

MAINE ORGANIC FARMERS AND GARDENERS ASSOCIATION

Farm Apprentice Program
P.O. Box 170 Unity, ME 04988
(207) 568-4142

email: mofga@mofga.org web: www.mofga.org

FARMER APPLICATION

Farm Name	Tide Mill Organic Farm	MOFGA Member? Yes
Contact Person	Carly DelSignore	Phone 207-733-2551
Mailing Address	91 Tide Mill Road	Best time to call Morning between 7 and 9
	Edmunds, ME 04268	County Washington
E-Mail	eatlocal@tidemillorganicfarm.com	Website www.tidemillorganicfarm.com
Number of apprentices sought: 3 who are all serious about farming.		
1 with a focus on dairy; 1 with a focus on pastured poultry and pigs, 1 with a focus on vegetables,		

The host farmer online searchable database helps prospective apprentices find farms that match their interests. The next two selections are an integral part to the database.

Farm Type: (Select as many that apply)

Yes Vegetables/Fruit

Yes Dairy

Yes Other Livestock

Yes Value-added/Processing

Yes Diverse, integrated crop/livestock

No Nursery Stock

Yes Educational

No Homesteading

Marketing Strategy: (Select only your primary strategy)

Community Supported Agriculture

Primary Other direct-to-customer (Farm Stand, Farmers' Markets, Restaurant) and Wholesale....Its really a toss up...both are pretty primary for us.

Education

Other

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During What Time Period: Year round (except for veggies)

Describe the physical setting of your farm and the nature of the community in which you live (e.g., acreage, woods/fields, buildings, near town/remote area, recreation available, etc.): Our farm is located along the shores of Cobscook Bay in downeast Maine. We are situated on Rt 1 about 30 minutes north of Machias and 45 minutes south of Calais; between Lubec and Eastport. It is a very rural setting located 20-30 minutes from any town with multiple stores. Our farmland consists of 40 acres of prime pasture, 40 additional

acres we are converting to pasture, 3 acres of cropland, 1500 acres of woodland, and 6 miles of shore frontage. Hiking, canoeing and sea kayaking are common recreation pastimes for people to enjoy the amazing raw beauty of this area.

We have a large free stall barn that houses our dairy herd, calves and beef cows with an attached shop. We also have a greenhouse for our seedlings we raise. We have a building to house our winter manure, compost, hay, supplies and brooding facilities for chicks. We another hoop house for vegetable production and one for turkey production. We have several portable housing structures for our pastured animals. There are 6 Bell families that each have houses on the farm and a renovated century-old farmhouse that hosts an office and the occasional renters and school groups. There are multiple family businesses operating on Tide Mill Farm where the 7th, 8th, and 9th generation Bells live, work and play.

Recreation includes the exploration of the woods, the stony beach, and the bay. The Cobscook Community Learning Center (www.theccclc.org) is located 4 miles from the farm and offers the opportunity to participate in art and traditional craft classes and events including an Old Time Music jam twice a month, a pottery studio, and a place to gather. We are also strong believers and supporters of the Weston A. Price organization. (www.westonaprice.org)

Describe your farm operation (e.g., livestock, crops, bees, herbs, forestry work, greenhouse, orchards, building projects, haying, maple sugaring, meat processing, level of mechanization, products made, marketing, dairy, stock dogs, etc.): Carly and Aaron run a diversified, certified organic farm that includes ~2 acres of row crops and cover crops, with some herb and companion flower production. We have a greenhouse where we start our own vegetables, herbs, and flowers as well as an annual Seedling Sale on Memorial Day Weekend. Our livestock that we raise for meat include 80 - 100 pigs, 15,000 broilers, and 500-800 turkeys. We harvest and process our own poultry once or twice a week in our new year round processing facility. We are milking 50 - 60 cows that are rotationally grazed during the growing season. We have an additional 50 cows which consist of dry cows, calves, steers and heifers. Many of these cows are housed off-farm for the grazing season. We run a Farm Stand on our farm, attend 3 other farmer's markets (Lubec, Town Hill and Bar Harbor), participate in the Senior FarmShare program (with about 80 shares), have a 20 member CSA, and deliver to customers via home deliveries, buying clubs and health food stores from Calais to Portland. Since the closure of MOO Milk (Maine's Own Organic Milk company) we have been selling the majority of our milk to Horizon. We bottle our own raw milk twice a week for local customers and stores. We work closely with Crown of Maine Organic Cooperative (www.crownofmainecoop.com) and are involved in developing an agricultural infrastructure in Washington County by working with the other farmers here. Aaron's cousin, Rachel and her husband, Nate have a certified creamery and herd of milking goats at her homestead on Tide Mill Farm. They make yogurt, greek yogurt, fromage blanc and various other cheeses. They also have hens, grow vegetables and pigs and have developed a fermentation product line. We preserve a lot of our vegetables for our family to eat during the winter, as well as prepare whole foods for delicious healthy meals.

Are all your crops organically grown? Yes.

Describe the work to be performed and the skills to be learned by an apprentice (e.g., care of livestock, planting, cultivation, harvesting, selling at market, use of equipment, carpentry, food preservation, woods-work, etc.). Please break the season (or months) into 4 major tasks to be performed during each.

Veggies:

Spring: Tending Seedlings, Seeding and Transplanting Crops into the Field, Cultivation, Record Keeping

Summer: In addition to tasks in the Spring there will also be Planting Cover Crops, Pest Control, Irrigation, Harvesting, Washing and Packaging Vegetables, On-farm Marketing and Delivering

Fall: In addition to the tasks in the spring and summer, there will be Drying and Preserving Food, Planting garlic, and Cleaning the fields of debris.

Animals: Year Round: Settling in pigs and day-old chicks, Daily animal care of cows, pigs, chickens and turkeys (feeding, watering, clean bedding, fresh pasture, & fence maintenance), Chicken Harvesting & Processing, On-Farm Marketing and Delivering, Calf feeding and care, Assisting with milking and barn chores.

Other: Piling brush and making fences to make way for new pasture, haying, delivery runs, packing orders, loading livestock, castrating piglets.

Skills to be learned: Raising organic livestock within a pasture based system, Harvesting poultry safely and efficiently, Holistic care of organic livestock for maximum health and vitality, Seedling production, Mixed vegetable production from seeding through harvest and preserving that harvest for optimal nutrient density, Scything for weed control and fence maintenance. Building and maintaining relationships with customers, Observation skills to maintain animal and crop health, Basic record keeping and analysis for farm profitability.

We expect to train you and be patient while you get accustomed to the tasks and routine, but do expect you to become efficient, developing and honing your farming skills throughout your stay with us.

What do you expect of an apprentice? (e.g., hours to be worked in a day, days to be worked in a week, heavy physical labour, time off, etc.): You can expect to work six days a week and are guaranteed one day off a week. Occasionally the sixth day will include only animal chores. We expect an average of a 10 hr day, but there will be at least one 12 hour day a week.

We operate with a weekly “to do” list and then try to get those tasks accomplished within the week based on the weather and other deadlines and tasks. Farming, especially when you are depending on it for your sole source of income, is very physically demanding work in adverse conditions. You will be expected to work in the rain and heat and bugs (black flies and mosquitoes). Many farming tasks are tedious (weeding and thinning) and repetitive (basic animal chores that need to be done everyday). You should be able to lift and carry 50 lbs of weight and squat or kneel (or those equivalents) for two or three hours at a time.

Explain how you intend to provide instruction and training to an apprentice (e.g., work along with the apprentice, demonstration, apprentice working alone, training “classes,” reading to be done, extent of supervision by yourself or others, etc.): We tend to operate more with the “learning by doing” philosophy. We will demonstrate how we want a task to be done and go into the details about why we do it that particular way. Aaron or Carly or an experienced field worker will train you but you will be expected to be able to do many jobs on your own after you learn how to do them. You must be reliable, responsible and accountable. You are welcome to respectfully use our large selection of farming books and Internet use, as well as other local library resources. We are also open to going to visit other farms in our area and promote Washington County’s Neighbouring Farm Tours and MOFGA’s twilight apprentice opportunities.

Are you a full-time farmer? Yes If not, describe what other occupation(s) you have:

Carly and Aaron are also parents, raising their 4 young children ages four, nine, thirteen and fifteen.

Can you pay a stipend or a wage in addition to providing room and board? Yes _____

If so, what are you offering and under what conditions? (i.e., experience level, duration of commitment, graduated scale) We offer \$100 a week per person. If you have a lot of farming experience there is room for negotiating a higher stipend. We also offer \$10 per week per person for additional food that we don’t have that you may want (coffee, bread, peanut butter, etc.). We offer a bonus for a successful apprenticeship if you are in good standing when you finish the season.

Do you require a prospective apprentice to visit your farm before a final arrangement is made? Yes.

Do you require a trial period? Yes.

Explain the room and board arrangements (e.g., would the apprentice live with the family, live apart but eat with the family, are there young children, what household duties would the apprentice share, are a vegetarian household, would you provide vegetarian meals, are there rules about smoking/drinking/drugs, are there any other important considerations?): We have a few different housing options. Our main housing is a 30 by 60 space that has a kitchen, bathroom, living area and four large bedrooms.

More private, seasonal housing includes a large camper trailer and a converted school bus, both located in the woods. Both have electricity and a hose for running water. A basic kitchen with a gas stove and oven and small refrigerator. Bathroom facilities include an outhouse. We would like to figure out a better meal situation this year. We are picturing a rotating meal night where for those of us who like to cook, take turns preparing a meal for everyone several days a week.

You must bring appropriate footwear (eg, rubber boots and work boots) as well as your own rain gear, sun hat and protection and bug protection. There are many wet, mucky days or hot, sunny days that we will be working in the fields. We also provide worker's comp. insurance that will cover your injury if you should get injured while working for us.

We will provide food from the farm and some additional staples, like coffee, sugar and flour. We provide certified organic seasonal vegetables, fruits and herbs, cow milk, eggs, turkey, chicken, pork and beef that we grow on the farm.

Our family has 4 young children. We incorporate our children into practically everything we do and value their participation, even though that participation takes more time, care and negotiations. You will not be expected to do any childcare. We also work with a large farm crew with often multiple directions happening at one time. Our farm is extremely busy as we are deeply involved in the production, processing, packaging, delivering and selling of nutritious food to thankful customers. There are a lot of jobs packed into that sentence. Our farm operation is often bustling and overflowing with people, animals, children, machines, etc. If chaotic situations and activity stress you out, this is probably not the farm for you.

Other considerations that make our situation unique is the fact that multiple Bell families live on the farm. There are 6 households consisting of 10 adults and 8 children. That has many positive qualities, but we also need to pay more attention to co-habiting with many people in regards to respect for other people's space. There is an 18th century farmhouse that can host renters. We need to be aware of keeping the farm aesthetic and being conscious of the presence of renters, guests, and other family members. With that said, it is also a great opportunity to meet and interact with many really neat, diverse people. We do not allow apprentices or hired help to bring their pets with them to work unless they are leashed or otherwise contained and special permission has been granted.

Describe yourself, your family, background, farming experience, philosophy, goals & interests:

Aaron Bell and Carly DelSignore are the husband/wife team that own and operate the certified organic meat, cow dairy and produce business of Tide Mill Farm. They work together to manage their different passions within their business and to balance their different strengths and weaknesses. Carly currently manages the greenhouse, vegetable, layer, pig and chicken ventures as well as the direct marketing of the meats and vegetables. She also manages the poultry processing and financial recording keeping of the farm. Aaron focuses his energy on managing and working with the dairy and beef herd, haying, field management for feed for the cattle, and maintenance and repair of equipment and buildings, as well as off-site facilities. Aaron is also a board member NODPA and spends a lot of time returning phone calls.

Carly is a member of MOFGA's Ag Services Committee and a founding member of the Sunrise County Food Alliance and spends a lot of time returning emails.

Since January of 2000, we have been earning our living farming and attempting to re-vitalize the agricultural infrastructure in Washington County. We believe we can make the world a better place by helping to connect people to the production of healthy food. We know that certified organic, nutritious food on people's plates doesn't just happen. There are an immense amount of critical steps necessary for that food to be grown, packaged, delivered and marketed. Hardworking, dedicated people are a critical piece of the picture. Ideally we want to help train future farmers, specifically in Washington County to contribute more production to what we need to support a vibrant agricultural food hub in the near future.

Are you interested in participating as a mentor and/or host farmer in MOFGA's Journeyperson program for advanced training in organic farming? Yes

References

Elisabeth Benjamin	elisabethbenjamin@gmail.com	406-529-1952
Former employee reference	email	phone
Amanda Henderson	amandagail.henderson@gmail.com	248-339-6548
Gregg Stiner	gregg.stiner@gmail.com	207-263-4819
Former apprentice reference	email	phone
Carol Bryan	ellifish@midmaine.com	853-4750
Personal reference	email	phone

MOFGA Apprenticeship Program Farm Synopsis Form

Please write a synopsis of your farm in 50 words or so. This synopsis will be posted on MOFGA's website, and is an important way that you will "advertise" your farm to prospective apprentices.

Name, address and phone are for office use only. Only the actual synopsis with a reference number will be posted on the web.

Farm Name: Tide Mill Farm

Synopsis:_

We are a nine generation family farm located on the coastal waters of rural Downeast Maine. Carly, Aaron, their family and a hardworking farm crew operate a diversified organic farm with 100 dairy and beef cows, 80 pigs, 150 laying hens, 800 turkeys, 15,000 broilers, 40 acres of pasture, 200 acres of hay, cover crops, 2 acres of row crops and on-farm composting. We are deeply involved in the production, processing, delivering and marketing of certified organic, nourishing food to our community.

Please return your completed application with the \$25 fee (\$35 for non-MOFGA members) to: MOFGA Apprenticeship Program, P.O. Box 170 Unity. ME 04988 or email to education@mofga.org. Thanks!