

Farm Notes

CSA Newsletter

Vol. 19 No.9

September 30 – October 4, 2018

Potomac Vegetable Farms
www.potomacvegetablefarms.com

It's a Newsletter Take-Over by the Workers!

By Ciara Prencipe



Putting together this newsletter can be a thankless task. Every two weeks, our fearless leader, Hana, doggedly pulls articles out of us, the crew, and every time it comes together beautifully. Since I've been here, she's started offering prompts or themes for each newsletter to make coaxing us into writing a little easier. Yet still, sometimes, we fail to deliver! I'll never forget last year, the night before Hana's birthday, newsletter articles were due. A few of us had said we would write something, definitely, for sure. That night I think I went to a yoga class, telling myself I would write my article when I got home. On my way home, I picked up some muffins to bring for the crew in the morning for Hana's birthday, and by the time I got home, I was thoroughly exhausted and promptly fell asleep without writing anything. In the morning, we all gathered for the crew meeting, and it turns out none of us had written anything for the newsletter! Hana arrived, completely bedraggled-looking, as we yelled "Happy Birthday!", and it was clear -

we really goofed up on that one. She yelled something about how it would've been great if anyone had remembered to write an article, and then quickly moved on - she's not one to hold a grudge.

This year, as a crew, we've been pretty good at celebrating each other's birthdays. A tradition we've started is that we all go around and say something nice about the birthday-celebrant. So this year, for Hana's birthday, we're doing the complete opposite of what we did last year! I asked everyone for brief stories about their favorite moments of wisdom and humor from Hana (I would love a book full of these, actually). I hope this is as fun for you, the CSA members, to take a bit of a different look inside our community, as it was for us to put together. We're not just growing vegetables here, you know; we're growing relationships, and community. So thank you, CSA members, for supporting the farm and thank you, Hana, for bringing us all together! Above, Megan and Hana rejoicing in the first dug sweet potatoes of the year!

The Obvious Solutions

By Katherine Collins

I think that one of the most incredible things about Hana is her sense of humor and her ability to laugh wholeheartedly when others might get angry or frustrated. Some of it comes from the fact that she really has seen it all. One of my favorite Hana stories is one that I only wish I had been able to witness.

One summer day, Hana was working away with a few farm staff members near the blackberry slope at the Vienna

farm when a car pulled up and a very enthusiastic man jumped out of his car. He clutched in his hands an entire, uprooted squash vine. Hollering and gesticulating from across the field, he yelled, "Something's wrong with my squash plant. Can you tell me what's wrong with it?!" To which Hana reportedly yelled, "It's not in the ground!"

Thanks, Hana, for all of the belly laughs, and for calmly handling our idiosyncrasies and mistakes, or as we like to think of them, "teachable moments."



Putting Everything On the Table

By Sophia Maravell

When I was first getting to know Hana a number of years ago I remember walking into her kitchen and there she was butchering a HUGE chunk of deer flesh on the kitchen counter. It might have been an entire half of a deer, I can't quite remember. Of course it was a deer that had been hunted on the farm and I remember the amazing venison chili that Jon cooked up from it later. But what I remember was the fearlessness of butchering the deer meat with the casual nonchalance that anyone could do the same thing in their very own kitchen. And I think that is how Hana is, she does things that other people could find daunting, or overwhelming, and just does them like it is no big deal - like co-managing a farm with two locations and more workers than I have even met, while being an active member in her synagogue and a devoted family member. Happy Birthday Hana! We love you!



Digging the sweet potatoes by hand after all this rain!



Little Lessons

by Lara Bigotti

This summer I had the pleasure of experiencing a farm wedding. It had rained and cleared into a soft summer evening with the sky streaked in blues and pinks. Sitting under the bamboo dome amongst friends and strangers. I felt warm and humbled. The healthy dose of rustic beauty was surpassed only by the devotions given by family of the betrothed.

I have only known Hana for about a year, and in this community, that feels like a very short time. But to meet her once is to know her, since her personality is potent in every exchange. Pragmatic and sure, she sets an example for us to be decisive, to act with purpose, to always use our brains. To listen well. So I listened well, that evening under the dome, to her words about love and marriage, which will remain with me for a long time.

Mothers, grandmothers, aunts, daughters. To be at Potomac Vegetable Farms is to be in the presence of women. This is my last season at PVF (or so I say) and I am so grateful for so many things. But mostly I am grateful to have the privilege of knowing Hana, of having her as our fearless leader, of being some part of her wide circle, and to have learned from the millions of little lessons watching her in the intricate rhythm of each day. Above, a lunch with the Root to Rise camp, a camp for teen girls put on by PVF this year.

Anti-Authoritarian Praxis in Action

By Megan Seldon

One of Hana's special talents as a leader is an awareness of where her employees are physically and emotionally. She is so generous to the people around her and selflessly works to better the situation of others. When asked about firing people, Hana said she absolutely hates to do it because it is the ultimate authoritarian act - instead, she prefers to let

people leave of their own volition and at their own pace, which tends to lead to maintained relationships and people feeling like they're in control of their own fate. I think it speaks a lot to how radical Hana is, but also to how she consciously works towards peaceful solutions to all problems rather than seeks an easy way out. Thanks for hiring me Hana, Happy Birthday! At right, just a sample of Hana's market schedule, for 7 different markets, taking into account everyone's schedules and time off.

The Promise of Tomorrow

By Sarah Waybright



Sarah and Hana working on the CSA, one of those tasks that can't wait until tomorrow!

Hana is a doer. She doesn't let much slow her down - not changing staff schedules, babies being born, a less than 100% knee, and barely even the weather. I can hear her voice in my head saying "we're just going to DO IT and get it done." (It's unclear who came to that first, Nike or Hana.)

On the farm, many tasks feel very daunting - cleaning 6 crates of onions, loading 3 market trucks simultaneously, weeding a whole field of mostly weeds - but with some Hana energy, you can power through most tasks. And then, if you don't finish it, she'll also say, "oh who cares? Someone will do it tomorrow!" - a good reminder that you can't do everything, and that's ok.

A Meditation on Daily Questioning

By Isabel Hulkower

People ask Hana Newcomb everything. At any given moment on the farm you can overhear queries of all types, from the extremely banal need for directions all the way up to larger questions about the logic behind the PVF ethos.



Hana, Hiu, Michael, and Stephen in a skit in this year's farm talent show, where they all answered questions "from the audience."

I have never seen someone handle constant peppering with such grace, and sometimes I stand in awe wondering how she is able to enjoy a workplace with so much inherent interrogation. But customers and farm workers are right to ask. Without fail she answers enthusiastically, whether it's about why we don't grow certain crops, what you should do next, or how to romance our notably picky farm vehicles. If you slow down and ask the right questions you will be doubly rewarded.



Hana at the Loudoun farm with a golf cart full of fall harvest

Hana serves as both boss and sounding board, sharing her wit and wisdom with us as we navigate our time on this farm. She is a well of information; willingly allowing us to mine if we desire and creating time to reward curiosity. What's truly remarkable in the face of all these questions, is that she's always willing to admit when she doesn't know.

VP	AV	FC	R	L	TP	DC
11 ML Rachel	11 Vida katie Emma	14 Paul Lara Pam Jenna	14 MB Sarah Ben	14 Sophia Isabel	14 ML RA Lara	15 SS SW Cathy Megan
18 Ciana Isabel	21 Vida Sarah Lauren	21 Paul Lara Isabel	21 MB Emma Avi	21 Sophia Polley	22 ML RB Megan	22 SS SW Cathy Rachel
25 MB Megan	28 Vida Emma katie	28 Paul Emma Lara	28 MB Sarah	28 Sophia Megan	29 SB RB Isabel	29 SS SW Lara Rachel
31 Vida	4	4	4	4	5	5

Cultivating a Community

By Jessica Zielinski

Being new to PVF, I've only known Hana a short while, but it was very soon after my July arrival that I came to understand how Hana isn't only a steward of the land, but also a steward of the community. I knew I'd come to the ideal farm when I saw not only how many different groups flock to the farm, but also how former PVF workers have sprung from the farm to start successful farming ventures of their own. When I work the stand, there is of course the continuous stream of happy CSA members and delighted stand customers to observe. Answer the stand phone and you'll hear from eager educators excited to schedule farm tour dates for their students in fall, or perhaps other farmers hoping to collaborate with PVF to market selections of their produce or subsequently baked, dried, or jarred creations. Head out to Purcellville or to Alexandria, and you'll find young farmers who studied and worked in PVF's fields and now run their own operations that are sprinkled here and there with ties to Hana, teaming up on filling CSA orders or remembering fondly that their trusty work van arrived as a loving donation in true Hana style. In a sense, reflections of Hana's good works and amazing character are humming all day in and around this farm in an ever-expanding way. My hope for her upcoming birthday, and every day, is that Hana feels in turn as nurtured by all of us who are so grateful to know and work with her on this eco-organic, farming of land and building of community, adventure.

Hana on Her 59th Birthday

By Hiu Newcomb

For the last several years, Hana has taken over the running of PVF – both at Loudoun and Vienna. On the occasion of her birthday this year, I want to say that I am so glad she has taken over the challenges of keeping PVF going. Her leadership and ability to attract and integrate people with diverse talents make this farm a thriving business and a community we want to be a part of.

She has encouraged me to explore interests outside the farm while keeping connected. I still get to work in the greenhouse, go to markets and help out where needed, doing things I have always enjoyed. What a special gift to be Hana's mom and for us to continue to have our unique relationship.

A Voice that Carries

By Ellen Polishuk

Once upon a time, many years ago, before we had cell phones, I was sitting upstairs in my house in my office. The sliding door was open. I heard a voice off in the distance. It was Hana calling to me from the Turner Shed patch ¼ mile away. Can you believe it? I think I could see her off in the distance waving at me to come to her. So I did.



Hana working at the Takoma Park market in the pouring rain - par for the course this year!

Once in a while I would call Hana to tell her that I was completely stressed out and worried that we just couldn't get all the work done in Loudoun. I would cry, literally, for HELP. Then Hana would calmly say, "well, you're right on time. It's the first week in August. You do this every season, and it's going to all work out fine. I'll be out tomorrow to pick tomatoes!" The moral of the story being that often when one is in the throes of despair, perspective is impossible to muster on one's own, so just call Hana and let her remind you that everything will be alright



Hana and Jon after unloading a wagon full of hay on an 85 degree evening!