



Unison Preservation Society

NEWSLETTER

Working to Protect and Preserve our Historic Countryside

Photo by Dara Bailey

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• WINTER •

UNISON, VIRGINIA

Spring Hill Garden—A Local Farm with Deep Roots

By Tara Connell



The frigid January wind coming over Mount Weather disappears into lush spring-time as I turn into Terri and Jim Teeter’s “High Tunnel”—a passive solar, half-round greenhouse—at School Hill Garden on Bloomfield Road, just outside the village of Unison.

Inside are hundreds of yummy looking, green-growing veggies and Terri herself, advising neighbor Linda Hart on what to clip and take home to husband Kim for dinner.

Right now, there’s kale and chard, arugula, carrots, collards, mustard greens, onions and cress. There’s also some early broccoli, spinach, herbs and something called Seven Dragon Stir Fry Mix (Tatsoi, Bokchoi, Pakcoi and Misuna).

All are what Terri calls “beyond organic,”

meaning she isn’t “Certified Organic” but doesn’t use any chemical sprays except ones that are certified organic and then only when it’s absolutely necessary.

Linda has filled a bag and is paying Terri for her trip to the “farm market” just across the road from her house.

I’m here to talk with Terri and Jim about their new business: Community Supported Agriculture. CSA’s involve a local farmer offering “shares” to consumers who then receive a box or basket of produce each week during an agreed upon season. The arrangement helps the farmer’s cash flow (payment up front, security) and the community gets fresh food, straight from the farm.

Starting this year, the Teeters plan to offer shares to ten families from May to September for a personalized, contracted amount. Each week during those months, the “shareholder” will get a box of seasonal produce and fresh eggs. Produce can include greens (lettuce, broccoli, beans, etc.) and berries, depending on what’s available. Boxes can be customized with bonus items such as pork, beef, bedding plants, jams, pickles, flowers or fresh baked breads.

“Our mission is to provide the community with wholesome, healthy food and preserve the farmland in the community,” says Terri.

This is the first winter they’ve had the High Tunnel and it’s allowed them to get

Turning Wood into Art

Another in our series of articles on Unison Artists

By Howard Lewis

As I pulled into his driveway on Bloomfield Road, a couple of hundred yards down the road from the Unison store, Dale Bright comes out of his shop on the west side of his property to greet me. He’s a former government official and Navy vet—a Frogman in his day but better known these days as a Navy Seal—who took up wood turning about 15 years ago after taking some classes in Leesburg and watching a well-known wood turner, Dave Hout, on television. From that point on, Dale was hooked. *Continued on page 6.*



ahead of things before they launch the CSA. As a result, they've been able to provide greens and herbs off season to her daughter's restaurants, to local farm markets and some customers like the Harts. They also are selling chicken and duck eggs and pork from the pigs they raised then slaughtered around the holidays.

Terri's daughter, Rebecca Dudley Lage, owns the Market Table Bistro in Lovettsville, Market Burger Fries and Shakes in Purcellville and Cocina on Market in Leesburg.

Clearly growing and selling things in Unison is nothing new for the Teeters. They have been providing fresh farm-to-table goodies to neighbors, restaurants and Farmers Markets in the area for ten years now. What's more, this work is in



Terri and Jim Teeter's "High Tunnel" is full of Winter crops including kale, chard, arugula, carrots, collards, mustard greens, onions, watercress and more.



Terri's DNA. She is the fifth generation to be farming and doing business in the Unison area. Yes, that's generations.

Terri is the daughter of June and Robert Craun, who ran the Unison Store and Tiny Acre Farm on Foxcroft Road. Her "granddaddy" was Josh Craun, Huntsman for the Piedmont Hunt. He bought School Hill Garden when he retired. "Five generations have driven a nail into this house," she said. (Her daughter and grandchildren also have lived there.)

Terri's mother was a Saffel, the family that ran the Unison store for three generations after her great-grandfather Henry W. Saffel bought it in 1914 from E.A. Milhollen (ok, I'll keep going: Mr. Milhollen bought it from L.E. Hutchison who opened it in 1888).

And just when you thought their community roots weren't deep enough, School Hill Garden's main building and the house in which Terri currently lives is the old Unison-Bloomfield School House (<http://unisonva.org/articles/Unison-Bloomfield-School/Unison-Bloomfield-School-article-2017.html>). The barn out back is where children used to put the ponies they had ridden to school that day.

Schools are a theme as well in the Teeter world. Terri teaches fifth-grade science at Mountain View Elementary in Purcellville. Jim retired last year as head custodian in Banneker Elementary in St. Louis and once worked at Middleburg Elementary.

How Terri manages the farm operation and teach full time is a wonder, really. Among the first things I noticed on my visits to School Hill Garden was how clean and tidy everything is and how healthy the



Linda Hart picks a harvest of fresh greens.



The brood of Red Sex Link and Buff Orpington hens supply eggs for the CSA.

chickens and ducks look. “She’s a stickler,” says Jim.

Her work area is filled with seed pods and the envelopes she’s filling to sell. Nearby shelves and the refrigerator are stocked with homemade jams and pickles ready to bring summer onto winter dinner tables.

The brood of Red Sex Link and Buff Orpington hens follow Terri around as if she’s their mother. Ducks of multiple breeds happily quack about. Eggs are all the hens and ducks provide. “I get to

know them so I just can’t,” she said, looking a little sheepish and not finishing the sentence with the obvious.

She has no such qualms about the pigs she raises or the steers and heifers. The cattle’s moms, however, are a different story.

“Right after Dad died (12 years ago), Ronnie and I told Mom we would carry on the farms,” Terri said, causing tears of joy. Ronnie Craun is Terri’s brother and runs Tiny Acre Farm on Foxcroft Road, the larger of the family’s two farms.

Brother and sister acquired their “seed

cows, Lucy and Suzie” ten years ago. Their operation now has 19 head, among them five steers and four heifers, mostly at Tiny Acres. Two more babies are due in May.

And Suzie and Lucy? They are still around. One is retired and the other will be after her last calf is born this spring. Both cows will be turned out to pasture. Looking sheepish again, Terri—the otherwise hardened farmer—says she couldn’t do anything but keep them around. “They’ve been too important to us.”

So with heart, lots of experience, and deep community roots, the Teeters are enthusiastically embarking on this new CSA business, opening their doors to Unison and working hard to get it started. Indeed, the excitement is palpable as we walk around School Hill with its new High Tunnel, a new green house built by Jim, spanking clean hen house and roost, even the cleaned-out, ready for the next occupants pig sty.

Says Jim: “We’re passionate about what we’re doing.” ■

More CSA Info

If you would like to purchase a share, call Terri at 540-454-5065 or visit **School Hill Garden** at the Purcellville Farmer’s Market on East Main Street, Saturdays from 10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. (Winter hours) Visit their exhibit at the **Loudoun Grown Expo** on February 29 at the Bush Tabernacle Skating Rink in Purcellville. Updates are on the School Hill Garden or **Tiny Acre Farm** Facebook pages.

Photos by Tara Connell.



Once the school stable for kids’ ponies, the barn now houses chickens and ducks.

Winter Update in Unison

By Tara Connell, President of the Unison Preservation Society

It seems like our wonderful Unison Heritage Day was years ago, right? Well, it was only a few busy months ago and it was a great success, thanks to your generous sponsorships, ticket sales and the silent auction. Thank you Unison.

Also a success at Heritage Day was our introductory Art Show and Sale, featuring Unison Artists including Laura Hopkins, Joan Gardiner, Avis Hodge and Dale Bright. So, as promised, we are announcing that we will hold a Spring Art Show and Sale the last weekend in April (the 24th, 25th and 26th) to end this weird weather Winter.

Along with our art show will be a community yard sale called "Unison's Attic" on April 25 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Rain date will be April 26.) SAVE THE DATES!

Hopefully everyone in the Unison area will begin saving up their stuff to sell at family tables on the Unison Store Village Green. Unison Preservation Society (UPS) will do the advertising, sell food, provide some entertainment and do clean up for a small share of the profits or a table rental charge.

The goal for UPS is to show off our amazing Unison artists, provide a safe, fun venue for a community yard sale and to raise money for the store and for UPS's preservation efforts. (Avis Hodge, for instance, just won the Clemente Faculty Award at The Art League Patrons Art Show in Alexandria for her watercolor "Early Morning.")

More details on how to reserve space in Unison's Attic will be forthcoming. Interested artists should contact Laura Hopkins at laurahopkins5@gmail.com. People interested in becoming sponsors should contact me, Tara Connell, at tara@rstarmail.com.

This Fall's Heritage Day helped replenish UPS's treasury after several years of expenditures to support local preservation efforts and our work to repair and improve the store (love the new sign, yes?), including attacking nagging water and plumbing problems (see the water story in this issue). We also have had some serious preservation issues to address in the past two years. Among our efforts:

- Restoring Unison to the list of Loudoun Historic Villages in order to give the residents of Unison a stronger say in our planning and zoning rights. We were surprisingly dumped from the list of villages when the new County Plan was approved. Getting us back on is a priority.
- Participating in the Loudoun Preservation Coalition's efforts to ensure the current rewrite of Loudoun's Zoning Code protect the Rural Western portion of the county.
- Monitoring the county's rural road network. Preserving our road network is essential to keeping Western Loudoun free from inappropriate development.
- Monitoring and assisting other Loudoun villages in their preservation battles such



UPS President Tara Connell (center) with 2019 Heritage Day volunteers Mary Ann Bell (left) and Karen Chase (right).

as the Aldie firehouse placement, Willisville's listing on the National Register of Historic Places and a cluster development in St. Louis.

• Ensuring that Unison remains Unison, one of Loudoun's most enduring and beautiful historic, crossroads villages. That includes support of other historic buildings and facilities in our village such as our Methodist Church and Civil War Battlefield markers.

Expenditures to accomplish these efforts include the cost of the newsletter, mailings, repairs and maintenance of the store, community outreach and signage costs, donations and support to other organizations.

With our new, second fund-raiser we can create a reserve fund for the store, a preservation war chest and begin some capital projects at the store. And again, thank you Unison! ■



The village of Unison comes alive at Heritage Day with neighbors and friends enjoying a perfect fall afternoon in early November.

Scenes from Heritage Day



From the top: (1) Bluegrass music by Willow Branch; (2) Local art show; (3) BBQ and craft beer on tap; (4) and (5) Piedmont Hounds make their annual visit; (6) Oysters on the half-shell; (7) Kids enjoy the moonbounce; (8) Joan Gardiner and her delicious Unison Honey; (9) Laura Hopkins and Harry Bigley; (10) Mayo Brown and friends; (11) Dedication of tree in memory of long time Unison resident, Dody Vehr.



Artist series continued from page 1.

“It is an addictive hobby,” he admits. But he comes by it honestly: His grandfather, a mountain man in the Appalachians of North Carolina, was a skilled wood worker who could make anything out of wood. Most of Dale’s own skills in wood turning are also self-taught.

As we begin to talk, it is pretty clear that I have a lot to learn about this subject.

My first question: When he starts making a wooden bowl, for example, does Dale see that bowl in a particular piece of wood or does he just decide that this piece of wood is going to be a bowl whether the wood likes it or not? The answer is that Dale sees the bowl in the wood before he starts to work. He points to a stump of wood on the floor, which is about two feet in diameter, and asks me where the bowl is in that piece of wood.

... “when I am looking at all those tree rings radiating out from the center of the stump, I am actually looking at the side of the bowl, not its center.”



Dale’s beautiful bottle stoppers make wonderful gifts for the wine lover.

I flunk the test—thinking the center bowl would be in the middle of the tree stump and the edges on the outside of the

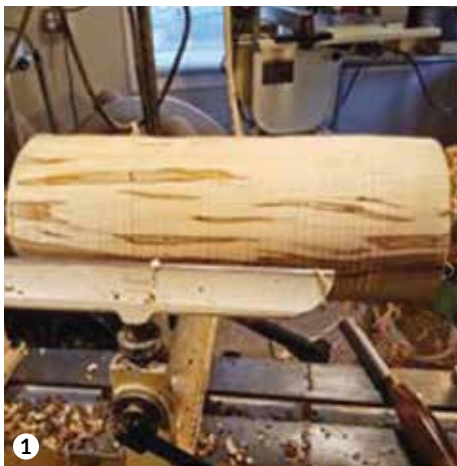
stump where the wood meets the bark. Wrong. Dale explains that “when I am looking at all those tree rings radiating out from the center of the stump, I am actually looking at the side of the bowl, not its center.”

Besides making bowls (usually getting a nest of two to three out of a piece of wood), Dale also makes vases, wine stoppers, lidded boxes, game calls as well as something called near-spheres—sort of wooden urns that aren’t perfectly spherical but “nearly” so. I don’t even try to find the near-sphere in the next piece of wood Dale shows me, but I am sure it is in there somewhere.

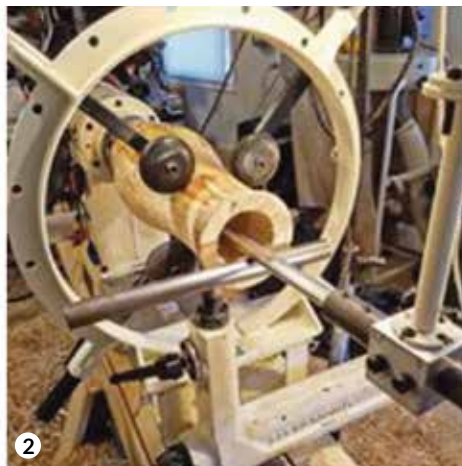
The collage of photos to the left show a piece of maple on a lathe in Dale’s shop literally “turning” into a piece of art—in this case a 15-inch vase. Creating something like this is “all about feel and eye,” Dale says. He shapes and hollows out the wood with a variety of handheld tools ranging from a bowl gouge to sandpaper as it spins on the lathe. In the last photo in the collage, the vase has taken shape but it still has a long ways to go before it is finished. It will be put on a shelf to dry for 6-8 months before Dale puts it back on the lathe for final finishing work and oiling—maybe in time for 2020 Unison Heritage Day!

Dale admits that he gets into fights with some of his pieces as he tries to figure out how best to bring out the character of the wood. He’s been in a fight for a couple of weeks with the near-sphere that he had on his lath on my recent visit.

Before all of this takes place, however,



1



2



3



4

Transforming a piece of maple into a 15” vase from start to rough cut.

you obviously have to start with a piece of wood—but not just any piece of wood. Dale is looking for wood with character. On rare occasions he may buy wood, but for the most part he uses the dead trees that his friends and neighbors bring him.

He has a couple of good-sized logs sitting out in his yard that are in various phases of weathering. He'll "rough cut" these with a chainsaw and bring them indoors to dry out. Once the wood has dried sufficiently, Dale uses a band saw to create "blanks" that he can begin to work with on his lathe.

Dale is picky about the wood he works with. To begin with, he needs a sizeable tree trunk to make a decent-sized bowl or near-sphere. A tree that's 24 inches across produces a bowl of around 16-inches in diameter, for example. And Dale is particular about the types of trees he works with, preferring maple, cherry, elm, black walnut, black gum and Osage orange. He also works with the burls (bumps) found on trees trunks throughout this area.

One of the most unique woods in Dale's inventory is ambrosia maple or worm wood—the name deriving from the wood's distinctive patterns. Actually, Dale explains, worms have nothing to do with these patterns. They are caused by a beetle whose enzymes create the patterns. By the time Dale is working with the wood, the beetle is long gone, but the patterns are still there waiting in the wood for someone to bring them out into the daylight, so to speak. That's Dale's job.

The patterns of the ambrosia maple can be seen in the photos below.

After my introduction to the art of wood turning, we sit down at Dale's computer and look through dozens and dozens



Coring some Rock Maple bowls.



of pictures of bowls, vases, near-spheres, bottle stoppers, canisters, lidded boxes and other objects that he has created over the years. He stops on one photo of what appear to be 4-5 inch wooden stakes. "What do you think these are," he asks. I don't have a clue. "Vampire stakes," he announces. A few years ago, a customer ordered 50 of them to send out with invitations to a Halloween party. You apparently really have to know your wood when it comes to making vampire stakes. "Stakes made out

of locust work best on Loudoun County vampires," Dale deadpans, "While you want to use maple and oak on vampires in Fairfax County." Who knew?

I leave Dale's home in Unison a lot wiser about wood turning than when I arrived and, once again, appreciative of the talented artists who live all around us in the Unison neighborhood. To see more of Dale's work, including the vampire stakes, check out [Hunt Country Wood Turner](#) on Facebook. ■ *Photos courtesy of Dale Bright*



Hollow Vessels Made of Cherry (l) and Black Walnut (r).



Ambrosia Maple Near-Sphere (l) and Bowl (r).

Water and Sewer for Unison? Decision time at hand

March 31 is the deadline for telling Loudoun County if Unison is interested in studying whether it's possible to bring water and sewer to a section of the village.

At least 60 percent of the residents of a mapped water/sewer target area need to agree to a study by that date for the county to do the feasibility study. The study area includes about 30 residences along Bloomfield Road to Furr Road and in the village proper along Unison Road.

The study's target area includes homes that traditionally have suffered the most severe water shortages and/or have self-identified as having septic concerns. Some have been identified in a county study as having septic issues.

The study area was decided by a group of village volunteers who have been working on the project since 2017.

Residents of the study area will be invited to an information meeting and petition signing to be scheduled in the near future. An information packet will be sent to relevant addresses shortly. More information about the project also is available at:

<https://www.loudoun.gov/DocumentCenter/View/117160/Prioritization-Manual-and>

<https://www.loudoun.gov/DocumentCenter/View/117162/Water-and-Wastewater-Projects-Funding-Policy>



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How to Support the Unison Preservation Society (UPS):

UPS depends upon contributions from people living in our community who want to preserve our historic village and the countryside surrounding it. Since the UPS is a not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) corporation registered in Virginia, all contributions are tax deductible. Contributions should be made to the Unison Preservation Society and sent to the post office box listed above.

Ideas for Newsletter Articles:

We are particularly interested in gathering material about Unison for future UPS newsletters.

If you have ideas for newsletter stories, please e-mail us at

unisonpreservsoc@unisonva.org.



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The Rescue Cats of Unison

By Howard Lewis

Two years ago, we devoted a page in the newsletter to the Second Chance Dogs of Unison. The cats of Unison were not happy with this dog-centric focus. So, we decided to make amends and include a section in this newsletter devoted to The Rescue Cats of Unison. There actually is a big difference between how dogs and cats get a second chance. About 25 percent of cats, for example, find new homes by just showing up as strays (see Pan below) compared to around five percent of dogs. Another 30 percent of cats are adopted from shelters and roughly the same

from friends and relatives. Only three percent come from breeders compared to 34 percent for dogs. Approximately 85 percent of dogs who stray from their homes are returned, but only about ten percent of cats. The saddest number in all of this, however, is that roughly 25 percent of both dogs and cats entering shelters each year are euthanized and never get a second chance. Below are some of the cats who have found their second chance around Unison. ■



Pan showed up at a barn where Tess Croce was working and came home with her to her parents farm.



Karn and Bob Rockwood adopted Tweetybird from Middleburg Humane.



Phillipa and Howard Lewis adopted Tigger from the Washington Area Adoption Group.



Karen and Nick Croce at Ridgeview Farm adopted Oliver from a friend being stationed overseas.



Anne and Lee Dahmer rescued Marley from a foster home in Herndon 11 years ago. He's now 13 years-old.



Steve and Karen Chase adopted Elton from Middleburg Humane.



Tara Conell and Michael Zuckerman rescued Babe Ruth 11 years ago—"our only female cat ever and we always name cats after baseball players."



Phillipa and Howard Lewis adopted Anna a long time ago from Middleburg Humane. She's an old kitty now.



Lucy (left) and Desi (right) are barn cats in training at Lazy Dog Farm—part of a Loudoun Humane Society program to relocate feral cats to barns in the area.