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Centennial Farms Foundation's quest to save Century Farms

The Millerton News Editorial

August 18, 2021

Centennial Farms Foundation is holding its inaugural Centennial Hay Days celebration on Saturday, Aug. 21, and we think it's special enough and important enough to write about the foundation's endeavors here and now.

The story of the Centennial Farms Foundation (CFF) is inspiring. It's about Pine Plains resident and multigenerational hay farmer Emily Hay (and we can't resist... how perfect is her name?), who grew up on the Kemmerer Farm in Stanfordville. The farm celebrated its centennial anniversary this March.

A "centennial farm" is defined as a farm that has remained within a single family's ownership continuously for 100 years or more.

Hay can still be found helping out her father, John, and her mother, Clara, on the Kemmerer Farm along with her siblings. She was forced to shut down her own business, a feed store in Pine Plains, last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

That's when she decided to create the CFF along with her husband, Bradley. According to her she is "a fourth-generation farmer, mother and entrepreneur [who then] had a lot of time on my hands to brainstorm, research and network."

While we're sorry she had to suffer through the economic hardships of the pandemic along with so many other New Yorkers and Americans, we're glad that it led to something as productive and magnanimous as her new foundation.

As Hay explained to this newspaper, the CFF is a charitable organization for century farmers facing hardships. It is currently backed by what she described as "the phenomenal support" of the Community Foundations of Orange and Sullivan (CFOS), out of those counties in the lower Hudson Valley.

She expounded further her very personal reasons for wanting to start the foundation.

"Witnessing firsthand the struggles my family faced, I understand the areas that farmers are lacking in support, and that now, more than ever, it is vital that they receive it. As people who feed the world, farmers are widely under appreciated. The presence of small farms in our communities is diminishing at an alarming rate."

We agree, farmers — esp these days. They've fed t



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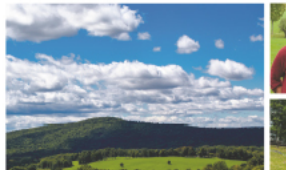


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her COVID downtime to come up with such a positive solution for this very important segment of our population.

Part of the way Hay hopes the foundation can assist century farmers is by providing debt fulfillment grants. She also wants to offer services including emotional support, financial and business planning and property tax aid. She already has one psychologist on board who has volunteered to provide her services to farmers free of charge through CFF. She's hoping more professionals will follow suit in that field and others.

Next year she is expecting to receive applications from Dutchess County farmers in need, including farmers from Millerton and North East, not to mention the towns of Pine Plains, Stanford, Amenia, Washington and surrounding communities.

Currently there are 31 registered century farm owners in Dutchess County; Hay said CFF will start allocating funds to those farmers, prioritizing the ones most in need. It will then distribute the money the foundation raises to other counties throughout New York as more funds are raised.

To that end, CFF will hold its first-ever fundraiser, Centennial Hay Days, on Sunday, Aug. 21, from 4 to 9 p.m. at Kemmerer Farm, located at 391 Shuman Road in Stanfordville. She, along with this newspaper, is hoping that COVID rates will be low enough to allow for many to attend. Please follow all health and safety guidelines.

Those who don't feel comfortable attending in person may still make a tax-deductible donation to the CFF. Donations may be made online at www.cff100.org; checks may also be mailed and made payable to CFOSNY Centennial Farms Foundation, P.O. Box 42, Pine Plains, NY 12567.

For more information on the Centennial Farms Foundation, go to www.centennialfarmsfoundation.org.

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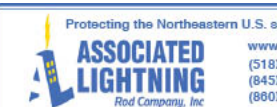
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