

Grant Report: Deepening and Growing Biodynamic Education
April 8, 2016

Dear Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation,

Thank you for supporting the Biodynamic Association's important work to educate and train the next generation of biodynamic farmers through our Biodynamic Scholarship Fund. Over our past fiscal year (April 1, 2015 - March 31, 2016) we were able to award a total of \$11,600 in scholarships to 63 individuals to attend numerous biodynamic workshops, courses and conferences across the country.

The grant of \$3,750 received from FSI in January 2016 allowed us to fund scholarships for 16 individuals, many of whom are apprentices in our North American Biodynamic Apprenticeship Program, to participate in the following three biodynamic educational events in January and February.

The Agriculture Course: An Intensive Study of the Origins and Future of Biodynamics is a midwinter intensive at the Pfeiffer Center in Chestnut Ridge, New York. This four-day intensive provided an in-depth examination of two plants used in making biodynamic preparations: dandelion and yarrow. Through a combination of lectures, artistic activities, practical experiences, observation exercises, and conversation participants investigated what qualities give these humble plants their powerful medicinal healing powers, as well as deepened their understanding of the role biodynamics plays in the development of humanity and agriculture. Scholarship recipients for this event included:

- Aquillon Hetrick, Fair Oaks, CA (\$200)
- Lisa Miskelly, Old Zionsville, PA (\$75)
- Victor Kubia, Chestnut Ridge, NY (\$200)

Compost and Soil Health: A Biodynamic Approach was a pre-conference event organized by the Biodynamic Association at the 2016 EcoFarm Conference in Pacific Grove, California. During this workshop, participants engaged in the biodynamic approach to the art of composting, including sourcing materials, building and turning piles, and working with the biodynamic preparations. Scholarship recipients for this event included:

- Adam Lee, Foster City, CA (\$100)
- Cache Hunter, Carbondale, CO (\$100)
- Cristina McCutcheon, Santa Cruz, CA (\$100)
- Dan Storm, Ukiah, CA (\$100)
- Jana Lynn Webb Muhar, Santa Rosa, CA (\$100)
- Mica O'Herlihy, Westby, WI (\$100)
- Sarah Patterson, Cedar City, UT (\$100)

The **Biodynamic Winter Intensives** are two week-long courses held each February for farmers, gardeners, and those seeking a working relationship with the living land. The first week takes place at the Nature Institute and the second takes place at Hawthorne Valley Farm Learning Center, both in Ghent,

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New York. Each features renowned biodynamic educators in a dynamic learning environment, including lectures, hands-on experience, inner work, and social activities. Scholarship recipients for this event included:

- Adam Szabunio, Kimberton, PA (\$400)
- Amber Dahlin, Holyoke, MA (\$375)
- Jodie Janovec, Whitewater, WI (\$500)
- Jon Giusti, Covelo, CA (\$450)
- Katie Margerison, Mountain View, CA (\$450)
- Sarah Pinkham, Kimberton, PA (\$400)

The farmers and apprentices supported by FSI deeply appreciated the educational experiences in which these scholarships enabled them to participate. Here are reflections from a few scholarship recipients in their own words:

My experience at the 2016 Biodynamic Winter Intensives was so beautiful! The first week at The Nature Institute really nurtured a new, more sensitive and whole way of thinking and connecting to plants and elements. The second week, at Hawthorne Valley Farm, was full of thought provoking lectures on subjects from astronomy to alchemy, and had a wonderfully surprising amount of inner development work as well. Both courses were so different, yet so complementary. I left feeling completely refreshed, grounded and so thankful to be a part of such a loving and intelligent community. -Katie Margerison



What an amazing event! Both weeks were so enlightening in such wildly different ways. The slow pace of the Nature Institute week was so perfect to enter into a real relationship with the nature of matter and soil and the substances of life. The tactile experiences and practical experiments made this week very impactful to me. My experience at Hawthorne Valley was so great in such different ways! The knowledge came in a little denser, but was beautifully balanced by a great deal of internal work and social communion. As a whole, I believe both weeks stimulated different parts of my brain and allowed me to more fully enter into a competent understanding of biodynamic principles. -Jon Giusti



I am so grateful for the BDA's scholarship that allowed me to attend the EcoFarm pre-conference this past January. There are so many great teachers in the biodynamic community, and I appreciated the opportunity to delve into Bruno Follador's relationship with compost. More than just information on 'how-to' or 'why', this event helped me deepen my understanding of how a different approach and relationship with compost can help deepen my relationship with all of life and its processes. It is so easy to forget how deeply one can become intimate and acquainted with any single organism or phenomena. I myself love such a concentrated and intense approach to something that seems so small, yet can be explored for a lifetime. While it wasn't a whole human lifetime, it was a pleasure to spend the better part of a day to inspire joy around and establish a deeper relationship with the alchemy of composting. -Adam Lee

The conference was rich in all areas of life. Socially it was great to meet so many other young and old farmers. I feel like this is a crucial part in attending conferences, to meet the old and the young generation and see how we can fit the two together. Talking with other apprentices, I was able to get a glimpse into other ways an apprenticeship might work, and talking with the old timers gave me a real sense of awe and inspiration for what I am striving for. During this time, when the earth is taking a deep breath in and connecting herself to the world again for a productive next season, it also behooves us, as earth stewards, to do the same, and I feel this conference fostered that well. Thank you for making it possible for me to attend this wonderful learning experience! -Aquillon Hetrick



We also surveyed scholarship recipients to get their feedback on the educational opportunities they attended and our scholarship fund. Of 13 survey respondents who participated in the events described above, 10 rated the workshop they attended “excellent”, 2 “good” and 1 “fair.” When asked what they gained from the experience, responses included:

Very illuminating new perspectives on science and agriculture

Better understanding of the biodynamic composting system.

This is what I wish my early "science" education had been: full of demonstrations and observation, experimenting with different substances and noticing their properties. Slowness of judgement and opening of perspective. Information is far more engaging when presented in such a manner, and, as a result, far more likely to stick.

Understanding that soil microorganisms are a part of the whole farm. Outstanding information about use of manures and building good windrows.

I gained greater insight into plant observation techniques. I developed a relationship with two preparation plants--Dandelion and Yarrow--and gained knowledge about using these plants for human health, as well as continuing to understand their role in compost preparations.

When asked how they plan to apply what they learned, survey responses included:

I already did! I reorganized my compost pile in way that I learned from Bruno Follador. Also excited to use some of the different ways that people bury their 500.

We are starting small homestead farms in an unincorporated urban area. Vital fertile soil is the key component to successfully producing food and creating biodiversity in small scale city farms. The experience of this biodynamic compost workshop will be shared with others in our ever-expanding network of gardeners.

The most directly useful aspect for me was the inner work: consciously being compassionate toward myself, other people, animals, and the world around me.

I have a new motivation to become even more familiar with compost. When I make compost I will think about what the materials were before they were put in the pile, and try to imagine what they might become. I have more images for the compost pile, and the whole experience feels much more alive for me now.

When asked about how the educational opportunities or scholarship process could be improved, most survey respondents answered with, “It was great” and, “The process was easy and people were responsive and helpful.” Some offered suggestions for modifying workshop content, which we shared with the instructors, and one person asked for more timely communication about the status of their application, which we will incorporate for new applications moving forward.

We deeply appreciate your continued support of this essential work to build the knowledge and skills of the next generation of biodynamic and organic farmers. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 262-649-9212 x5 or thea@biodynamics.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thea Carlson', with a long, sweeping underline.

Thea Maria Carlson
Co-Director