

Newsday

Llife

INSIDE
THE WEEK
AHEAD
E15

**VOLUNTEER
NATION**
A MONTHLY SERIES

Harvest for the hungry

FOOD PANTRY FARM'S
ORGANIC PRODUCE
FEEDS EAST ENDERS
IN NEED E4



"I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do."

— Edward Everett Hale

A passion for plenty

VOLUNTEER NATION

A MONTHLY SERIES

Food Pantry Farm in East Hampton brings its organic produce to the East End's hungry

BY MERLE ENGLISH
Special to Newsday

When the East Hampton Food Pantry announced that it had gone from serving 75 families a week to more than 400 in the wake of the 2008 economic downturn, master gardener Peter Garnham set aside his work gloves and put on his thinking cap. "The food pantry was just overwhelmed and needed food," recalled Garnham, 78, of Amagansett.

He and two friends worked leased plots at the town-



At the Whalebone Village Apartments in East Hampton, tenants stock up from a selection of Food Pantry Farm produce.



ON THE COVER Darcy Hutzenlaub, farm manager at Food Pantry Farm, harvests yams destined for those struggling economically on the East End.

owned, 42-acre East End Community Organic Farm in East Hampton. In the winter of 2010, the trio decided to start a small farm on half of a 1-acre plot that Garnham was renting.

Garnham, a former board chairman of the organic farm, reached out and got donations of seeds. Local nurseries gave bags of soil. Fellow gardeners at the organic farm volunteered to help prepare the soil for planting and sow the seeds.

"We knew the need, so we all joined in," said John

Malafronte, 83, of East Hampton, a retired Wall Street bond salesman and a friend of Garnham's. "The first year, every seed we planted came up. We realized we had something going, and we were happy about that."

From that small beginning, the nonprofit Food Pantry Farm has sprouted "to address hunger on the East End," said Marjorie Hays, 57, president of the farm's all-volunteer, seven-member board.

On a recent day, yellow and

red tomatoes, green summer squash and other vegetables brightened the bed of a pickup truck, one of several loads of freshly harvested, organic produce that farm manager Darcy Hutzenlaub was delivering to housing developments in East Hampton, including Whalebone Village.

Food Pantry Farm serves the growing number of East End families turning to food pantries for help. Over the years, the farm has expanded its half-acre field into a 5-acre

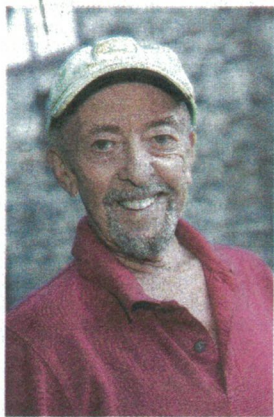
venture that grows organic produce and delivers thousands of pounds of fresh vegetables free to food pantries, senior centers, a women's shelter, a day care center and several government-aided housing developments in East Hampton.

"This farm is the little engine that could," said Hays, who owns a design and construction business in Sagaponack. "There is food insecurity on the East End of Long Island," she added, using the federal Department



GRAHAM POOLE

An intern brings food prepared for the farm's annual barbecue benefit to tables, right, set up in the fields at East End Community Organic Farm.



RANDEE DADDONA

Peter Garnham co-founded the farm in 2010, when he and two friends set aside for the project half an acre he was renting.



RANDEE DADDONA

Co-founder John Malafronte recalls the farm's beginnings: "The first year, every seed we planted came up," he says.

of Agriculture's term to describe a person or family's limited or uncertain access to nutritionally adequate foods. "People tend to paint it with a wealthy brush; that it's exclusively wealthy people out here. In fact, there is a significant population of people economically compromised or struggling. They include working families, seniors. It's a wide range of people for a wide range of reasons. You can't make ends meet sometimes, because it's so expensive to be

here."

Hays joined the nonprofit five years ago. Deliveries of produce from Food Pantry Farm feed about 425 households weekly, and the nonprofit has taken steps to provide food year-round, particularly in winter, when housing and employment often are in short supply after the busy summer season. Hays and Hutzenlaub said the nonprofit uses a greenhouse and hoop

See COVER STORY on E6



JACK CASTORO

Cultivating generosity



Farm manager Darcy Hutzenlaub spreads diatomaceous earth on plants in a hoop house to prevent bug infestation.



Kristen Brady with Onyx, 5 months, assists Lai'la Sanders, 5, and Quentin Gilbert, 7, all of East Hampton, at the farm's spaghetti dinner.



Ella Engel-Snow, left, tenant specialist at the Whalebone Village Apartments in East Hampton, with farm manager Darcy Hutzenlaub.

COVER STORY from E4

houses to extend the growing season. The greenhouse allows Food Pantry Farm to overwinter some crops, such as carrots, spinach, kale and other greens. Hutzenlaub said the hoop houses allow for the storage of sweet potatoes, squash, onions and other root vegetables and crops that can be donated throughout the winter.

"The reason the Food Pantry Farm was started was to provide the most nutritious food we could produce and get it to as many people as possible," Hays said. "We go to great effort to make available the very best. That's what attracted me to the organization."

Residents — some with babies and toddlers in tow — at Whalebone Village realize the bounty they are receiving.

"It's great; the quality is excellent," Argenis Gonzalez, 55, a vegetarian, said in Spanish interpreted by her sister, Amparo Gonzalez, 59.

Gonzalez joined others who happily filled their bags from crates of freshly picked tomatoes, purple okra, carrots in a rainbow of colors, eggplant, corn and other vegetables that Hutzenlaub delivered.

"It's beautiful. It means a lot to me," said Erin Cherry, who brought along her 5-year-old daughter, Ingya. "I'm so grateful they do this."

Basilio Parada, 54, picked up onions, okra, kale and "everything" to feed himself, his wife, their two children and his mother-in-law.

Ella Engel-Snow, Whalebone's tenant specialist, welcomes the gift of food for residents. "A lot of people tried new things they never had before," she said. "We're really grateful. It's a beautiful thing to have organic food to share."

Gerry Mooney, who manages Whalebone Village and other low-income housing developments on the East End, knows Food Pantry Farm helps ensure its clients eat well when times are bad.

"Much of this food is very expensive in the local stores," he said. "When you're on a

Volunteer Spotlight

Paul Muller

Paul Muller watched his mother baking when he was growing up, so he felt qualified to volunteer when Darcy Hutzenlaub, farm manager of the Food Pantry Farm in East Hampton, said the nonprofit needed someone to make cookies and brownies to sell at its farm stand.

"I said, 'I could do that,' so I did it," said Muller, 53, a Southampton resident and assistant manager at a golf course. "In a normal week, I'll make 16 dozen cookies and 24 packages of brownies, which people tell me are to die for. This is my fourth year doing this."

About two years ago, Muller, who provides the ingredients, added pies to his output, using fruit grown on the farm.

"I make blackberry, blueberry and raspberry pies," he said. "My Key lime pies don't stay on the shelf. When strawberries are in season, I make strawberry-rhubarb pies. Then the peaches show up, and I make peach pies, peach-raspberry and peach-blueberry pies. I always add my own little touch to it. I want them to come back and say, 'What are you going to make this week?'"

For the farm's fundraising Harvest Moon Spaghetti Dinner on Sept. 16, Muller said he made about 400 cookies. Now he wants to add something else to his repertoire.

"I'm learning so much I want to get into cakes," he said.

Muller makes all his creations himself, but, he said, "After this summer, I'm going to have to start thinking about getting help."

Over the years, Muller said, he has baked almost 5,000 items to sell at the farm stand. "I pretty much have no life during the summer because I get up early to bake and deliver to the farm stand," he said.

Muller said he supports the farm's mission to grow quality produce to feed struggling families on the East End, and he gets satisfaction from making people happy.

"It doesn't matter who they are; they can't have people go to bed hungry," Muller said of the nonprofit. "They're trying to do their part. I try my best. We all have to make a difference."

— MERLE ENGLISH



RAHDEE DADDONA

Sign me up

Food Pantry Farm needs donors as varied as the organic produce it grows to help feed hungry Long Islanders on the East End. Farm manager Darcy Hutzenlaub said the nonprofit is seeking help to acquire a refrigerated truck to keep its produce fresh and expand deliveries, a

creeper tractor to cut up heavy grass and another greenhouse to grow plants year-round.

"Even the simplest of tasks are important," Hutzenlaub said. "Sometimes it's nice to have a plumber volunteer, a chef, a nutritionist, a photographer."

Contact: foodpantryfarm.org

You might consider...

Rock and Wrap It Up is an anti-poverty think tank with donors including professional sports teams, hospitals, television and film production companies like Sony and Warner Bros., touring bands and the hospitality industry, to name a few. The Cedarhurst-based nonprofit recovers food that is prepared for concerts, games, conventions and other events — but not consumed — and distributes it to homeless shelters, soup kitchens and other agencies that feed the hungry. It operates in 500 cities and five countries. Since 1991, it has recovered more than 1 billion meals to help feed the hungry.

Contact: Founder Syd Mandelbaum, 877-691-3663; rockandwrapitup.org

St. Hugh of Lincoln Outreach

Food Pantry in Huntington Station is open 10 a.m.-noon and 1-3 p.m. Monday-Friday. This client-choice pantry allows users to visit every other month and select food items. St. Hugh's provides referrals to other agencies and pantries to help clients between visits. The pantry serves those in the Huntington Station area but will provide referrals to anyone seeking help. The pantry needs nonperishable food and baby items, as well as toiletries for infants and adults. There is also a need for volunteers who can work for two hours.

Contact: Yaritza Ramos, 631-271-8986

For more information and volunteer opportunities, contact the **LONG ISLAND VOLUNTEER CENTER** at 516-564-5482; longislandvolunteercenter.org

fixed income . . . they cut back on food and eat as cheaply as they can."

College interns assist

Hays and the three founders of Food Pantry Farm credit Hutzenlaub for its success.

"She's the heart and soul of this organization," Hays said. "She's remarkable at what she does. She got us this far."

Hutzenlaub, 32, carries out the rigorous dawn-to-dusk farm chores with two staff members and four to seven college interns. Their six-day week involves operating tractors and

other farm equipment, and lots of manual labor.

They weed and enrich the soil with tons of compost and volcanic ash to produce a wide variety of vegetables, fruit and herbs, including lettuce, winter and summer squash, pumpkins, potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, melons, Swiss chard, garlic, sweet peppers, Brussels sprouts, asparagus, turnips, collards, parsnips, radishes, raspberries, blackberries, parsley and basil. Bees are raised for pollination, and three greenhouses enable a year-round harvest.

"This is the kind of work that really makes a difference to a lot of people," said Hutzenlaub, who lives in East Hampton. "It makes the world go round. It's also what we're creating: relationships around food, our eating together around a common table, bringing people together."

The interns — mostly women so far — are accepted "from a large field of applicants at colleges and agricultural schools all over the country," Hays said. They stay for much of the growing season, May to September, living in a

converted barn near the farm, and receive a stipend.

"They're all students who have a passion about the environment and sustainable organic processes," Hays said. "They work very hard. They must be able to lift 50 pounds consistently throughout the day. They are coming specifically for the experience; this is hands-on, they're immersed. They've gone from us [to] all over the world in pursuit of agricultural, culinary, environmental and other pursuits related to their experiences at the farm."

Farm co-founder Malafronte, who is also one of the nonprofit's board members, said Food Pantry Farm would not be as successful as it is without the interns' efforts.

Lynora Stallsmith, 20, an intern from Hadley, Pennsylvania, said she found out about the farm through the Amagansett Food Institute website, which matches prospective interns with farms. "I was matched with a lot of farms on Long Island, but I liked the mission here,"

See COVER STORY on E8

A farm rooted in giving

COVER STORY from E6

she said. "I'm learning about farming for myself, and I'm helping people. It's a good cause."

The farm also grows zinnias, tulips and other flowers, and delivers bouquets with produce. To those who ask, "Why do you grow flowers? People can't eat flowers," Garnham — who writes for three national gardening magazines, teaches a master gardener course at Cornell Cooperative Extension and offers guidance to the farm — replies: "When the economy tanks suddenly and you go from having your job and being able to support your family . . . that's a depressing position to find yourself in. A few flowers brighten the day."

Sources of income

Donations from individuals and businesses in the community help fund the farm, which also sells its own and other locally produced food items, such as cheeses, at the nonprofit's farm stand, which was open Thursday-Sunday from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Hays said Food Pantry Farm hopes to expand a cooperative food program that she said was underwritten by Men at Work Construction Corp., a Wainwright-based home builder.

Another source of income is a yearly barbecue for the farm's supporters and interns that is laid out on long tables



Melissa Mapes, a manager at Food Pantry Farm, drives a tractor through the field.



Lynora Stallsmith, an intern at the farm, harvests tomatillos. "I liked the mission here," she says of her decision to apply.



Farm stand manager Marielle Ingram of Springs carries a basket of freshly cut lettuce.



Marjorie Hays, president of the nonprofit's board of directors, speaks at a sponsor-appreciation event in July.

covered in white tablecloths set amid the fields. Nahvae Frost, a Brooklyn chef, volunteers to prepare the meal from the farm's produce, and she brings in her kitchen and serving staff. Hutzenlaub said Frost "contacted us because she knew we're a nonprofit farm and offered to do this."

The event has grown in popularity over the past seven years, and not just for diners. This year attracted the helping hands of two employees of the online marketplace Etsy. Hays said Ahmad Sadraei, an engineer

at the company who heard about the event from Frost, came out from Brooklyn and helped with set up, served food and cleaned up afterward. He came back the next day to help finish the cleanup, Hays said, adding that Aravis Moore, part of the support staff at Etsy, also volunteered at the barbecue.

This year Hays had to halt ticket sales — after selling 175 tickets — to maintain the gathering's intimacy.

"It's a nice problem to have," she said. "All the money we make gets plowed back into

the organization. Our organization is run very strictly," she added, referring to Ira Bezoza, the nonprofit's third founding member and the board's treasurer, who Hays said "can stretch a dollar."

"That management and the dedicated work of those who till the fields have yielded results. 'We're very pleased with our progress,'" Malafronte said.

Food Pantry Farm has produced tens of thousands of pounds of produce to date. The board is recognizing the success of its mission with a

name change.

"We're in the process of changing our name to Share the Harvest," Hays said. "We started by growing enough food to help food pantries, but today we've gone past that; we're not a Food Pantry Farm anymore, we've outgrown our name."

There's no change on the table for Hays. "Being part of this farm has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, to be a part of something that's done so much for so many people," she said.