

Farm Education Day and Food Festival to celebrate the Shmita year

Carole Caplan, special to the WJN

On Sunday June 14, the Jewish Alliance for Food, Land and Justice will be hosting a free Farm Education Day and Food Fest at Matthaei Botanical Gardens with bus tours to Green Things Farm.

The connection between Jews, Food, and Justice is not a difficult one to make. According to co-chair Idelle Hammond-Sass from the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation, "The Farm Education and Food Fest will offer the whole community a way to celebrate our Jewish roots-- and the Shmita cycle-- through delicious local food and by learning not only how to grow healthy food, but how to care for and protect the land, farm animals and the people that work it, and to consider how we as Jews might advocate for a values based food system." Shmita, the Jewish laws which call for re-assessment of how we use our resources, has been examined through



Food Festival in honor of Shmita year

community events throughout this past year.

Plans for the day include Education, Demonstration and Information tables run by local groups and individuals on all sorts

of sustainable and locally-related topics, and will be accompanied by narrated bus tours to Green Things Farm—a local, organic farm just northeast of downtown Ann Arbor

owned by Nate and Jill Lada. There will be tables and workshops offered by Ann Arbor Reskilling on canning, weaving, lotion and lip-balm making, backyard chickens, among others: educational presentations on soil and composting with Lisa Perschke, as well as water, seeds, pollinators, land use and preservation, animal husbandry and foraging. Other groups, such as Sierra Club, ICPJ, Fair Food Network, Growing Hope/Ypsiplanti, and Fair Trade Judaica will offer their wares and ways to advocate for food justice and the environment. Of course, there will also be locally sourced FOOD including Zingerman's Knish Kart, salads from local greens, and bagels with locally-grown and milled flours.

Some vendors have compelling connections with sustainable Jewish living. Karyn Schoem makes Shabbos candles made from beeswax from local bees. An active

continued on page 2

Shmita Year, continued from page 1

participant on the Shmita Network, an online google group moderated by Hazon, Karyn communicates with Rabbis, educators and others exploring Shmita in the US, Europe and Israel. Lori Lichtman, owner of Challah Rising Baking Company, makes a newly inspired challah. "Challah has connected me with the land, and I am very committed to supporting local, Michigan based farmers. The challah also tastes better coming from local sources. By far the best honey is from Lessers Farms. I love driving out to the farm and talking with them about their bees and learning about their concerns as the bee population dwindles. I know they care about their honey and that means a lot to me." Lichtman started baking challah as a spiritual practice to help her connect with G-d. Chanting while baking, she infuses each loaf with prayers to the Divine before selling the loaves at Argus Farm Stop each Friday.

Kids of all ages are welcome to attend the festival, and will be engaged by innovative Shmita programming led by educator Lauren Zinn, founder of the Hebrew Playgroup at Zinnhaus. Offering a simulation-game at 10:15 called "Jubilee for You and Me" will help kids understand the Shmita cycle culminating in the Jubilee (Yovel). Kids under 12 should be accompanied by a parent.

And, of course kids will love to get an up-close look at bees, goats, chickens and worms!

"The event is free, but we are inviting people to bring donations of packaged foods and personal care items for the pantry at Jewish

Family Services," said Hammond-Sass, "Even as we celebrate our local, healthy food system, it is important to remember that there are those in our community whose experience with food is more insecure."

In an exciting synchronicity Hazon, the national Jewish movement on food and the environment, will be opening a Detroit office early this summer, and will be attending the festival as well. Look for Hazon staff Sue Salinger and Blair Nossan to be hosting an information table and demonstrating how to make dill pickles. Hazon has run Jewish Food Festivals across the country, and hopes to build on the June 14th event for an even larger event in 2016 in the Detroit area.

Hammond-Sass, who was herself inspired by the work of Hazon, summarized by saying, "The festival is the culmination of a wonderful series of events leading up to and honoring the Shmita year," and added that she was so grateful for "having had the opportunity to learn and work with everyone who has made it possible". Hope to see you there!

The event, which will run from 10 a.m.–2 p.m., is open to the entire community, and has been made possible in part by an Impact Grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor. The schedule for the day can be found on the groups' facebook page at: www.facebook.com/JewishAllianceforFLJ. Pre-registration at <http://farm-and-sustainable-foodfest.eventbrite.com>. ■

The Jewish Alliance for Food, Land and Justice invites you to a



Farm Education Day and Sustainable Food Fest

Honoring the Shmita Year!

Celebrate sustainable food and farming through a Jewish lens- Re-Skilling Workshops, Vendors, Education, and Food! "Jubilee for You and Me" childrens program at 10:15

Sunday June 14th, 10am – 2pm

Matthaei Botanical Gardens-with bus tours to Green Things Farm
1800 N. Dixboro Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48105



All are welcome and admission is free, but please pre-register at <http://farm-and-sustainable-foodfest.eventbrite.com> www.Facebook.com/JewishAllianceFLJ



Please bring donations of food and personal care items for Jewish Family Services Food Pantry. This program is made possible in part by an Impact Grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor.

JEWISH NEWS

February 2015 Shevat/Adar 5775

Volume XXXIX: Number 5

FREE

“Edible Home Landscapes”—a perfect match for Tu B’shevat in the Shmita year

Rabbi Michal Woll, special to the WJN

In celebration of Tu B’Shevat, and in keeping with the teachings of the *Shmita* year, the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation and Pardes Hannah will host “Edible Home Landscapes—From Saving Seeds to Harvesting from Your Own Trees” the afternoon of February 1, from 1–3 p.m., at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor.

This event, which will be an opportunity to study about permaculture and perennial home food gardens, is a natural fit for the Shmita year, which invites Jews to re-consider current food production and land use. “Although the mitzvot for Shmita include letting the land lie fallow, one is instructed and allowed to collect what grows perennially, harvesting only what grows without cultivation,” says Carole Caplan, a member of AARC. “The ancient texts point directly to the wisdom and practices now resurfacing around sustainable food systems. Looking at the issue through text helps to connect us back to our roots as Jews, while learning about current sustainable gardening principles makes Judaism relevant to our modern lives in a very tangible way.” The February 1 event will include text study, dialogue, hands-on learning and refreshments. The event is free, but registration is requested.



To register, visit <http://foodlandjustice-ediblelandscape.eventbrite.com>.

“We want to encourage individuals to think beyond grocery stores, farmer’s markets and even CSA’s, and to imagine healthy foods perennially outside their own kitchen door,” says Caplan. To facilitate this, local plant guru Erica Kempter, of Nature and Nurture Seeds, will educate attendees on what is possible, even for the novice gardener. She will cover soils, seeds and perennial plantings that offer beauty

and food to home landscaping.

Out of the excitement amongst those working on creating programming for the Shmita year here in Ann Arbor, a newly formed Jewish Alliance for Food, Land and Justice, is taking root. Upcoming events include a visit to ROC in Detroit in partnership with ICPJ (Interfaith Council on Peace and Justice) on February 11 to discuss fair labor

practices for restaurant workers, and on June 7, a Youth Farm Education Day/Community Jewish Food Festival.

These events are made possible in part by an Impact Grant from the Federation of Greater Ann Arbor. Anyone interested in joining the festival planning committee or volunteering at the event can contact Carole Caplan at caplan.carole@gmail.com. ■

Community

Shmita group presents "Looking at institutional food through a Jewish lens"

Rabbi Michal Woll, special to the WJN

The community is invited to gather at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital on December 7 to explore how the Jewish teachings of *shmita* are coming to life through the impact of regional institutions and their commitments to local, healthy food.

The event is a continuation of an exciting year-long exploration of the teachings of *shmita*, funded by a grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor late last winter. "For me, the commandments of *shmita* can be seen as a built-in seventh year wake-up call," said Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation member Carole Caplan,

who is co-chairing the event with fellow congregant Idelle Hammond-Sass. Caplan explained, "*Shmita*, which means 'release,' is the opportunity to become conscious of our relationships with each other, with the environment, and with our understanding of true health, nourishment, and 'enough-ness.' Just as Shabbat is an opportunity to reset our ideas about production and consumption on a personal level, *shmita* provides us with a unique and important opportunity to re-imagine and reset our practices regarding food production and consumption in and beyond our own homes out into our communities."

AARC member and owner of Locavorious Rena Basch agreed. "Modern philosophy on how to celebrate and honor the *shmita* years recommends we take the time to re-imagine society, re-lease the land and



Hoop house with planters for patient use at St. Joe

re-think farming," she noted. Basch, who began working in the local sustainable food movement in 2006, founded Locavorious, a locally grown frozen fruit and vegetable CSA here in Ann Arbor. "Do you wonder how we, and our community, our congregations, our schools, and our institutions can support the values and intentions of this *shmita* tradition?" Basch questioned. "This event will introduce us to the inspirational people who are re-imagining our food system by considering environmental health, human health and sustainability in institutional food sourcing. These community leaders are on

the ground working to incorporate local and healthy food into our community's schools, hospitals and other large institutions."

The panel will include farmer Dan Bair, project manager at Saint Joseph Mercy Health System; Betti Wiggins, executive director of School Nutrition for the Detroit Public Schools; and Nicki Milgrom, Healthy Food in Health Care Organizer with the Ecology Center. Basch will facilitate the panel. A tour of the hoop house with Farmer Dan will follow the panel discussion.

The panel will include farmer Dan Bair, project manager at Saint Joseph Mercy Health System; Betti Wiggins, executive director of School Nutrition for the Detroit Public Schools; and Nicki Milgrom, Healthy Food in Health Care Organizer with the Ecology Center. Basch will facilitate the panel. A tour of the hoop house with Farmer Dan will follow the panel discussion.

"This event will be a great opportunity to celebrate ancient Jewish wisdom as a pathway towards invigorating local food systems, creating community mindfulness around food, and supporting sustainable local agriculture," added Basch.

Inspired by *shmita*-year materials provided to them by Hazon, the national Jewish organization for environmental awareness and action, Caplan and Hammond-Sass were touched on a personal level to take the questions they were individually wrestling with—healthy food accessibility and affordability; availability of a sustainable non-gmo, local, organic food supply; the environmental impact of the food production system; fair-wages in the food system—and

gave them a framework with which they could involve those around them in the conversation as Jews.

"Jews hold justice and environmental stewardship as important spiritual values," Caplan offered, "I believe that if we can get people into the conversation and make them understand that it is personal, more people will be inspired by those shared Jewish values to act. And, of course, with all of the interest in sustainable, local food, the time to act is now."

The Food, Land and Justice Shmita event committee is currently made up of Caplan, Basch, and Hammond-Sass from AARC, along with Oran Hesterman, Lucinda Kurtz, and Linda Jo Doctor from Pardes Hannah. There is a hope for involvement with other Ann Arbor synagogues, and partnerships with other local organizations, as well as plans for the group to move forward following the grant year as the Jewish Alliance for Food, Land and Justice.

The committee is very excited to have partnered with ICPJ, the Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice, for this event.

Future events include "Sustainability at Home," with a focus on organic home gardening and permaculture principles, in honor of Tu b'Shevat; a "Stewardship Day" late spring; and will culminate the year's efforts in a community-wide Youth Outdoor Education Farm Day and Community-wide Jewish Food Festival at a local organic farm. ■

The December event will take place at St. Joe's Women's Health Center, 5320 Elliot Drive, Ypsilanti, from 1–3:30 p.m. There is no charge for the event. For information, contact Carole Caplan at carolecaplan@livebychoice.com, or Idelle Hammond-Sass at Hammond_sass@msn.com

JEWISH NEWS

October 2014 Tishrei/Cheshvan 5775

Volume XXXIX Number 2

FREE

September Food, Land and Justice program

A group from Ann Arbor attended a Food, Land and Justice visit to Detroit to see D-Town Farms and attended a panel at Eastern Market. The group of 30 explored the farm and market and learned about the exciting work being done in Detroit, and met some of the people involved at the grassroots level. The Food Land and Justice program is funded through a grant from the Jewish Federation of Ann Arbor to explore sustainability and food justice and system change through a Jewish lens. Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation in collaboration with Pardes Hannah and a cross-section of Jewish groups and congregations in Ann Arbor will offer programs throughout the Shmita year on these important issues. The next event will be a trip to St. Joes' Farm December 7th to learn about "Farm to Institution". The Food Land and Justice program began last March with a symposium featuring Oran Hesterman of Fair Food Network.



The day's planning committee and panel: Oran Hesterman, Randall Fogelman, Carole Caplan, Idelle Hammond-Sass, Lucinda Kurtz, Eitan Sussman, Rena Basch, Linda Jo Doctor, and Davita Davison



The Food Land and Justice Bus Tour visited D-Town Farm in Detroit, where Malik Yakini explained the rich history of urban agriculture in Detroit

Food, land and justice through a Jewish lens: A symposium honoring the *Sh'mita* year

Lucinda Kurtz, special to the WJN

Dr. Oran Hesterman, president and CEO of Fair Food Network, will be the keynote speaker for a community symposium focusing on Jewish perspectives around food, land, and justice issues on March 23, from 2–5 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor. The *Sh'mita*, or sabbatical year, which begins this fall, taps into the most fundamental elements of sustainability in its injunction to rest the land, have a conservation approach to food and agriculture, and treat those who labor more justly. This symposium will explore how ancient Jewish traditions around food and land are relevant to us today.

A wide range of Ann Arbor Jewish institutions, led by the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC) and Pardes Hannah, are joining forces to explore these primary issues of our relationship to the earth from a Jewish perspective. And without doubt, these issues are capturing the passion and imagination of our Jewish community, particularly the young people who are flocking to organic farming, farmers' markets, and the good food movement in large numbers.

In his presentation, "Fair Food: A Jewish Perspective," Dr. Hesterman, author of *Fair Food: Growing a Healthy Sustainable Food System for All*, will speak about the basic principles of a fair food system, a system that needs to provide food



PHOTO CREDIT: SUSAN AYER

that is healthy, green, fair and affordable. He will also explore how we can transform our food system through direct action and policy change.

Six breakout sessions featuring leaders in the Ann Arbor food, land, and sustainability movements will follow the keynote at 3:30 p.m., providing an opportunity to dig deeper into this rich material. These sessions are: Food Produc-

tion; Food Distribution; Global and Domestic Fair Trade; Public Health and Policy; Regional Land Use and Conservation; Jewish Text Study. Experts in their field will share information about innovative projects and activities that have already been initiated in Ann Arbor and suggest how we can get involved at the ground level in making a difference.

Michigan is a clear leader in the good food movement and is one of only a few states that has a document, "The Good Food Charter" that lays out a statewide strategy for institutions like schools and hospitals to procure sustainably grown and locally sourced foods as much as possible. In addition, Fair Food Network's Double Up Food Bucks Program is the recognized model on the national level for incentive programs at farmers' markets for people on federal food assistance, increasing access to healthy fruits and vegetables for families in need, while supporting farmers. Michigan's Senator Debbie Stabenow, chair of the Senate Agriculture, has just successfully led the Farm Bill through the U.S. House and Senate, a herculean task that spanned several years of negotiations. The bill, signed into law by the president at Michigan State University, supports the food security of millions of American families, provides a degree of certainty for thousands of farmers, and invests in the development of sustainable local and regional food systems.

As we become more informed about food justice issues and the challenges of providing equity in a wide variety of circumstances, we as Jews can become inspired to take a meaningful part in the growing food justice movement and take specific actions to create change. Dr. Hesterman and the workshop leaders will present a myriad of actions individuals and the community can take to have a positive impact on this issue so important to our future. The principles that guide *Sh'mita* and *tikun olam* can lead us from the wilderness into a healthier future for ourselves, our land, our children.

This symposium is organized and co-sponsored by: Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation, Pardes Hannah, The Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor, Temple Beth Emeth, and Beth Israel Congregation. For more information, call 445-1910 (AARC) or email to hammond_sass@msn.com. ■