

**Harrisdale Homestead**  
**A Project of the Wallace Foundation**

**Annual Report February 2019**

**Our mission:** *To contribute to rural economic and social vitality through activities that promote locally-produced foods and public health, contribute to public understanding of the food system, advance agricultural sustainability, cultivate community, and foster democratic participation and leadership. (See Appendix A for our definitions of key terms)*

**Our continuing goals (2019-2021) and supporting activities:<sup>1</sup>**

**GOAL 1: To participate in community activities, organizations, and initiatives for fostering:**

- health and well-being and improved quality of life.
- understanding of agriculture, food, and community development and their interconnections.
- strategic planning.
- increased production and consumption of local food.
- an appreciation of the value of a diverse food and agriculture system including food produced for local consumption and revenue-generating exports (corn & soybeans).

**Activities in 2018:**

- We continued to participate in Healthy Cass County (HCC), Cass County Local Food Policy Council (CCLFPC), Cass County Local Food Action Coalition projects, the state-wide Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG; formerly under the Leopold Center), and Practical Farmers of Iowa.
- Ardy has contributed to Healthy Cass County planning and evaluation. She is part of the team seeking local financial support for a Cass County health coordinator. In August, Ardy made a presentation on food system and health at a Practical Farmers of Iowa Ag Arts Field Day at Maple Edge Farm near Hastings.
- Gil served as the chair the CCLFPC.

**Plans for 2019:** We anticipate continuing our involvement in the same organizations at similar

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<sup>1</sup> We describe below what we have been doing “wearing” the “Harrisdale Homestead” hat. As a matter of our responsibility to the board of the Wallace Foundation as a not-for-profit organization, in any of our activities in which confusion might arise about which of the three entities associated with the Harrisdale name--Harrisdale Homestead, Harrisdale Farmstead, and Harrisdale Farm—we are acting under, we strive to be clear and transparent. The “Farmstead” is our for-profit local foods production enterprise in which we have been growing and selling local foods by order and at farmers' markets. The “Farm” is Ardy's family's farmland which we bought out her siblings' shares in 2018 and which we rent to a local farmer who grows corn and soybeans. Clearly our experiences in each of these different entities informs our thinking about the other. For example, working with our renter and NRCS personnel with regard to the “Farm” helps to ground us in the practical realities of contemporary conventional agriculture. However, in any situation where overlap conceivably exists, we do that explicitly under the for-profit entity, e.g., educating consumers about less common vegetables, providing recipes for using these, and introducing new vegetable dishes through taste testing at a farmers' market is done as a Farmstead activity.

levels with the exception of Gil no longer serving as chair of the CCLFPC. We've developed a concept statement outlining how Harrisdale entities might become an incubator for beginning vegetable farmers and circulated it to potential co-sponsors (see Appendix B). Our proposal has been accepted for presenting a paper on the Cass County "Community Builders" process at the 2019 Association for the Study of Food and Society/Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society Conference in Anchorage, Alaska in June. About 12 years ago this program developed relationships among leaders of smaller communities in the county and increased community pride and capacity. We are working with key people involved in that process, including LaVon Eblen, to write up this case study for presentation at the conference and to submit a manuscript for publication in the peer reviewed *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* (JAFSCD).

**GOAL 2.** Collaborate in organizing events intended to increase the appreciation of agriculture and local, healthful food.

**Activities in 2018:**

- We collaborated with the 2016-17 Local Food and Farms Celebration partners--Rolling Acres Farm, Brun Ko Farm, and Harrisdale Farmstead--to sponsor the 2018 Local Food and Farms Celebration in early August. The 2018 event featured a particular focus at each of the participating farms: Rolling Acres—Extended Season/High Tunnel production; Brun Ko Farm—Rotational Grazing; Harrisdale Farmstead—Soil Health with exhibits by Cass County NRCS and Smith Generation Farms; Alan Robinson--Contemporary Beef Production; Pace Poultry & Produce—Pastured Chickens; Kevin Peterson—Transitioning Row Crops to Organic; and Danish Countryside Vine and Wines--Vitaculture. Other exhibits during the event included the Wallace Foundation, DezaRae Farm soap products, the Cass County Local Food Policy Council, and Healthy Cass County. The event flier is attached to this report as a separate document.

**Plans for 2019:** We have begun planning with last year's partners to organize another Local Food and Farms Celebration. We have been discussing how to pursue the same goals while making the event more manageable for the organizers.

**GOAL 3:** To participate in professional activities that relate to the Harrisdale Homestead mission.

**Activities in 2018:**

- Ardy is a member of NC-1196 USDA Multistate Research Project and chairperson of Lyson Center for Civic Agriculture and Food Systems Leadership Team.
- Ardy is co-author of the introductory chapter, "Communication is the Essence of Nutrition Practice" (Mayfield and Gillespie), for the *Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Guide to Nutrition Communication*, edited by B. Mayfield, forthcoming 2019.
- Gil is associate editor for *Renewable Agriculture & Food Systems* for which he manages the review process for approximately four manuscripts per year.
- Gil is a member of the Leadership Team for the Lyson Center for Civic Agriculture and Food Systems, serves as an advisor to the Lyson Center's *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* (JAFSCD);

<https://www.foodsystemsjournal.org/index.php/fsj/about>), and reviews manuscripts for JAFSCD.

- Gil was awarded the 2018 Richard P. Haynes Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award in Sustainable Agriculture by the Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society.

**Plans for 2019:** We are currently anticipating continuing with the same professional activities as in 2018. We are planning to become a shareholder the JAFSCD journal because we think that its focus “. . .on the **practice** of agriculture and food system development. . .” is very consistent with both the practical and applied research that we need for rural development and the goals of the Wallace Foundation.

### **LONGER TERM GOALS 2020 - 2023:**

Continue work on the current goals plus:

- Assist community organizations and initiatives in studying and evaluating community-based programming.
- Developing, in collaboration with other partners, an incubator for beginning farmers interested in fruit, vegetable, and small-scale livestock production.
- Assist in “connecting the dots” regarding current and potential organizations and initiatives to maximize use of resources and to improve communication.

## **Appendix A: Our Definitions of Key Terms**

Rural economic and social vitality: We think that for a locality to be a good place for people to live requires (a) an economic base that provides opportunities for provisioning the adequate goods and services; (b) a social “climate” that is conducive to people feeling included, supported, and valued; and (c) broad-based democratic decision-making practices that promote the general welfare by effectively addressing issues, solving problems, and seizing opportunities.

Activities include investing our time, expertise, and resources both in our own initiatives and in organizations that share our goals of promoting rural economic and social vitality.

Locally-produced foods include any food or food product grown or processed in a location geographically-proximate (e.g., within the county or nearby counties) to that product’s consumer. We deem "local" to be valuable only to the extent that it is associated with freshness, nutritional value, transparency, social justice, producer benefits, and ecosystem viability.

Public health refers to the prevalence of good physical health among members of the population resulting from good diets, adequate exercise, reasonable access to needed medical treatment, etc. It also refers to having satisfaction with life and a sense of well-being among the populace.

Food system includes the ecological base in land, the agricultural inputs and suppliers, the range of all agricultural producers and practices, produce buyers, food-related transport systems, food processors and distributors, food retailers, food pantries, household food-related equipment and practices, family and community food decision-making, and food waste practices and facilities.

Agricultural sustainability refers broadly to the capacity for a social grouping to continue to supply the needs of its members from available resources over a long period of time under a wide range of social and ecological changes.

Community (as distinguished from locality of habitation) involves people possessing strong bonds of shared identity, mutual concern, and collective interest; bonds that shape social networks to be characterized by cooperative, collaborative, and mutually supporting social relationships. Community is important for motivating people to work together both to address problems and issues and to act on opportunities.

Democratic participation and leadership refers to having broad-based and meaningful involvement in important public decisions as well as allowing for any ordinary, competent citizen to take an active role in public deliberations on issues and problem solutions.

## Appendix B: New Farm Incubator Concept Statement

**Subject:**Incubator

**Date:**Sun, 13 Jan 2019 15:17:06 -0600

**From:**Gil Gillespie <gwg2@cornell.edu>

**To:**Steve Carlson <steve@practicalfarmers.org>, sally@practicalfarmers.org

**CC:**Ardyth Harris Gillespie <ahg2@cornell.edu>, Denise O'Brien and Larry Harris <rollingacres76@gmail.com>, Kent Morris <kmokgm@metc.net>

Sally & Steve,

Recently Ardy and I have been considering starting incubator for beginning farmers at Harrisdale and wanted to share the idea of what we have been thinking. Although, we recognize that right ahead of the PFI conference is a very busy time for you, we want to see if the general concept might be of interest to PFI (see attached)

Although I have been familiar with a number of beginning farmer incubators, including at The Intervale in Vermont and at the New England Small Farm Institute at Belchertown, MA, I have limited direct experience with them. I was quite involved in the establishment of the Groundswell Center for Local Food and Farming at Ithaca, NY and participated as a representative in Groundswell's version of CRAFT and co-led workshops in farm safety and farm equipment maintenance for that program. However, Groundswell's incubator didn't really get off the ground until around the time Ardy and I moved to Iowa.

The attached concept statement indicates what I think that we could reasonably offer to a beginning farmer here at Harrisdale and what we would need from others.

We've mentioned this idea to Denise O'Brien and Larry Harris at Rolling Acres Farm, so I am copying them. I am also copying Kent Morris, who would be an excellent resource on small farm equipment and who I think, from his recent activities in working with small farmers in the area, might be interested in such a project.

Best,

Gil

**Attachment:**

**Thoughts about the possibility of starting a beginning farmer incubator at Harrisdale Farmstead/Harrisdale Homestead** October 4, 2018, updated January 13, 2019

What we currently could offer to a highly motivated individual or couple already prepared with the basics of vegetable and, maybe, fruit/berry production:

- Land in sufficient area for the early stages of an alternative vegetable farm startup
- Equipment needed for growing and harvesting
- Basic equipment for selling at farmers' markets
- Production training based on our very modest expertise in growing vegetables, managing fruit and nut crops, weed management, cover crops, marketing, etc.

- Basic beekeeping training
- Introduction to good food safety practices
- Basic small project woodworking and metalworking training
- Farm safety training
- Farm equipment operation and maintenance training
- Basic farm management training, including enterprise budgeting and some legal matters
- Opportunities to learn about producing small ruminants (and maybe poultry), rotational grazing, and integrating livestock with vegetable and fruit production
- Modest financial support for seed and growing supplies
- Modest labor contributions toward the start up enterprise

What we are currently unable to offer:

- Housing (though something akin to a shepherd's wagon, might be possible)
- Good local markets (we are 1/2 way between Council Bluffs & Des Moines in a vicinity with apparently very limited local potential for substantial income from produce sales)
- Stipends (participants would need to support themselves through some combination of savings, produce sales, and off-farm employment)
- Advanced training in farm management, production, marketing, and other areas
- High tunnel experience

What we currently are uncertain about:

- Organizational sponsorship (We cannot see undertaking this as a stand-alone program. Harrisdale Homestead, currently essentially a virtual entity headquartered at our residence, is a project of the Wallace Foundation for Rural Research and Development. Wallace might be one potential sponsor, but we would also need additional expertise in alternative farming and support.)
- Liability insurance for protecting our interests
- Possibilities for establishing something akin to the Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (C.R.A.F.T.) in the Northeast (<https://craftfarmapprentice.com/>)
- Local employment opportunities, that might include at nearby Rolling Acres Farm.

Other Information:

Hilltop Urban Farm "Farmer Incubation Program" (Pittsburg, PA)

[https://www.hilltopurbanfarm.org/farmer-incubation-program?mc\\_cid=316e5db4b2&mc\\_eid=f8c09fd60f](https://www.hilltopurbanfarm.org/farmer-incubation-program?mc_cid=316e5db4b2&mc_eid=f8c09fd60f)