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MAGAZINE

Farm Party With a Purpose

The Centennial Farms Foundation is having a party. It deserves to for all the hard work it does. It's a party with a purpose, of course, and everyone of any age is invited. It's the 2nd Annual Centennial Hay Day Charity Music Event at Kemmerer Farm in Stanfordville, NY. It's on Saturday, October 8, from noon to 8 pm. There will be live music performances throughout the day, hay rides, food trucks, a wine and beer tent of local libations, and activities for kids.

The Centennial Farms Foundation (CFF) was started in 2021, and is being run by Emily Hay and her family, with the support of many others. The Kemmerers are fourth-generation farmers on the 100-acre Kemmerer Farm, and they understand and appreciate as only a long-time farm family can how challenging – yet rewarding – the farm life is. The Foundation aids families like theirs, farm families that have been in operation 100 years or more. Amazingly, there are about 30 such farms in Dutchess County alone. The Foundation's mission is "To support century farm owners facing hardship by providing debt-fulfillment grants, personal and business support services, and property tax aid."

In the short time since its inception, the Foundation has gotten a strong start with fundraising, has formed a Board of Directors, and is in the process of establishing itself as a 501©3 organization. "With tremendous help from staff and student attorneys at Pace University," Emily said, CFF's articles of incorporation have been certified by New York State. To support

its mission while it grows, CFF has teamed up with NYFarmNet to provide farmers with promised services, free of any costs. NYFarmNet is part of the Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell University and has been helping large and small farmers stay farming for over 30 years.

While the farming life can seem romantic to outsiders who imagine a bountiful and blessed life on the land (which is indeed part of it), the truth is it's very hard work. Equipment breaks and needs to be repaired or replaced. Animals need care 24/7. Finding and keeping help can be challenging and expensive. Small farm owners face bankruptcy or foreclosure more and more often, forcing them to sell property or assets to survive. Price fixing by larger manufacturers forces farmers to sell their goods at lower prices even as expenses rise. "The number of farms that can survive is diminishing year by year," Emily said. "But farmers make the world go around. With the Foundation I hope to contribute to economic sustainability for today's farmers and those of the future by helping pay off debts, of course, but also helping with business planning, taxes, emotional support – anything that helps."

CFF also coordinated with the Town of Stanford Special Events Committee to put on a series of panel discussions on farming. The first one, held on September 21, had "a great turn-out, and ran over by a half hour," Emily said. "We expect even more people for the others," which will be held on October 19 and November 16 at the Stanfordville Library. Learn more at www.centennialfarmsfoundation.org/events.

For now, the focus is on the charity event on October 8. "I wanted to make it more welcoming for families and easier for farmers to attend," Emily said. Late August is a "hectic time" for farmers, Emily realized. "Even I needed to be able to help my dad with the haying at that time," she said, "so this year's date in early October is more accommodating." The line-up of musical performers and the attending food trucks can be found on the website at www.centennialfarmsfoundation.org/events. Admission is \$15/person, and an additional \$20 donation to reserve a space for a pop-up tent for a family or group. Attendees should bring along folding chairs and blankets to sit on to enjoy a full day.

A music and food festival on a beautiful farm at the height of fall is occasion enough to attend, but knowing that it's a fundraiser for such a great cause makes it a "can't miss" event. For more information on CFF and the event, go to the website: www.centennialfarmsfoundation.org. To contribute to the Foundation at any time, go to www.centennialfarmsfoundation.org\donate.



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