

Farm Trip 2019 – Information Letter

April 25, 2019

Dear Grade 9 Parents and Students,

Ms. Choberka and Mr. Banks are very much looking forward to the upcoming Farm Block, the final block of the year for the ninth grade. Please save a copy of this letter for future reference as it contains most of the information you need about the trip. I encourage you to share this letter with your student as well.

This year we will be returning to the Community Farm of Ann Arbor (CFAA). The Community Farm is really in Chelsea, but got its name due to the intention to serve the Ann Arbor community. The Community Farm was the first Biodynamic Farm in Michigan, and the first CSA farm in Michigan and the 7th in the United States. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms have become very popular, especially around Ann Arbor, but the roots can be traced back to Biodynamic Farming, one of the sister movements to Waldorf Education started by Rudolf Steiner. CFAA is unique because it is the only member-owned farm in the area. The farm members (those who purchase a vegetable share each year) make all decisions about the farm through a consensus process. It is a special experience to be on this farm!

The previous trips to the Community Farm have been rich and meaningful. Quite a number of our students who have visited the farm have returned for their apprenticeship program in the summers after the farm trip. Projects that we have accomplished include: building a fence for a pasture for the 3 miniature goats and making a tile mosaic for their pasture; working with the chickens, taming baby chicks and building poultry housing; abundant work in the gardens including planting, harvesting, weeding, watering, and laying out irrigation hose; various building projects, including construction of a greenhouse, cold frames, and many structures to house the bees; repairing and helping to preserve the barn that is on the National Register of Historic Places; baking bread and pizza; sign and mural painting; and helping with the first CSA harvests of the year.

This year the students will be at the farm from **Sunday, June 2** through **Saturday, June 8**. You may drop them off at the farm at 4pm on Sunday and they will be ready for pickup at the farm at 2pm on the following Saturday.

Following are some additional details of the upcoming trip. **Please return the attached permission slip, delegation of parental powers, and parent/student contract forms by Friday, May 17 to the High School office.**

You must sign the Student/Parent Contract with the HS Coordinator or another Full-Time Faculty Member no later than May 17. Full-Time Faculty will be available to review the contracts with you and your student during lunch and afterschool (before 3:45pm) during the weeks of 5/6 and 5/13. If you are not available to sign the contract during one of these times, please contact Laura Shope to make an appointment. We have found that these conversations and this additional step significantly supports the success of the trip and the experience of your students. Thank you in advance for taking the time to meet with us in person.

Please know that this is a challenging trip due to the hard work on the farm and the fact that we are camping. Our advice is to not schedule too many events, travel, sleepovers, parties, etc. over the weekend before the trip so the students can come refreshed and ready to go.

Even though we are close by, we would like for you to consider the benefit to the students of being away from home and their regularly scheduled activities, living and working in nature with classmates, teachers, and farmers. Please avoid scheduling appointments, practices, etc. for which the students would have to be taken out of the immersion experience of this trip at the Community Farm. Students will not be allowed to have cell phones on the trip, and we encourage that they have an independent experience.

Camping: We will be camping in the backyard of the farmhouse. Their house is about ¼ mile walk from the farm. They have a large yard adjacent to one of fields and an orchard. The neighbors have been so kind as to let us swim at their lovely nearby swimming pond in the afternoons, weather permitting. No showers are available, but over the last years the students were quite content with swimming and washing in the hose to clean up in the afternoons. Portable toilets will be rented for the occasion, and the farm has two composting toilets.

Setup: The school owns excellent camping gear for this type of trip. We have a camp kitchen, several tent awnings, and mosquito proof awnings. This makes the inconveniences of camp life quite a bit more bearable! However, we have to transport all of it to the farm. We are looking for several parent/student volunteers to do this and hope to use one or two pickups or trailers to help move everything. The time to do this will be Sunday, June 2 at 2:00 pm. We will then be setting up the camping area with the help of parents and students. **If you would be willing to help and/or loan a vehicle, please let Mr. Banks know.**

Drop-off/Pickup: Students will be dropped off and picked up from the farm house of Aquillon Hetrick, one of the lead farmers, which is near the Community Farm in Chelsea. Her address is:

1236 S. Fletcher Rd
Chelsea, MI 48118
Phone: 734-433-0261

Following is a link to a map of this location. Please note that the exit number off the highway is 162.

<http://maps.google.com/maps?q=1236+S.+Fletcher+Rd+Chelsea,+MI+48118&hl=en&ll=40.773002,-74.232731&sspn=0.06305,0.169086&safe=strict&hnear=1236+S+Fletcher+Rd,+Chelsea,+Washtenaw,+Michigan+48118&t=m&z=13>

Cost: This is a tuition funded trip, so all food and expenses to the farm will be paid by the school.

Food: We work closely with the farmers to use as much food as possible from the farm. We will be baking our bread from grain grown on the farm, and for several lunches students will be making pizza and other treats with ingredients primarily grown on the farm. The students will be responsible for preparing food and cleaning up all meals with the help of the chaperones. For the food we have to purchase, we will be using as much locally grown, natural and organic food as possible. Bringing extra food, candy and junk food is not allowed. In addition, keeping food in tents can invite unwanted animals and lead to a mess!

Allergies and Food Preferences: If your student is a vegan or vegetarian or has any food allergies or special food needs we ask that you inform us of this well in advance. Ms. Choberka will be collecting this information in the near future.

Parent Contributions for Food: The healthy snacks and main courses for dinners are provided by parents daily. We have found that it is too difficult for us to work at the farm all day and then try to prepare meals. Students help make salads and side dishes to go along with the main course. So if you are willing to provide a meal, please let us know and we will sign you up for a day.

Parent Coordinator: Ms. Choberka will be organizing the food, and a parent volunteer to help with coordinating meals provided by parents would be much appreciated. Please contact Ms. Choberka or Mr. Banks if you would be willing to be a coordinator or to provide one or two dinners, snacks, or desserts during the trip.

Weather: We will need to be prepared for anything. Students will be outside almost all of the time when they are not working in the barns. Rain is likely, and effective raingear is a must. See the attached equipment list for the gear you need to get together. In the event of severe weather, there are buildings we can shelter in.

Daily Schedule: We will be working on the farm daily from 8:30 to 4:00 with a break in the middle for lunch on the farm. There will be free time in the evening for games, swimming, and fun. Additionally, there will be some evening activities planned.

Clothing and Supplies: Please see attached supply list. This is a camping and work trip, so fashionable clothes are unnecessary. Following is what the student handbook has to say about personal appearance for the Farm Trip:

“You need to be dressed to be out in the sun, rain, and wind daily. We ask that students wear work shorts and pants (no short shorts), and shirts and t-shirts with at least small cap sleeves (no spaghetti straps). We ask this because of concerns about sunburn and scrapes and cuts in the fields. Students should also have good rain protection and at least one pair of long pants and a sweatshirt (it can be surprisingly cold at the farm).”

Cell phone use: Cell phones, music players, and other technology are not allowed. This is a school trip, and we have found through the years that the trip works best if cell phones are not used by students. Daily communication home is not encouraged. It is good for the students to have an experience of being on their own in a safe environment. Faculty members will have cell phones to use for emergencies and communication with the school office. If you need to reach us or your child during the trip, you can do so through the school office.

I-pods/headsets/electronics: Students are asked to leave electronic devices such as iPods, iPads, computers, tablets, headphones, smart watches, electronic readers, etc. at home for this trip. In the past, we have experienced that they interfere with the experience of the farm we are trying to create so we decided years ago not to allow them. We will enjoy the sights and sounds of nature and the camaraderie of classmates on the farm and around the campfire. Musical instruments are encouraged, and a book for quiet moments is welcome.

Chaperones: RSSAA teachers Gary Banks and Erica Choberka, will be the main chaperones of this trip. Parents will be helping with evening supervision. Other faculty members may be joining us for portions of different days. The farmers, faculty chaperones, and Community Farm co-workers will be supervising students at the farm.

Parent Help: We rely on parents to provide extra support overnight. This would involve coming either at 4:30 to help supervise swimming, or around dinner time and staying until the following morning, making it possible for parents to come from work and return the next morning. Please contact Mr. Banks if you are able to be present for periods during the evenings and overnights.

Medications and Medical Information: Please contact Mr. Banks in advance of the trip with information about medical needs and medications. Please make arrangements to give medications to Mr. Banks or Ms. Choberka on the first day of the trip. Medicines will be stored securely and dispensed by a faculty member. If any information has changed in your child’s medical history, please contact the HS front office through email at hsofficemanager@steinerschool.org. It would be extremely helpful and ensure your child’s safety if you made a special effort to contact Mr. Banks about unusual or potentially difficult medical conditions your child has. We will be working on a farm and camping, where allergies and other medical conditions can be exacerbated.

Back at School: The ninth graders will gather at the school at 9 am on Monday, June 10th for clean-up and reflection time. They will be dismissed at noon that day. The final day of school begins at 8 am on Thursday, June 13th. Additionally, since the 9th grade missed the field trip to the Henry Ford Museum during their Physics block, we are currently trying to reschedule this for either June 11th or 12th. We will keep you posted on how this develops.

We look forward to a successful and meaningful Farm Trip. Please contact any of the trip coordinators with any questions or concerns you may have before the trip.

Warmly,

Gary Banks
gbanks@steinerschool.org
603-769-0055 (cell)

Erica Choberka
echoberka@steinerschool.org
734-395-3405

HS Front Office
hsofficemanager@steinerschool.org
734-669-9394

FARM TRIP SUPPLY CHECKLIST

Maximum baggage = 1 duffle bag, 1 small daypack, + sleeping bag, tent & chair

- Warm sleeping bag – synthetic fibers will still insulate if wet, 30° rating or better
- Tent or knowledge of which tent you will be using
- Therm-a-Rest, foam camping pad or inflatable air mattress specifically designed for camping
- Pillow
- Lawn chair
- Flashlight or headlamp with fresh batteries
- Water bottle
- Insect repellent (herbal type without DEET. DEET is not allowed on biodynamic farms.)
- Lip balm
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher)
- Toiletries (soap, shampoo, toothbrush and toothpaste, any other personal needs)
- Washcloth and towel
- Beach towel
- Day pack
- Any required medication, allergy medication if needed (give prescription drugs to Ms. Choberka)

Warm clothing. Layers and work clothes for farm. Fashionable clothing is unnecessary.

- Long pants
- Shorts
- Long sleeve shirts
- T-shirts
- Sweater or sweatshirt
- Swimsuit
- Underwear
- Socks
- Sturdy shoes for farm – “muck boots” aren’t the best. You need shoes or boots that are good for walking and working. Hiking boots are a wonderful option, but good sneakers will do.
- Close-toed sandals, sneakers, or Crocks for camp – no flip-flops
- Raincoat that you know is waterproof (flimsy plastic rain ponchos tend to get ruined quickly)
- Rain pants are optional, bring if you have them
- Warm jacket
- Hat for sun
- Stocking cap for warmth
- Work gloves
- Suggested: mosquito netting hat/jacket

From the Student Handbook: “You need to be dressed to be out in the sun, rain, and wind daily. We ask that students wear work shorts and pants (no short shorts), and shirts and t-shirts with at least small cap sleeves (no spaghetti straps). We ask this because of concerns about sunburn and scrapes and cuts in the fields. Students should also have good rain protection and at least one pair of long pants and a sweatshirt (it can be surprisingly cold at the farm).”

Optional

- Book and/or journal, sketch book, notebook, pens, drawing supplies
- Camera (iPhones/smartphones may not be used for cameras, but digital camera is okay)
- Musical instruments (uke, guitar, etc.), cards, games (volleyball, soccer, Frisbee, etc.)

Leave at home – cell phones, iPods, computers, tablets, video games, other electronics, candy, junk food, etc.