



Photos by Beth O'Keefe from August 2015 Breakfast on the Farm at the Vander Wey Farm. Left to right: The dining tent served more than 500 visitors breakfast. Cups of fresh strawberries. A young boy with his breakfast of yogurt and pancakes. The next stop after the dining tent was the bio-security tent. Visitors put on protective booties before they entered the farm. A sweet greeting from one of the calves.

Breakfast on the Farm

An Educational Effort of the Ag Community by Tim Buskey

How many farmers does it take to serve breakfast to a thousand hungry people? Admittedly, that's a rhetorical question. We know that American farmers each feed 155 people worldwide every day with the products they grow, produce, nurture, and sell. That number has changed dramatically since 1960 when economists reported that every farmer in America fed about 25.8 people. Add to that the statistic that today's farmers produce 262 percent more food with two percent fewer inputs (labor, seeds, feed, fertilizer, etc.), than they did in 1950. Those are interesting facts that we could have

learned first-hand at last year's celebration of Vermont's Breakfast on the Farm event at the Nea Tocht Farm in Ferrisburgh. By the way, less than 100 volunteers at last year's event served more than 500 visitors to the Vander Wey farm, and this year the number of on-line free tickets will be increased to assure a larger attendance at the June 25 event. There will also be a second Breakfast on the Farm event on August 27 hosted by the Rowell family of Green Mountain Dairy in Sheldon.

The idea of Breakfast on the Farm surfaced at a Chittenden County Farm Bureau meeting when Louise Water-



Along the tour informational tents and areas were manned by volunteers. The Must Be the Milk tent provides information before visitors entered the cow barn. The hands on milking station was very popular with small children. Volunteers flipping pancakes for the next wave of breakfast. A Booth Brothers delivery truck.

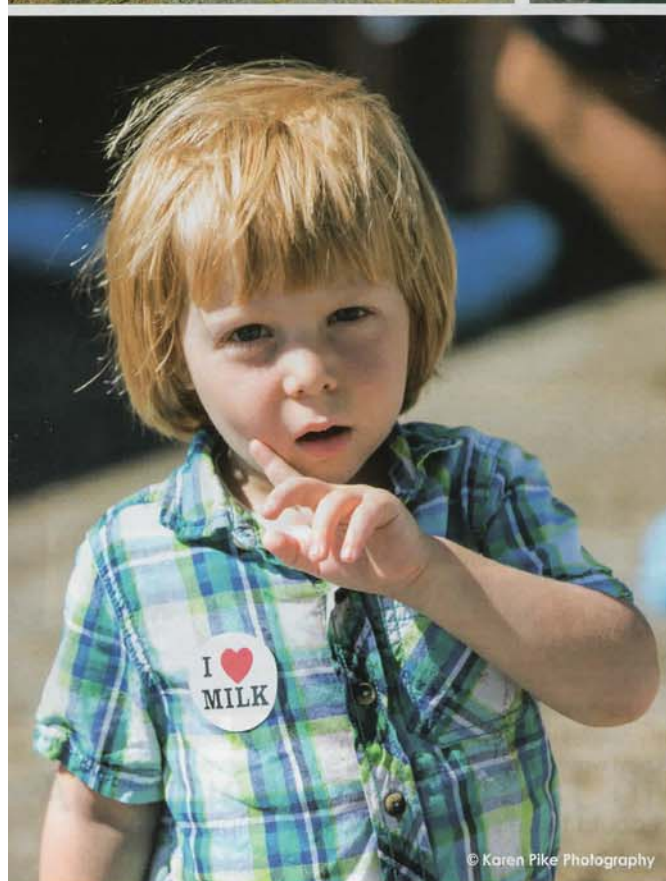
man, education coordinator at the Vermont Agency of Agriculture who is also a board member, mentioned the concept to board member, Julie Smith, and they enthusiastically began to plan. "I remember reading about this Michigan farm that tried the educational effort, told Julie, and she was immediately excited about doing it right away," Louise said. "The enthusiasm rose as we brainstormed with Laura Hardie who is in a new position with the New England Dairy Promotion Board."

Laura was a brand new employee in August 2015 who was hired to serve Vermont farmers faced with challenges with water quality regulations. "I just jumped in and did

whatever I could to help," Laura said. Her employer, the New England Dairy Promotion Board, is a Bulk Tank Sponsor of the event.

It wasn't long before the news of the new venture spread, and everyone wanted to get in on the planning. "We set this up as an educational effort," said Louise, "so that people who may never have even been on the farm could experience it first-hand, learn what farmers are doing with their animals and how they take care of the land. Most people never get a chance to see where their food comes from."

From the initial few planners, the committee grew. A suc-



Left to right: Visitors could visit UVM extension to learn about cover crops and soil mixes. Veterinarians, Cary Telgen and Joe Klopfenstein were on hand to answer questions about animal health. A calf was born during the event. Equipment was set up to climb on and explore. The crowd watches as a calf is born. A little boy with an "I Love Milk" button.

Successful first effort gave the group the courage to try two events this year and increase their goal of educating thousands of folks about dairy farming and our farmers' way of life.

These are present members of the Vermont Breakfast on the Farm 2016 Planning Committee: Laura Hardie, New England Dairy Promotion Board; Claire Stanley, Paul-Lin Dairy Farm; Julie Smith, University of Vermont/Department of Animal and Veterinary Sciences; Marty Waterman, Cargill Feed and Nutrition; Rebecca Howrigan, Manning Dairy LLC; Melissa Woolpert, Miner Institute; Shawanna Vander Wey, Vermont FFA; Vicki Vander Wey, Nea-Tocht Dairy Farm; Virginia Holiman, NOFA-VT; Bill Rowell, Green Mountain Dairy Farm; Tammy Rowell, Green Mountain Dairy Farm; Meg Rowell, Green Mountain Dairy Farm; Mariah Gauthier, Green Mountain Dairy Farm; Wendy





The welcome tent. Visitors lined up and checked in before they entered the breakfast tent. Tim Buskey, vice president of Vermont Farm Bureau and writer, cleans tables at last year's event. Laura Hardie, Public Relations & Communications Specialist for New England Dairy Promotion Board and Louise Waterman, Education Coordinator for Vermont Agency of Agriculture.



could be bringing unwanted bacteria or viruses to the farm." The requirement that each person be fitted with protective booties was explained as "good for each visitor and good for the cows."

"The whole thing was a real learning experience for me," said one family member. "Yes, the kids had lots of fun, but I learned something important from coming to this farm. I learned that it's easy to criticize modern farming practices if we don't understand them, and it's really, really hard to be a farmer. And, farmers make an outstanding breakfast."

Several people wondered as they completed their visit, "Do farmers eat like this every day?"

Please log on to www.vermontbreakfastonthefarm.com to reserve your free ticket to Vermont's Breakfast on the Farm to educate others about Vermont agriculture, on June 25 at Nea Tocht Farm on Botsford Road in Ferrisburgh and on August 27 hosted by the Rowell Family of Green Mountain Dairy in Sheldon. Directions and a schedule are available on line. ■

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Extension over the summer, to understand if advocacy could restore adequate funding from the state of Vermont for all extension programs that benefit farmers.

EQUINE EQUITY

Vermont has a diverse population of farms and small homestead farming, and horse farming is adding to this diversity. Horse farming is defined in many different ways in Vermont in different statutes. We want to get a common definition. We face an uphill battle. Horse farming, at least lessons and boarding, because it doesn't produce food or fiber, is excluded from farm income calculations. Ornamental plants sales are included as farm income calculations, even though they are not food or fiber, because they are seen as ancillary to the nurser-

ies selling other food production plants. There is also a deeply held conviction that horse farming is a hobby for wealthy people and isn't farming at all. Still others fear that if we push for full equity, it will cause harmful, unintended consequences to traditional farmers. We intend to start with the Vermont's Department of Taxation and meet with them to explore what, if any, parts of current law can be changed to benefit our horse farmers without harming any other group of farmers. This is going to be a long, slow process.

FOOD SAFETY AND MODERNIZATION ACT

The federal government has spent the last few years overhauling the food safety and modernization act (FSMA). It hadn't been done systemically for 70 years.