



"...looking into the eyes  
of our fellow creatures..."

Students learn  
from the animals  
and plants, not  
just about them

## education at *Sprout Creek Farm*



Each season brings deeper  
understanding of our relationship  
with all of creation.

Educational programs at Sprout Creek Farm are conducted close to the earth God created – in open fields of growing lettuce, beans, and potatoes; in pastures where cows and goats and sheep reside; and in a creamery where students of all ages can make the connection between the grass that grows, the cow that moos, and the delicious cheese made by RSCJ and sold locally and nationally. But the curriculum involves far more than just petting the animals, making cheese, and growing vegetables...

*Photographs by Georgie Blaeser, RSCJ*

... reconnect with the cycles of nature... connect people with their own interior lives, and with God.

Summer Program students harvest cabbage and lettuce – after the weeding and the watering.



Above: Milking is one of the daily chores at Sprout Creek Farm, where approximately fifty cows reside, half of which are “milkers.”

Below: Auracana chickens lay multi-colored eggs ranging from olive green to pink!

According to Margo Morris, RSCJ, the real-world education at Sprout Creek Farm takes place on many levels. “It’s not just the science and the math,” she says. “People who come to Sprout Creek are able to really learn what life is all about, to look into the eyes of our fellow creatures, to spend time weeding and composting, and to reconnect with the cycles of nature.” And, she says: “Those cycles for planting and letting seeds develop, for growing and harvesting, connect people with their own interior lives, and with God.”

For the past twenty years, Sprout Creek Farm in Poughkeepsie, New York, has been introducing students to an environment that in itself can be called teacher. Three elements combine to offer those with “eyes to see and ears to hear” an experience of what it means to live on this planet. First, the farm itself shows observers how animal husbandry works (yes, someone must rise and shine daily to feed those cows and goats!), what organic gardening requires (there are no spray-on pesticides so careful watch must be kept), and the do’s and don’ts of field and pasture management along with the “unmanaged” world of nature. The Creamery and Market element introduces concepts about production and sales and brings “the farm” to the city folk. By

observing how milk is made into cheese, wool into yarn, and livestock into meat, observers see the connections firsthand. Informal classes then link lessons in agriculture and economics to such issues as equitable allocation of the world’s resources.

Relocated and renamed Sprout Creek Farm in 1990, this place of natural learning was first called The Farm in 1982 and located on the campus at Convent of the Sacred Heart (CSH), Greenwich, Connecticut. Created by Sister Morris, Suzanne Rogers, RSCJ, and Father Darrold Endres, the chaplain then employed at CSH, The Farm was designed for the purpose of having teenagers connect what they learned in their regular science and literature classes with a hands-on nature experience; it would function as a living laboratory to revive their sense of wonder and inspire the kind of questioning that could lead to social change – and open the spirit and heart to God.

Now, educational programs at Sprout Creek Farm include students of almost all ages and continue to open minds and hearts.

Saturday programs, for example, are open to boys and girls, age 6-11. Each Saturday is filled with seasonal farm and homesteading activities, such as feeding animals (goats, cows, sheep, chickens, pigs, and ducks),



baking bread or churning butter, planting seedlings, watering, and spreading compost. Participants also learn about farm animals and plants – including bees and bugs – and help with routine farm chores such as milking, moving hay or cleaning pens.

In the summer, numerous educational activities are underway including the Institute for Social and Environmental Awareness (ISEA), a program for Network school students that comprises ten full days of making connections between “pastures of plenty” and places where Mother Earth needs to be better taken care of. Students who come to Sprout Creek Farm and experience the connection between its life and theirs, between their life and those they might serve in shelters or soup kitchens, can see for themselves the reality of issues such as homelessness and hunger.

As Sister Morris says: “Animals may ruminate, but we humans need time to reflect as well! We are all a community of learners who are always in the process of remembering who we are and how we fit in with every other creature. Sprout Creek Farm is an experiential component of the concepts taught in every Sacred Heart school. And I am happy to be part of this particular effort to make known the love of God through the education of youth.”

Sisters Margo Morris, Georgie Blaeser, and Anne Byrne cordially invite students of any age to come and spend some time at Sprout Creek. Accommodations are available, and there is always something interesting going on. Complete information can be found on the webpage, and, if anyone has not yet heard the mooing cow, please log on right now!

[www.sproutcreekfarm.org](http://www.sproutcreekfarm.org) ❖



Taking a little break at the farm, from left: Georgie Blaeser, RSCJ, Pocket (the goat), and Margo Morris, RSCJ.

## a day at Sprout Creek Farm

Rise and shine at 5:30 a.m. for chores at 6 a.m. Groups of five or so are divided up for different chores:

1. Milking and feeding goats
2. Milking and feeding cows
3. Feeding calves, kids, lambs, sheep, pigs, turkeys, chickens
4. Gardening and harvesting
5. Meal preparation for breakfast

And everyone cleans his/her own environment (sweeping, mopping, etc.)

### Breakfast

Morning meeting or seminar depending on age group

Projects: planting, building, repairing, moving hay, cleaning barns

### Lunch

One hour of rest/reading/journal writing

Art or construction project, bread baking, butter or cheese making

Swim in the creek

Afternoon chores same as morning – with food harvest and dinner preparation

### Dinner

Evening activity: guided night hike or swim in creek, campfire with songs and s'mores, discussions, games

9:30 p.m. Sleep

