont’s food traffic is inbound, sold to Vermonters by outsiders. Far less is grown and sold by Vermonters.

Two Vermont food distributors, Black River Produce and Squash Valley Distributors, have begun to go out of their way to service smaller farms. Their work has allowed Cook to increase the amount of local food she brings into Scrumptious’s kitchen.

“Black River Produce has been great,” she says. “I could order just one melon and they’d deliver!”

In contrast with more upscale restaurant members of the Vermont Fresh Network, such as Mary’s in Bristol or the Putney Inn, Scrumptious doesn’t proclaim its use of local food on its signs or menu.

“I like everyone to know that the food at Scrumptious is fresh—but I don’t want to say ‘local’ too much,” she explains. “I don’t want to pigeonhole our restaurant with the ‘organic’ or ‘vegan’ places that scare off the regulars.”

Montpellier’s “Coffee Corner”

On the corner of State and Main streets, right at the center of Montpelier, the Coffee Corner recalls an earlier time. This is a working-class diner, complete with counter stools, waxcracking waitresses and busy fry cooks. But behind the operation is an owner with a decade-long commitment to local, fresh eating.

Explains, “I rely on fax and email and Web sites to do my purchasing, while farmers are out in the fields or in the barn—so they don’t connect ideally with the restaurants.”

Still, the Coffee Corner manages to serve customers maple sugar, milk, cheese, eggs, meats, and dairy products.

In 1994 Mitofsky purchased and took over the Coffee Corner, which has been serving food on its corner for over 20 years. The new owner was still interested in using local foods—but he was far from starry-eyed about it.

“I’m a capitalist,” Mitofsky says. “My main reason to go local is that it’s better for business. When I use commercial products I have 25 percent shrinkage, but with local food it’s only 5 percent. So I get a higher yield for my money.”

Even though many farmers around Vermont are striving to find new outlets for their products, Mitofsky, like Cook in Burlington, has trouble getting all the local food he’d like to use.

“There’s a big technological gap,” he and meat from local sources all year round. In season, nearly all of its fruits and vegetables are locally grown. Mitofsky buys directly from farms or farmers at the Farmers Market every Saturday. That helps him keep the dinner’s prices low—”and I get the best product,” he says.

In presenting its food to customers, Coffee Corner walks a fine line.

“I have a new turkey sandwich with turkey from Misty Knoll Farms that I call the ‘Hot Minty,’” Mitofsky says. “I’m afraid if I put ‘free-range organic’ on the menu, people won’t even look down to see the price, which is only $4.95.”

“My big emphasis is that this food is available to everyone at reasonable prices,” he says.

Your Voice Counts

More local foods will appear on Vermont menus when more restaurateurs realize that the public appreciates a farm-fresh product. You can encourage this by inquiring about local ingredients at your favorite place to grab a bite. Summing up the benefits for everyone is Deborah Good, communications director for Oldways Preservation Trust, a New England non-profit that tracks trends in the American diet as part of its efforts to promote healthy eating and traditional cuisines.

“Let’s face it: we tend to eat what tastes great,” Good says. “A freshly picked local tomato is juicy and full-flavored. It just calls us to eat more of it. We wish to repeat such a pleasurable experience—and, healthwise, this may create an interest in lifelong eating patterns focused on fruits and vegetables.”

How Can Your Restaurant Dollar Support Locally Grown Food?

• Look for the Vermont Fresh Network logo. Restaurants that are Fresh Network members display its logo in their window.

• Patronize businesses that serve local food. Their support of local farms helps keep Vermont agriculture strong, while also giving you a healthy, tasty meal. Not all restaurants that serve local food are members of the Vermont Fresh Network, so ask around!

• Ask for local products. Restaurateurs who know their customers want fresh local foods are more likely to look for it. Consumer demand is a powerful force!

See back cover to find more contact information for the businesses featured in this story.
Knowledge That Grows

“Ag in the Classroom” and “FEED” Projects Cultivate a Wealth of Local Learning

Children should get a feeling of belonging and what life was like in the bygone days. It is important they understand where they came from.

JACK SMITH
logger & dairy farmer

Other elementary-school children are coming home to point out that one sweater is made from “sheep fur,” while another comes from recycled plastic bottles. Kids are learning these things, and more, because of an educational movement that is quietly spreading across Vermont.

Programs sponsored by the state Department of Agriculture and by three collaborating non-profits are giving teachers grants and training for creating educational units that achieve several of the Vermont student-learning standards by focusing on farm life, nutrition, local history, and the experience of growing food in our communities.

This approach is often called a “curriculum of place”—and it’s being promoted by the Ag Department’s “Agriculture in the Classroom” program and by “Food Education Every Day,” or FEED, a project of Vermont NOFA (Northeast Organic Farming Association), Food Works of Montpelier, and Shelburne Farms.

Grand money pays for farm visits, books, community presentations, even garden supplies.

Here’s a look at a few of the programs that have brought Vermont’s working landscape into both classrooms and community consciousness.

Burke School: “That Was Then, This Is Now”

In the Burke Town School’s fourth grade, teachers Jessica Simpson and Tracie Surridge named the project they created, with sponsorship from the Ag Department’s program, “That Was Then, This Is Now: A Comparative Study of Vermont Agriculture 1800-2002.” As part of it, they helped students see what academic skills today’s farmer needs.

“A farmer needs biology and English,” student Kirsten Wilson reflected in an essay—one of the tools cows can go to the bathroom, but put it where everybody doesn’t have to smell it.”

After his class visited a dairy farm, Lawrence Duth wanted to stay forever. “On the trip to the farm I felt good when the cow was sucking my finger and Comet was being nice to me.” The tough side of life on a farm didn’t escape him, though. “I helped get the hay in the hole and rake the manure from the floor. It smelled very, very disgusting, and I felt sad when I saw the baby calf that was going to die.”

Jeff Call was making plans midway through the unit. “I will raise cows, bulls, horses, ship, pigs, chickens, and roosters,” he wrote. “I will grow corn, potatoes, onions, and string beans. I will have a big farm for all of my animals and a lot of equipment to raise the farm. I will make the gutter thing so the

Students then interviewed older relatives and neighbors about their farming experiences. They watched movies and read books on agricultural history and methods, and went on field trips to a sugarhouse, a dairy farm, a cheese factory, a farm museum, a horse farm, and a sawmill.

The fourth grade interviewed guest speakers—including a "and math so you can add up your stuff, pen-cilmanship for customer service, and geogra-phy so you know where to send your stuff.”

Another concluded, after the lesson: “There are no dumb farmers still in business.”

It’s a good thing Simpson and Surridge did that—because without such an academic reality check, their students might have been tempted to quit school and start their own farms.

“Their ideal lessons, filled with careers that kids will never know they could have.”

TOMMY VIGRANT was motivated by his field experience to research the relationship between comfortable bedding for cows and increased milk production. “I think it will work much better because if I was in comfort I would work better,” he decided.

After receiving their grant, Simpson and Surridge began to teach their new unit early this year. They first asked students to list what they already knew about agriculture, along with the things they wanted to know more about.

Students then interviewed older relatives and neighbors about their farming experiences. They watched movies and read books on agricultural history and methods, and went on field trips to a sugarhouse, a dairy farm, a cheese factory, a farm museum, a horse farm, and a sawmill.

The fourth grade interviewed guest speakers—including a...
sheep farmer who was their school nurse, a logger, a mill owner who was one student's father, a gardener, and a historian.

"Children should get a feeling of belonging and what life was like in the bygone days," said logger and dairy farmer Jack Smith, who spoke to the class. "It is important they understand where they came from."

To top off the unit, students chose research topics and presented their findings to a crowd of 130 at a community dinner. D.J. Allard challenged listeners to think about past environmental problems that farming had caused. "Potash was made from woodshakes and boiled water," he said. "It was used for soap and bleach, but Vermonters had to stop making it because it was killing the forest."

At the Fairfield School, third and fourth grade students partnered last year with the Ag Department's program, and with local farmers and volunteers, and planned a mostly local menu. They face a lack of financial support or promotional strategies that offer too few local ordering choices.

"Children should get a feeling of belonging and what life was like in the bygone days," said logger and dairy farmer Jack Smith, who spoke to the class. "It is important they understand where they came from."

By putting their knowledge into practice, students gain a new perspective on where their food comes from and become more conscious consumers. "We should do PowerPoint presentations on the computer," Erich Marcy said.

"What You Can Do"

Interested in agriculture-in-the-classroom programs?
Here are some ways you can follow up:

• Support or promote AITC and FEED at your local school. Talk to teachers and administrators about including agriculture in the curriculum, and local food in the cafeteria. If these programs already exist, support them by attending presentations or volunteering to help with field trips or prepare healthy meals.

• Share your knowledge! If you have agricultural expertise or farming experience, offer to share this with local schoolchildren. You can also get involved through NOFA Vermont's School to Farm Directory, a listing of farmers around the state who are interested in hosting visitors and working with their communities. To learn more about the School to Farm Directory, contact Abbie Nelson at (802) 434-4122.

• Get Involved! If you’re a teacher or school administrator, especially, you should know about the AITC and FEED programs! To learn more, contact:

  • VT Agriculture In the Classroom Partners
    116 State Street, Drawer 20, Montpelier, VT 05602
    Contact: Kara Cimon: (802) 828-2099 / kara@agr.state.vt.us

  • NOFA-VT, PO Box 697, Richmond, VT 05477
    Contact: Abbie Nelson at (802) 434-4122 / AbbieNelson@al.com

VT Agriculture In the Classroom Partners

See back cover to find more contact information for the organizations highlighted in this story.
Opening the Landscape to Everyone
How a “Handshake Agreement” Created and Preserved Public Access

Think of your favorite walk along the edge of an upland pasture, or the trail that brings you through gleaming snow and sugar maples in February. For most of us, it’s outdoor experiences like these that have inspired and strengthened our commitment to healthy landscapes. Our worst fear—too often made reality, these days in Vermont—may be the appearance of a new set of “No Trespassing” signs. Especially as more and more larger properties are being subdivided, our concern grows about the fate of traditional land uses.

In the midst of all this change, many organizations have made important progress in obtaining permanent easements that keep privately held lands available for public use. While these easements are the ideal means for long-term open space protection, the process and the prospect of finalizing such a permanent, legally binding contract can make landowners wary, and prevents some from participating at all.

Here is the story of one community and one farmer that together found a way to allow public access on private land. They did it by moving step by step through informal agreements, toward the eventual formal one that exceeded everyone’s expectations.

One Farmer and a Riverside Path
In Waitsfield, along the scenic Mad River Valley, Elwin Neill, Jr. farms the land that his father farmed before him. In 1993, Neill heard from representatives of the Mad River Path Association about the proposed development of the Mad River Greenway—a recreation path that would run alongside the river from Warren to Mooretown.

For the path to reach that far without interruption, Neill saw it would have to cross his farmland. He believed in the project, but worried that he just couldn’t support it. If a public path ran through his land, wouldn’t people drive over the crops and toss trash in his fields? If someone were hurt on his land, wouldn’t he be sued? What if people disturbed his livestock or started camping on his property?

Neill wasn’t ready to sign papers committing his land to a permanent easement that would guarantee public access—but he was open to other ideas. Discussions with the town and the Mad River Path Association led to a new option. The town would maintain riverside roadways that Neill had built for his farm machinery, and in return he would grant the use of his land, including these roadways, for the path.

Visitors enjoy a walk on the Neill farm property—a section of the Mad River Greenway.
The deal was sealed by handshake agreement in late 1993. The town Select Board hesitated to found its path on this informal bargain; but the board members knew Neill personally, and had encouragement from the Path Association and other community partners. Neill soon signed a license agreement for public use of the path on his farm, including a 30-foot ecological buffer between the Mad River and his cultivated land, with the town’s liability insurance covering the portion of his land that would be open for public use. To resolve his remaining reservations about a permanent legal contract, Neill and the town both retained the right to cancel this agreement with 60 days notice at any time.

“It’s Safer & Cleaner than Ever”

Within a year, the town had packed down Neill’s riverside roadway enough for people to push strollers on it and pedal bikes alongside the water. The town now had a maintained, mowed path to drive his equipment on, and was spending nothing on its upkeep. The town also allocated $800 for the path’s winter transformation into a cross-country ski trail. Almost immediately, Neill found that every time he came into town to get his mail or deliver his corn for sale at local stores, townspeople were approaching him to express their gratitude. And in spite of his concerns, Neill found that neither theft nor crime were coming onto his land.

“People are self-policing—and there are lots of eyes out there, now that more people are using it,” he said. “People are taking pride in it, and it’s safer and cleaner than it’s ever been.”

Neill learned from the neighbors that one of the many fine views along the Mad River Greenway.

In summer 1998, the access agreement benefited Neill’s farm in an unexpected way. That season, the swollen Mad River swept repeatedly over portions of his fields, causing costly flood damage. Because the edge of his land was now licensed to the town, Waitsfield was able to access federal emergency-relief funds to fix both the path and the damage to Neill’s fields.

Shared Work and a New Partnership

Neill has now been involved with the Mad River Greenway for nine years. He has appreciated the free upkeep of his farm road, community-enforced security for his land, and the funding for repair of his flooded fields. He has also enjoyed seeing his land’s use contribute to his neighbors’ health and pleasure, and to his community’s tourist- and recreation-based economy. In fact, Neill felt strongly enough about what his agreement with the town had accomplished that he began working with the Mad River Path Association as it expanded the greenway. Assisted by the Vermont Land Trust (VLT), he purchased a swath of property on the other side of the river. The VLT helped both Neill and the Path Association by paying Neill for the new property’s development rights, for an access easement, and for ecological buffer zone along the riverbank. Again the path was expanded, and Neill had added to his holdings of productive farmland.

Neill also expanded a partnership that had been developed during the original pathway’s creation. The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers, Inc. (VAST) already had a path on Neill’s property, and supported his new agreement with the town. Although some proponents of the Greenway were less than enthusiastic about sharing the riverside path with snowmobilers, the town and community felt comfortable heeding the expertise of a group like VAST, which held owner permission for use of over 4,000 miles of trails.

VAST and its local chapter, the Mad River Ridge Runners, donated much of the physical labor needed to build pathways and bridges along the route. After the floods of 1998, snowmobilers helped to rebuild the trails—and VAST volunteers have offered to work on paths areas that are not open to snowmobilers in winter. A new partnership between the town, VAST, and the Mad River Path Association had been born.

In sum, Elwin Neill helped himself, and his farm, by helping his community. And by working with a local farmer on his terms, Waitsfield gained a valuable asset for both local quality of life and the town’s economy. Beyond that, this story illustrates the possibilities that can open up when conservation-minded lawyers work with farmers, snowmobilers work with environmental advocates, and people of different communities work together to achieve a goal that offers long-term benefits for all.

One of the many fine views along the Mad River Greenway.
All over the state, Vermonters participate in farmers’ markets as vendors, customers, advocates handing out leaflets, entertainers, or simply as spectators. From Newport to Brattleboro, Vermont now has some 46 local farmers’ markets—and the more we join in on this statewide phenomenon, the more we contribute to our health, our pocketbooks, our local economies, and to two crucial parts of our working landscape: local farmers and our environment.

We visited three farmers’ markets around the state to see how these benefits work.

Montpelier: the State’s “Granddaddy” Market

The first Montpelier farmers’ market was first set up behind City Hall in 1900. This local tradition dwindled out after half a century, then was rekindled in 1977 through the combined efforts of local farmers, merchants, state agencies, city residents, and non-profit organizations.

Interest in regional self-reliance was then on the rise, and planners and citizens saw the market as a place for small growers to build their businesses simply, with little overhead, and as a means of strengthening local business networks. The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA), and the Americorps VISTA program sponsored workers who organized and coordinated the market. By the end of its third year, 125 vendors had taken part.

At today’s large, established Capital City Farmers’ Market you can buy every local product imaginable—from zucchini to wool yarn, from meat to blown glass. “It’s a gathering place for the community, with space for people to hang out and talk,” says market manager Jessie Schmidt. “About 70 percent of our customers are locals. It also helps keep the local flavor and feel of the market that our vendors have to be from Washington County or a contiguous county.

Musical performances and hot food of many ethnic traditions add to the festive atmosphere. The market opens itself to community members of all income levels by accepting hundreds of dollars worth of Farm-to-Family coupons each week. The state Office of Economic Opportunity distributes these coupons to low-income families, who can redeem them at any farmers’ market.

Owners of Montpelier businesses have noted increased foot traffic on market days, from both locals and tourists. “We need people coming here saying, ‘Oh, this is so nice and different from where I come from,’” says Bob Watson, proprietor of the Capitol Grounds cafe. “The farmers’ market is one thing that makes it different. And as a gathering place, it’s strengthening the town.”

The revenue generated by the market’s 75 vendors supports production on over 1,400 total acres of nearby land. Market sales are an especially vital revenue source for producers of traditional, less well-known varieties of fruits and vegetables. Most supermarkets sell only five kinds of apples, for example, while it’s not unusual to find 20 at the market. This gives a much-needed boost to agricultural biodiversity in the region.

Operating here without a “middle man,” market farmers earn more while shoppers usually pay less. And because market food hasn’t traveled far or been stored long, the market customer is making much less use of petroleum products and packaging—making a shopping trip here not only a good deal but an environmental kindness.

The “Fresh Connection,” Right Downtown

How Farmers’ Markets Can Benefit Whole Communities—and the Working Landscape

When did you last stroll through rows of farmers and craftspeople on market day? Did you go to confirm the arrival of spring with some fresh asparagus... treat yourself to the colorful variety of late summer... or paw with gloved hands through the late-harvest baskets of squash?

Produce, cheese, meat and crafts can all be found at many Vermont Farmers Markets.

The revenue generated by the market’s 75 vendors supports production on over 1,400 total acres of nearby land.
Alburn Growing a Farmers’ Market

In Vermont’s northwesternmost corner, Alburn’s fledgling market is being nurtured by a broad coalition of neighbors and organizations that saw a farmers’ market as just what their town needed. Area farmers, town government, businesses, and non-profits came together to create the Alburn Farmers’ Market in 2001.

The project began when a new priority, supporting local agriculture, was added to the town plan. The town Planning Commission then struck a partnership with the University of Vermont to provide technical assistance, grant writing, and data services for the project. NOFA chipped in to fund promotional materials and “Shop with the Chef” events. These bring in a local restaurant chef to do cooking demonstrations at the market, using produce that’s available there. The Vermont Department of Economic Development also got involved, as did the Alburn Chamber of Commerce. Local would-be vendors joined the town in forming a committee to write the bylaws and organize a table run by its students, and filled elementary school. Next year, it plans to in Alburn Farmers’ Market: Masonic Hall, Alburn, Saturdays from 9 am-2 pm, May 11-October 26. Contact: Maeghan Murphy (802) 636-3021.

Old North End, Burlington: “Niche Growing” for Neighborhoods

For the past five years, late Tuesday afternoons during growing season have been market time in front of the H.O. Wheeler School in Burlington’s Old North End. Because 90 percent of the market’s customers live within three miles of its site—and up to 40 percent are first-generation immigrants—farmers offer produce especially oriented to the eating interests and habits of the neighborhood. A typical selection of produce, herbs, and flowers, grown in Burlington’s fertile Intervale and offered at the market, includes Vietnamese greens, chilies, and Asian basil popular with the many Vietnamese families who make their home in the Old North End. Growers also offer prices generally lower than those of area supermarkets—none of which are within walking distance of the market. The Vermont Campaign to Aid Childhood hunger started this market in 1997, to address the community’s need. NOFA contributed grant money to the project, and locals were quick to vote in its favor with their food dollars.

The Neighborhood Farmers’ Market has grown into a gathering spot. In an area with few family-friendly social venues, people of all ages converge here each week to stop and chat with each other and with vendors. Now, the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity is extending the market’s mission, of bringing quality, locally grown food to this economically disadvantaged area, by holding cooking and nutrition workshops here. In short, the Old North End market has become a gift that keeps on giving—to neighborhood residents, to the agencies that are working to reach them, and to local farmers as well.

How Can You Be Part of This?

Here are some ways you can join the farmers’ market phenomenon:

• Shop at a market near you! To find a market near you, log on to www.state.vt.us/agric/farmmkt.htm, where you’ll find information on every farmers’ market in Vermont. If we all spent 10 percent more of our food budget on locally produced food, that would pour another $132 million every year into Vermont’s agricultural economy.

• If your town has no farmers’ market, help organize one. To get started, try contacting Northeast Organic Farmers Association (NOFA), at (802) 434-4122, and Steven Justis at the Vermont Department of Agriculture, (802) 828-3827.

• Donate funds or offer your time to the organizers of your local farmers’ market.

• Put up flyers at your workplace or other locations, for your local farmers’ market—and talk to your friends about it. Word of mouth is the best advertising of all.

• Take every opportunity to educate yourself about the food you eat. Where does it come from? How was it grown? Read labels, ask your grocer, check out a book at the library. Best of all, ask a farmer at the farmers’ market.

See back cover to find more contact information for the businesses highlighted in this story.
In Vermont’s early years, many settlers relied heavily on whatever income they could extract from the woods—and different seasons and land types offered different forest products, from lumber and trapping to maple syrup and fiddleheads. Today in Vermont, the variety of forest-derived products and businesses may actually be wider than it has ever been before.

For example, in Addison County’s “Five-Town Area,” a traditional grouping of Bristol, Monkton, New Haven, Starksboro, and Lincoln, quite a few Vermonters are earning at least part of their living as loggers, woodland managers, makers of wood furniture, toys, and cabinets, herbalists, berry collectors, and/or sugarers. The economic value they draw from the area’s woods helps, in turn, to keep the forest cover intact and healthy.

The value of intact forests for environmental stability, wildlife, and tourism is well-known—but forest-related businesses in the Five-Town Area also have a less-obvious benefit. They help build strong human communities.

In Lincoln, for example, Stephen Taylor owns a woodlot, portable sawmill, and woodshop. Through his business, WoodWorks, Taylor harvests lumber from his own or a customer’s property, cuts it on his mill, and uses the wood for self-designed renovation projects and furniture making in the local area.

“I do carpentry and contracting, and I have designed several buildings to be built out of customers’ standing timber,” Taylor explains. “For example, a guy across town needed a barn, and he wanted to use his own timber, so he hired me.”

Taylor describes his business as an “integrated package”: WoodWorks offers a complete service, which adds value to local raw materials at each step of a project.

“I sort of developed a niche for these projects that are comprehensive and utilize materials from local land—not just one piece of that, but the whole thing,” he says. “In other words, selecting trees, cutting them down, taking the logs to the mill, sawing them, drying them, and putting them in.”

Taylor contracts out to local artisans work that he is unable to do himself, such as tiling or cabinetmaking. For him, “local” means “certainly Vermont, mostly Addison County, preferably my own town, and preferably my own neighborhood. A lot of what I’ve done over the last year and a half has been right on this hill.”

So as Taylor’s hammers and nails build homes, his land and timber build relationships and community.

New Beauty from Old Sugaring Scraps

In the case of Jim Cunningham’s business in Bristol, a different scenario is at work. Cunningham’s Moose Maple uses old maple syrup-making equipment to produce rustic, handcrafted wooden chairs, tables, coat hooks, picture frames, lamps, and ink pens.

Cunningham uses his connections with area loggers and mill operators to access logging sites and find scrap pieces of once-tapped sugar maples, and he finds antique maple taps in area sugarhouses. The chairs and tables Jim makes become masterpieces, accented by the tap holes and color changes that develop at the tap site from bacterial infections. He also uses old taps as hooks and ornaments. Moose Maple enjoys a niche market, and creates new value in wood otherwise destined for fireplaces and mulch piles.
"Most of the wood that I get is from sugarbushes," Cunningham says. "It's wood that gets thinned out because the trees are dying or the wind blew them over. If the wood is good above the tapped area, the logger will sell it. Usually the part below the tap gets cut to six or eight feet in length and stacked up for firewood. Most people don't like to cut it because there was a tap, or part of a tap, left in it. Sometimes the ends of the taps will break off when the sugarer tries to pull them out. A lot of times the taps will be forgotten and the tree will just grow up around them. Sometimes when the logger cuts them up the tap will break a blade or mess the blade up."

Cunningham's relationships with area loggers, mill operators and sugarers are crucial to his success. Without their scrap wood and taps, his furniture would lack its uniqueness. As a result, he tries hard to build and strengthen those relationships.

"I try to barter as much as I can. If somebody gives me a nice amount of wood I tell them if they need something for Christmas or a birthday present to let me know. I think I traded some key holders, a lamp, a mirror, and a little table nice for Christmas or a birthday present to let me know. I think I traded some key holders, a lamp, a mirror, and a little table.

"Word of Ear" Marketing

Another Five-Town Area entrepreneur, Lawrence Clark, has been cutting and selling firewood in his home town, Lincoln, for 30 years.

"My father cut wood, so I've been doing it ever since I was old enough to hold a splitting hammer," Clark says. He also works at the Lincoln Pallet Mill, which depends on lumber from Bristol's two sawmills—so wood is always available. Most wood that gets thinned out because the trees are dying or the wind blew them over. If the wood is good above the tapped area, the logger will sell it."

Clark’s first experience cutting wood for a living: he cut and sold firewood. I told him, ‘if you want me to cut and split on the side, let me know,’ and he gave me a call. I worked for him for five or six years in the summer.”

Clark has never formally marketed his product with an advertisement or sign. Instead he finds customers, and they find him, through word of mouth. Buyers find him at the pallet mill, stop by his house, or pull him over when they see him driving on Lincoln's back roads.

"It might just happen in a phone call," he says. "Sometimes they say, 'I heard you had some firewood,' and I'd say 'How'd you find out?' If it's a friend they will say, 'I heard through this person,' but like I said it all depends. It's pretty neat the way it works, actually."

In and around Lincoln, places like general stores, churches, bakeries, and swimming holes provide the atmosphere for the old-style marketing that Clark relies on. "Up here in the hills, it's mostly word of rat," he says. "Like if someone was just starting out, and wanted to sell some firewood this year, they might talk to a lot of people real quickly or put up a quick sign. But if you're doing it, or getting into it gradually, and start talking to people, word gets around pretty quick, like a rumor."

One key aspect that's common to Moose Maple, WoodWorks, and Lawrence Clark's firewood-selling operation is that each relies for its success on the community's greatest strength—people—as much as on forest health and resources. All three businesses encourage and build on the stuff that makes Vermont special: word of mouth communication, popular local establishments for gathering and meeting people, reliance on other local businesses, and sharing help, work, and knowledge with neighbors.

Forest-based businesses like these also keep people connected to the woods as working, economic resources. So in this and many other parts of Vermont, just as in the state's early days, forest-dependent businesses are alive and well. In fact, in many-modest ways that do add up, these businesses are helping bring people closer to the resources that built our communities—and whose use today helps to keep Vermont a working, living landscape.
These examples are not the only way, or even the best way, to look at the issues that surround growth and community in our state. Nor do they fully represent all of the great work that is happening. Each is just a solid example of the connections that have developed between Vermont’s working landscape and its communities—and each is an example that we hope will inspire and inform people who would like to build more connections like these, and to help strengthen those we have.

This publication is a product of the Vermont Forum on Sprawl's Urban/Rural Connections project, which aims to promote “smart growth” in Vermont by highlighting and encouraging efforts that mutually support our communities and the working landscape. To learn more, please contact the Vermont Forum on Sprawl, or visit our Web site...