

Neighbors

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FREE



Serving the inhabitants and environment of northeastern Connecticut and beyond

From the Ground Up - Buying Local in Connecticut

Unbound Glory Farm, Pomfret Center

By Cris Cadiz

When I first met Courtney and Adam Squire on their farm, Unbound Glory in Pomfret, about 10 years ago, it looked very different. It was beautiful, as all farms are to me, lush fields full of healthy produce. Feathery carrot tops gently waved in arrow-straight rows. Hearty dark green and frilly purple kale marched alongside. Garlic, onions, lettuce, radishes and more grew in neat, predictable lines, all separated by weed-free dirt paths. This young couple, who moved to the Last Green Valley from Philadelphia, were in love with their new careers as farmers and were paying meticulous attention to their efforts.

Courtney and Adam had 20 combined years of experience on the other end of the food system, working their way up to management at Whole Foods Market. After raising bees and covering every square inch of their city yard with flowers and vegetables, they were ready to escape grocery retail for a chance to nourish the community directly from the soil.

Today at Unbound Glory, swaths of produce curve and undulate along gentle slopes of hilltop acreage. In early spring, beds of brilliant crimson clover protect bare soil from wind, sun and rain. By June, this cover crop dies back to become mulch that feeds the soil and keeps weeds at bay. Pollinator plantings (purple coneflower, garlic chives, yarrow, hyssop) flank vegetables, offering food and shelter all year long for bees, butterflies, and other insects plus gorgeous blossoms throughout the growing season. Opaque high tunnels and mounded Hgel beds are semi-permanent landmarks alongside the fields. On select weekends, the smell of wood smoke permeates the air as they fire up their brick oven to make delicious wood-fired pizza featuring veggies grown just yards away.

Unbound Glory Farm has evolved in a decade. What hasn’t changed is Courtney and Adam’s deep respect for the land, a commitment to taking care of it so it can take care of us. With a lot of reading, research, and learning from other local farmers, UConn Extension and USDA programs, they have evolved from following organic practices to adopting regenerative ones. Unlike organic standards, which are regulated by the government, regenerative practices can mean different things to different farmers. The foundation for all regenerative farmers is a focus on soil health, increasing biodiversity, and working in harmony with nature. It also helps the land be more resilient in the face of climate change.

Over the years, Courtney and Adam have learned what it takes to nurture the earth rather than bend it to their will. Instead of plowing—churning the earth every season, disturbing the delicate microbiome within the soil, and compacting the earth with heavy machinery so that water eventually can’t soak in—they practice no-till farming. Rather than planting ruler-straight rows that allow rain to wash soil away, their rows flow in curves that follow the natural contour of the land. This allows water to stay where it falls, and soak into the earth where it’s needed. Rather than spray with chemicals to wage war against pests and disease, they keep the needs of the whole ecosystem in mind, so *everything* thrives—meaning insect pests have predators that eat them. Pollinator plantings welcome beneficial insects to help plants create balance. The Squires plant cover crops that keep down weeds and, when they die, become healthy mulch that holds moisture and feeds the earth as it breaks down.

It’s taken a decade of learning and trial and error for them to develop satisfactory regenerative growing methods. Along the way, they have generously given back to their community, which they value equally to taking care of the land. They have shared not just healthy, delicious food but knowledge and experience. Courtney and Adam are natural teachers. They have given presentations, hosted tours, and participated in agricultural conferences but are most proud of their internship program.

Unbound Glory has housed, fed, and educated dozens of interns over the years. “We like to leverage our experience in the food industry to help mentor those interested in agriculture, either farming or working in policy,” says Courtney. As higher education has added agriculture programs, they have gotten many more applicants—60 for this growing season. “We will teach them everything we can, from hands-on seeding, weeding, cultivating, harvesting, and processing to how to work within a farm system, marketing to be profitable, plus knowledge about soil science and pollinators... People can learn on whatever level they want. Even how to cook with the vegetables we grow and contribute to a healthy lifestyle.”

Besides non-traditional farming techniques, Unbound Glory stands out for its unique community-support-



Adam Squire in the greenhouse. Winter Caplanson photo.

ed agriculture (CSA) model: order online, pick up weekly, only buy what you want, no obligation. They also enjoy growing unique veggies (cardoons, artichokes, Italian escarole and radicchios) and heirloom varieties. Finally, they *love* to cook. After a stint with a food truck (which customers loved but wasn’t sustainable for Courtney and Adam), they acquired a wood-fired pizza oven and started making delicious, thin-crust pizzas using organic flour mixed with freshly milled local whole wheat, local cheese and meats and showcasing their own seasonal vegetables. Unbound Glory Farm offers pizza on select dates. You must pre-order (get on their e-mail list) and be quick, because it sells out every time.

“We love to cook,” says Courtney. “We love eating healthy food. We are obsessed with vegetables and love sharing that with everyone around us.” Here is one of her favorite locally grown recipes that she has shared:

Coconut Creamed Kale

- 1 bunch kale, stems removed and rough chopped
- 1 can coconut milk
- 3 garlic cloves *or* 2 garlic scapes, minced
- ½ medium onion, chopped
- ¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes

Bring coconut milk to a simmer in a skillet on medium-high heat, frequently stirring to avoid scalding the milk. Add crushed red pepper and onion and cook for 2 minutes. Add kale and garlic to the pan. Keep stirring to get the kale wilted into the coconut milk; once it reaches a simmer, turn down to medium heat and cook uncovered for 10–15 minutes until the kale is tender and the liquid has thickened.

Cris Cadiz is a writer for Grown ConNECTed, an initiative of UConn Extension to build connections between farmers and residents in Northeastern Connecticut. The project promotes more than 175 farms and 21 farmers markets across 32 towns in Eastern Connecticut. Its Grown ConNECTed for All campaign is making it easier for residents to find and purchase locally grown food, specifically by building awareness that those who receive SNAP food assistance are able to use their EBT cards at local SNAP retailer farms and farmers markets.

Find your local farmer and view the FREE Guide to Farm Fresh Food in Northeastern Connecticut at grownconnect-ed.org/csa (scroll down).

Windham Mill Museum News

By Irene Barnard

The **Windham Textile & History (Mill) Museum**, after an extensive search, is excited to welcome Charles Olsen as its new Executive Director. While board, staff, and volunteers worked together to continue museum operations and coordinate a busy new season of upcoming events and exhibits, Olsen had already been volunteering regularly for months, updating museum lighting in the Bev York Room, modernizing computers and other tech equipment, and organizing documentation and communication.

Olsen brings years of executive experience to this position. According to him, “We have a number of new projects planned, and we’re currently exploring partnership opportunities with other local organizations. From exhibits to education, we will be bringing new programs on as the year progresses. We’ll be expanding the content of our web pages and our website will be getting a revamp. We also expect to host more demos and workshops in the coming months and to have some special events for our members and some free days for the general public.” His focus on organizing systems and communication, and his ability to prioritize bigger issues will bring many needed improvements, allowing the Mill Museum to progress toward critical goals. One such goal: the museum is now open for extended summer hours (Friday thru Sunday, 10-4, thru mid-September). Another goal: opening a major new quilt show.

The museum’s new juried art quilt exhibit opens Saturday, May 2, reception at 1pm: “Local Color 7: Circular Thinking,” sponsored by Studio Art Quilt Associates, Connecticut, is a fiber art exhibition by SAQA-CT members that explores the varieties of meanings, images, and experiences evoked by the circle. The circle can be appreciated as a shape, a symbol, a concept, or a metaphor. Featured in the museum’s main exhibition hall, the Bev York Room, this exhibition seeks to celebrate diverse explorations of an image that has permeated cultures around the world and across time. (Runs through Sunday, June 28.)

A special musical event will be held Sunday, May 16, 2-3pm at the museum’s historic, restored Dugan Hall events room: Former Connecticut State Troubadour Sally Rogers will perform a medley of textile and mill history songs, accompanying herself on guitar, banjo, and mountain dulcimer in conjunction with the SAQA-CT art quilt exhibit. Rogers, a folk singer, songwriter, and educator, has performed for audiences around the US and globally at festivals, concerts, schools, and many other public places, for forty years. A talented fiber artist as well, she is also a SAQA member whose work will be displayed in the quilt exhibit.

The museum’s permanent exhibition, “Thread City: The Rise and Fall of the Connecticut Textile Industry,” shares the Bev York Room with rotating temporary exhibits like the new quilt show. Jamie Eves researched, curated, designed, and installed the “discovery” exhibit, which follows the course of local textile production in five sections (charettes). Visitors experience a trip through time, from industry origins in preindustrial textile production, through the Industrial Revolution, labor history, mill cities and towns, to deindustrialization. This overview of the industry’s profound influence on Connecticut is both introduction and context to the museum and its other installations. With over 100 artifacts entirely from the museum collection, the exhibition connects objects to each other by the stories they tell. Eves continues to make updates; and QR codes soon will link to online activities, the museum’s online catalog and objects, and other museums’ websites telling similar stories. Visitors can view the textile industry’s complex legacy through the lens of Willimantic, a local town inextricably linked with the state’s identity.

Windham Textile & History (Mill) Museum: 411 Main Street, Willimantic, CT, 06226. Mill Museum Dugan Hall, 157-B Union St., Willimantic. Park on Union St. or 411 Main St. museum parking lot.

Admission: \$10.00; Seniors (60+)/Kids (5-17)/Students: \$7.00; Kids under 5 and Members: Free.

Open Fri.-Sun. 10am-4pm. (860) 456-2178. Facebook, Instagram (@millmuseum.org); <https://millmuseum.org>