

Farming

By James Evans

Dummerston Middle School, Grade 7
Farming in Vermont is great
Apple trees for miles and miles
Rich soil next to the Connecticut River
Milking the cows in the barn
Irrigation in the hot summer
Nothing but John Deere tractors
Getting to know people

Farming

By Derek Foley

Oxbow High School, Grade 12
A friend of mine works on a farm. He works extremely hard every day and has long hours. He milks the cows better than the other workers, which means he is the only one trusted to do it on a regular basis.

I met him in the summer three years ago when he was playing soccer on the summer team that I joined. The team was part of an adult league that consisted of teams throughout the Upper Valley. My friend is an amazing soccer player. He is barely over five feet tall and he is not very muscular, but he is so quick he can beat just about anyone.

I have gone to the farm to give him rides to games and I have also just visited him. I was surprised how high-tech the farm was. They had machines for milking the cows and other electronics that I can't even begin to explain. Yet my friend knew how to operate all of it and he was good at it. There were hundreds of cows and it took him hours just to set the cows up to be milked.

Some people hate my friend because he is an immigrant from Mexico. He works harder than anyone I know and he makes very little money; the money he does make gets sent home to help support his family. He keeps so little for himself that he couldn't even afford cleats to play soccer, so the team pitched in to get him some. He told me the story of how he came here once. The hardships he went through were something I feel would have stopped most people. ... Many people say that these immigrants are stupid and have no right to be here, yet my friend can operate very complicated machinery necessary to an American farm and he fought his way into the country to be allowed to do it, all for almost no money.

Family Farming

By Nolan Benoit | *Spaulding High School, Grade 10*

My grandfather was a farmer. He lived in a brick house built in the early 1800s with his wife and his four children, the same house that he had grown up in. They had cows, horses, chickens, pigs, sheep and a few other random animals. He loved to farm — it was a way of life for his family. However as the years went by, they were forced to sell much of the land they owned, only to watch the trees be torn down and houses e built on it. Then one day, though my grandfather opposed the idea strongly, the state built an access road to the interstate right through his land. It began to be obvious that the more time went on, the more land they lost. Finally he was forced to give up farming on that land. In his later years he still had a farm with cows that he milked. He still calls himself a farmer, even if he doesn't actually have a farm. He is part of dying group of people, farmers.



FARMING CONTEST WINNERS

Each year Young Writers Project asks students to write about farming and selects the very best among their submissions for cash prizes. Each student on this page has won a cash award courtesy of **St. Albans Cooperative Creamery and Cabot Cheese.**

To read all winning entries, go to youngwritersproject.org

VERMONT 2059

Envision your town in the year 2059 and write about it. Best submissions will win cash prizes and potential public presentation. **Due Friday.**

Young Writers Project is an independent nonprofit engaging students to write. We operate youngwritersproject.org, a safe online community for Vermont young writers, and build **Digital Writing Classrooms** for schools. Early sign up ends **May 29**. More at ywvpt.net.

Spreading Manure

By Lance Bergmans

Ferrisburgh Central School, Grade 3
On our muddy road by the hayfield
My dad drives the huge tractor
The smell of manure spreads everywhere
People in their cars scrunch up their noses
At the smell
The manure looks like it is raining
And the field is as brown as cardboard
I feel sick to my stomach
But after my dad is done
He will run to me
And give me a hug.

My Life in Farming

By Cody O'Connell

Waits River Valley School, Grade 7
My family moved to Vermont in the year 2000. My parents had both grown up in Massachusetts and had good jobs with great pay. When we moved to Vermont, my father chose a house that had a small family farm.

When we were all moved in we started the farm running again. My dad was new to this business so he learned everything as he went along. We got a herd of heifers . . . which we let out during the day and brought into the barn at night. When the heifers were old enough, my dad bought a bull so they could breed. Once they were ready to give birth their udder would start to fill up with milk. After they gave birth, they would stay in for a day or two. We would finally congratulate the mom for becoming a cow and would start to milk her. ...

One winter was fiercely cold at Christmas. Two of the water bowls' pipes split and leaked all through the night. When my dad went out the next morning, he had a lovely flooded barn for a Christmas present from the cows. ... When spring hit that year, milk prices started to go down the drain dramatically. We couldn't afford the electric bill in the barn, so we had to sell the herd. My dad started doing little jobs off the farm. Once he had enough money, he bought another herd that winter and they were great. We kept them all the way into the next winter. Milk prices stayed nice and steady. Then spring came and milk prices started to go down very slowly, like water in a clogged drain. When the summer hit we had a really bad drought. It wiped out our wells and we had to sell the herd.

Over the summer, my dad was thinking of how he could make farming easier for us. He decided that he was going to build an addition onto the barn. ... When it was done he still had money left over and he bought a new herd immediately. Milk prices stayed stable until the winter started to settle in. Then milk went under \$15. We had to sell the herd because it wasn't making enough milk. My dad's heart was broken. He had thought this was going to be the herd that would wash away all of his bad memories.

... My dad got even more little jobs off the farm and got enough money to buy another herd. He bought it because milk prices were at \$21.50. Milk prices were so good that we bought a small goat herd. They were phenomenal. Then we started to run out of hay, so we had to sell it. Then milk prices started to drop under \$10 and we had to sell the herd again. My dad is distraught; he really wants a cow herd again.

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Caring for cows

By Derek Jettie

Cold Hollow Career Center, Grade 10
I work on an organic farm in Fairfield. We milk 50-55 cows each day from 5:30 - 7:00 a.m. and 4 - 5:30 p.m. We feed them hay, grain, cornmeal and kelp made from ground up sea weed.

In the summer we hay. First we mow the field, then ted the hay a few times to help dry it. We rake the hay into rows for square baling. The baler kicks each bale of hay into a hay wagon. When the wagon is full we pull it up to the barn to unload it. We load it onto the conveyor, which brings it up to the top of the barn. Then we stack the hay. We bale three times from our fields. After each cut we spread manure. First we have to agitate the pit, then we pump it into a spreader and then bring it to the field and spread it out to fertilize the land.

During milking chores we have to clean the cows' teats off with wipes. We then put the milker on each teat. We wait until there is no more milk going into the milking machine and then take it off. We have to repeat these steps for each cow. At the end of milking I have to go in the back of the barn to scrape under the calves and feed them hay. We have to scrape down the tie-stall barn and put down sawdust to keep the cows clean and keep them from slipping when they come back in the morning.

Farming is hard work. You have to enjoy it to do it. I like that at the end of the day I get to see what I have done.

Past

By Rachel Lombard

Enosburg Falls Middle School, Grade 8
Excerpt: more at youngwritersproject.org
Farming is part of my life
Red walls
Silver roof
Old, shabby barn
Farming is part of my life
Meadows of flowers
Green grass swaying
Ready for grazing
Farming is part of my life
Cats meowing
Cows mooing
People yelling
Farming is part of my life
Tractors chug along
Mowing the fields
Smoke belching at the rear
Farming is part of my life
Shoveling the gutters
Scraping the mangers
Covered in poop
Farming is part of my life
Dressed in plaid
Blue jeans
Straw hat
Farming is part of my life