

January 31, 2017

Dear Community,

We've reached the most critical moment in our farm community's existence and **we urgently need your financial support.**

Over the past nine years, together, we have successfully:

- Provided low-cost organic vegetables, cheese, eggs, bread and skin care items at Farmers Markets;
- Delivered those same goods in the cold season every two weeks to homes or businesses;
- Founded and maintained a 2-for-1 food program for low-income families (together with LiveWell);
- Educated and hosted over 150 interns from one month to one year at a time;
- Co-founded and co-managed the first two farmers' markets in Huerfano County;
- And done our best to model a lifeway which takes little from and, we hope, gives much to, the Earth, conserving water, energy, goods, and cash.

We are proud of these achievements, and hope that you—our partners and fellow community members—are as well!!

That said, after 9 years of service as Shii Koeii's resident stewards, we have come to realize that our current model of farming and community-building isn't sustainable for us stewards, our interns, and, therefore, the wider community.

These accomplishments have come at a cost to us, physically and emotionally. One of the biggest challenges we need to transcend is our reliance upon interns. While we appreciate their passion for learning and their help, we've learned the hard way that many are unable to keep their their commitments, causing enormous stress to our community.

To create a sustainable future, we are taking a sabbatical break this year to find a healthier balance and a sustainable way forward. We are committed to keeping Shii Koeii going for the rest of our lives. Please invest with us in her future.

Our strong hope is that Shii Koeii will continue to provide food to the wider community during our sabbatical, though most certainly at a reduced rate. **To this end, we are hoping to pilot a new program this year.**

- **“My First Farm”** will give young people with previous farming experience, a strong work ethic, maturity, and sense of personal responsibility the opportunity to manage Shii Koeii Farm with a great deal of freedom to experiment. We provide ongoing training and consulting to the young farmers throughout our sabbatical.

Our 2016 farm income was the same as 2015: \$22,500. However, our fundraising effort last year fell \$4000 short of our \$10,000 goal. In addition we had two large unplanned expenses: \$500 to fix Dora our hardy Ford Explorer, and \$750 to purchase a new large refrigerator, and \$500 to help pay for liability insurance for the La Veta Market.

On the last page of this newsletter you'll find the 2017 budget. Note that it's nearly half our normal operating budget.

To pilot “My First Farm,” and take a sabbatical break, we need to raise \$11,000 dollars this winter by February 21st. Please, will you help us? You can give via Paypal if that's easier at www.shiikoeii.org.

For the land, with our deepest gratitude,

Val and Mark
Resident Stewards

2016 in Review

JANUARY - Our year began strong with interns Jonah Womack and Jean Glaub, both from North Carolina, continuing from the fall, and Emma Owecke from Wisconsin (and Alaska) joining us. Though Jean left us in January, Jonah continued on with us until the end of February before heading to Utah to be a park ranger. Both blessed Shii Koeii greatly with their beautiful spirits, thoughtfulness, and hard work. Together we helped organize the annual seed exchange, finished planning the garden, and started indoor seeding. Jonah even came back to visit us in November, after his stint with Goblin Valley was completed, and we're hoping he may spend part or all of next winter at Shii Koeii.



Jonah with his "main squeeze," Red Wing

FEBRUARY – February saw us beginning to prepare garden beds for planting, and continuing with indoor seeding, as well as continuing our usual cheese-making, husbandry work, and farm maintenance. By February, Emma was well-trained to complement and partner with Jonah in Shii Koeii's winter work. With a ready smile, sense of humor, great work ethic, and can-do attitude, she kept everyone's spirits up. She has been fishing for salmon in the wild waters off Alaska most of her life, and lucky for us, we got to meet her dad, and enjoy some incredibly delicious wild salmon he caught.



Emma and Maple

Shortly after Jonah left, Christopher Cordero from near Bordeaux joined us. Though born in France, Christopher also identifies strongly with his Portuguese heritage, and regaled us with stories of his father's and uncle's hard work on farms and ranches. Something of a Renaissance man, Chris can run, sing beautifully, write, research, and farm!

February also brought us the great joy of a visit from intern alumnus Arthur de Robert (2011) and his friend, Jasmine Chebli, a charming, smart and hard-working woman from Quebec City, who fit right into life at Shii Koeii. They were with us for five days, helping out, hiking Badito and a nearby 14'er, and joining us for a fun day to the Taos Pueblo and nearby wild hot springs. You may recall last year that we visited Arthur's parents and grandparents in France, but this was the first time we'd seen him in 5 years, and we had missed him so much!



Kolby and her brilliant smile hard at work in the garden



Arthur and Jasmine cooking for us (they're really good cooks!)

MARCH – By March, we were well into garden planting and plaster repair on the land, as well as hot crop seeding. March was a very challenging month because we were spending an inordinate amount of energy on issues related to the La Veta Farmers' Market. Fortunately, things eventually worked out well, and we now have a fully vendor-managed market in La Veta, where responsibilities are shared and decisions are made by consensus. Yay!

Continuing the alumni visits, wonderful Carrie Peters visited us for three weeks in March. Carrie interned for 9 months in 2011, has returned three times since, and is very much a steward of Shii Koeii, even in absentia. She worked hard while she was here, and contributed

generously with her loving presence and deep knowledge of Shii Koeii.

We were also joined by intern Kolby Taylor near the end of the month. Kolby brought a mature warmth, centeredness, and caring attitude to both the community and her work on the farm. She was originally going to be with us for four months; sadly, her homesickness overtook her, and she had to leave us after only a month. But during that month she was invaluable.

APRIL - April is a very busy time on the farm. We're continuing the hard work of prepping the garden beds and planting, beginning to harvest salad greens, getting ready for the farmers' market, and minding the pregnancy of whichever goat/s are scheduled to kid in May. Because Emma had to leave us



Christopher and Emma



Wild Rose taking her first sips from mama.

early, we were struggling for a bit until Mohammed, a Palestinian from Jordan, joined us. At 36, Mohammad brought with him both an academic background and quite a bit of international experience from other farms. Unfortunately, Mohammed was not happy at Shii Koeii, and it affected his relationships with all those around him. After a month of service, for which we were most grateful, he moved on.

We also were joined briefly by a young man named David who decided rather suddenly, after five days, that he wanted to ride a bicycle to California instead of continuing to work at Shii Koeii through the season.

MAY – May is always our toughest month on the farm. This year it brought us the joy of Chamisa's new babies, Wild Rose and Daisy, the crazed energy of the beginning of both farmers' markets beginning, lots of good rain, the beauty of the land turning green, and alumna Olga Kreimer visiting us. Olga did a lovely story on Shii Koeii for YES! Magazine as part of their issue on the “gig” economy. You can find it at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/the-gig-economy/on-a-remote-homestead-the-work-you-do-is-not-just-a-job-its-your-life-20161024>

May also brought us the challenge of severe under-staffing. With Kolby, David and Mohammed having left early, we were pretty stressed out, and Christopher, our rock, bore the brunt of it. Catie Coyle of Philadelphia joined us later in the month and her constant sense of wonder, curious intellect, positive energy and great work ethic helped us all. By the end of May, Chris was ready to move on, cutting short his original six month commitment.

Chamisa's babies, Wild Rose and Daisy, were a source of light and joy in May and throughout the season. There's nothing like a kid to remind you how great life can be.



Kristen LeBlanc and Jenn Bostick

A remarkable amount of hail in both May and June damaged our chard and kale, dramatically reducing our sales, and squirrels took out multiple successions of beets and carrots. It was disheartening.

JUNE - In June we were joined by Nathan Belanger from Missouri, who became an apprentice and stayed with Shii Koeii for seven months, providing invaluable continuity and commitment. Also rounding out our team in June was the hard-working, funny, mature



Olga and Cait making pasta!



Kaitlin Duthie making pasta (hey, alumni, are you noticing a pattern here? Guess what you'll get to do when you come back to visit!)

and talented Jennifer Bostick.

We were treated to a tremendous gift in the form of intern alumna Kaitlyn Duthie-Kannikkatt (2012), who came and worked with us for a month. We were also overjoyed to have a surprise visit from Kristen LeBlanc, our 2015 apprentice, now living in Albuquerque.

June also saw the arrival of our newest community member, Raul-Sia-Sienna the cat, courtesy of our dear friend Lee Phillips. Interns Amber and Nathan named him Sienna--Sia for short--but Val has taken to calling him Raul since the day he arrived when his howls sounded like, "rauuuuuuuuullllll!!!" Thanks largely to Amber and Nathan's tender care, our wild little kitten calmed down and became an affectionate, helpful member of the community. He is a little more than six months old now, big and strong, and hunting rodents and rabbits quite effectively. He sleeps with the Willows in their barn at night, and recently freaked them all out by bringing his catch-of-the-day in and plopping it on the floor in front of his vegan roommates.

We're hoping he might take on some of the squirrels come spring.

Other fun pests which kept us hopping all summer included harlequin beetles, aphids, cabbage moths, and grasshoppers. They each took far more than their fair share this year.

For our fun day in June, we took the gang to Mission: Wolf, a nearby sanctuary for wolves who have been partially domesticated. It was a wonderful experience.



The intrepid crew of the S.S. Shii Koeii at Mission Wolf. From L-R: Cait, Jenn, Kaitlyn, Val, Mark, Nathan



Mark Schneider, wolf whisperer

JULY – In July we were joined by Amber Due, Jesse Nielsen, David Park, and Sara Klementovic. Within one week, each, both Jesse and David had to leave to due to behavioral health issues. Amber stayed with us for more than three months, and her constancy and competence were a great gift. Sara joined us and brought her sweet heart, artistic flair and fearless manual skills to many a needed project at Shii Koeii. Though she was only with us a month, her impact far outlives her!

Continuing the 2016 treat of alumni visits, Caitlin Fogarty and her boyfriend Aaron visited us for a few days near the end of the month. Since leaving Shii Koeii, Caitlin has both run her own “veganic” farm, and gone back to school to study permaculture. It was wonderful to see her again.

AUGUST – In August, we were joined by Ivan Castaing from Paris, France, and Rebecca Pitocco from North Carolina. Ivan brought a great youthful energy and spirit to the community, and Rebecca showed promise to be an excellent intern. Unfortunately, she decided to cut her time short and left Shii Koeii after less than 2 weeks. Meanwhile, Gardner School recruited intern Cait Coyle to teach in their kindergarten, so she cut short her time with us by a few months as well. Since Cait had always wanted to teach, she was thrilled to have this opportunity. We leaned heavily on Amber, Nathan and Ivan for strength and sanity during this period, and are most grateful to them.

In August we gave Daisy, Chamisa's younger daughter, to a nearby goatherd with lots of experience caring for dairy goats. We simply didn't have the room nor the need for 9 goats. Chamisa continued letting Wild Rose drink from her for several more months.

August was also challenging because our mother, Marilyn (aka The Pie Lady of Huerfano County) had a health scare which required her brief hospitalization. Thankfully, she came through it like a champ.

SEPTEMBER - Ivan returned to France in September, and, on the same day, Stephanie Ledesma from the Philippines, and Salem from North Carolina joined us. Stephanie was delightful and brought a lot of great experience from her family's farm in the Philippines; unfortunately, Stephanie's parents insisted she cut her time short with us to work on a farm in the northwest belonging to relatives, so she was only with us for two weeks. Salem's enthusiasm was a balm on our soul, and their continued deep caring for the land and community has proven a great help and daily inspiration.



Three Generations: Maple, Chamisa, Daisy & Wild Rose

We were ecstatic to celebrate in September the marriage of Shii Koeii alumni Carrie Reece and Garth Johnson (2012 and 2013)! It was a beautiful ceremony, a wonderful party, and Miss Reece is now happily Mrs. Johnson! She and Garth are hoping to buy a house in Colorado Springs this year, and begin saving for one day getting their own land.

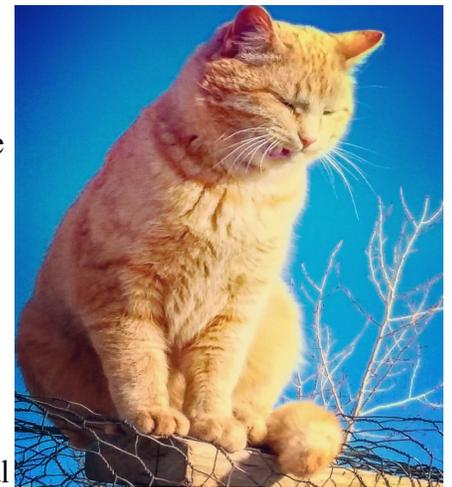
We were also overjoyed to learn that Daniel Moffatt (2011) and his wife Katelynn are expecting their first child in February!!

The final harvests of hot crops and winter squash kept us busy throughout September and October.

OCTOBER – Sadly, a dear friend of Amber's mother passed away suddenly, and Amber had to cut short her time at Shii Koeii. She, Nathan, Salem, and Cait (who was then living in Gardner) had all become friends, and each other's social network, so her loss was felt deeply. The slower, cooler days of autumn were a welcome treat, as the markets came to a successful end. We were able to get the garlic planted for next year, and, because we began in August, got cover crop into most of the beds to feed and strengthen the soil through the winter.

We were also honored in the fall to meet Nathan's dad and step-mom, mom and her partner, and his brother and his boyfriend!

NOVEMBER - Salem and Nathan looked after the farm for 3 weeks so Val and Mark could get a break. They kept busy milking and pasturing the goats, taking care of the chickens, making cheese, watering the garden on warm days, and looking after Shii Koeii. We are most grateful to them for the time off. When we returned, we started goat share deliveries, and prepared for the annual Gardner holiday fair. Nathan went home for Thanksgiving.



Our Ferocious Lion, Yawning



DECEMBER – The Holiday Fair went off without a hitch, and then the holidays were upon us! Shortly after the turn of the year, Apprentice Nathan completed his seven-month commitment at Shii Koeii and moved to the northwest to experience

working on a different farm. Salem returned from a visit to family and friends. And just into the new year we were joined by Thomas and Haley, two warm and thoughtful young people interested in the My First Farm project here in 2017.



The Why, What, Where and How of the Resident Stewards' Sabbatical



From March – December 2017, resident stewards Val and Mark will be on sabbatical. The purpose of the sabbatical is two-fold: to get some deep rest and perspective, and to research, reflect, and plan for Shii Koeii's next 5-10 years.

Life at Shii Koeii these 9 years has always been filled with blessings and challenges. In our “Year in Review,” we really try to focus on the blessings, which you can see, are many. Even the challenges help us to grow, learn, adapt and evolve. But, cumulatively, we've reached our limit in terms of the number of challenges we can address and integrate, whilst keeping Shii Koeii going in a good way and keeping ourselves healthy and sane.

One of the greatest joys we have and biggest challenges we face is that we are simultaneously trying to run a project—a farm and nascent community--while at the same time teaching others how to do the same. Those others, our interns, come from a variety of backgrounds. Some have a bit of experience in farming; most have neither experience in farming, nor rustic, rural living.

Each day we're throwing metaphorical new books at these young people, but most of them don't even have a shelf yet to put the books on. What we're teaching them is so alien to most of what they know—computers, book

learning, urban life—that they don't yet have the confidence in their bodies, the problem-solving skills, or the intuition needed to help them understand, remember and retain what we teach them.

We were in almost the exact same position when we first came to Shii Koeii. We'd both lived in cities all our lives. We'd had jobs that were more heady than physical. We'd had some farm experience, and some outdoor experience, but one of our favorite memories concerns a conversation we had along these lines with our friend Mike, who was helping us build the infrastructure here. His diverse array of skills and confidence blew our minds. What he didn't know how to do, he was fearless about figuring out. One day we said to him, “Mike, how do you know how to do so much?” And in his guileless, self-deprecating way, he replied, “it's not that I know how to do so much. It's just that you guys don't know how to do anything.”

In the winter, we can take more time to support our youth in building their bookshelves. In the warm season, when we're so much busier, it's too easy for us to get frustrated when folks forget what we've taught them, find it hard to be efficient with their time, or make what seem to us foolish decisions because they lack sufficient knowledge and experience to do otherwise.

One of Mark's and my heroes is Gene Kranz, former flight director at NASA, perhaps best known to most folks through Ed Harris' portrayal of him in *Apollo 13*. Mr. Kranz is widely regarded as a model of extraordinary leadership, in part for his ethic of the need for “extreme competence,” but also for his ability to stay calm, and keep his team calm, under pressure. Kranz' famous “work the problem, people,” has become a kind of mantra for Mark and me. Writer Thomas Bateman, in reference to Gene Kranz, notes that the best leaders are *those managing a team of folks with useful and complementary skills, expertise, and information, as well as a “darn good reason to care and an unwavering commitment to seeing things through to success.”*

We would never claim to be “the best leaders,” but we recognize that, to successfully manage any project, one needs—among other things--a strong team. Despite young people often arriving with no “bookshelf,” we can, over time, teach skills and expertise. But we can't teach people to have a good work ethic, to care, or to follow through on their commitments.

While all our interns care to some extent, after 9 years we've come to realize that very few care *enough* about what they're doing that we can trust them to do their jobs competently, even after considerable training and re-training, without constant supervision.

As for commitment, there have always been folks who committed to interning with us and then failed to turn up, or left early, usually with good reason. But this year was unreal. Interns go through an extensive application process to come here, involving interviews, references, and written responses to essay questions. Yet, 12 of those who made it through this process backed out at the last minute. Of the 17 interns who showed up, 13 left earlier than we expected, sometimes dramatically so. Some realized they'd rather be hiking, or biking,

or around more young people. Others just didn't want to work so much. Still others had to cut their time short, at our initiative or theirs, due to serious behavioral health issues.

We want Shii Koeii to be a positive learning experience for young people, and a healthy community in which they can thrive. But what we require in return is that they evidence a passion for learning, take the work and the community seriously, keep their word, and communicate openly and honestly. This seems to be asking too much of many folks.

Clearly, we're doing something wrong. Are we trying to do, and be good at, too many different things? Shii Koeii is not just a farm--it's also an educational institution, a homestead, an intentional community, and an experiment in off-grid, simple, rural living. Can we be all those things, in such a way that one aspect doesn't suffer as a result of the other? And if not, what should take priority, and how?

Gene Kranz had a Herculean task in front of him trying to get men safely to and from the moon. But he wasn't, at the same time, also trying to raise money to keep NASA going, recruiting new trainee-astronauts to take the place of the ones currently vomiting all over the simulator, managing the NASA gift shop, and fixing the plumbing in the NASA bathrooms.

Obviously, running a farm is NOT comparable to putting a man on the moon. But when we look at our work through this lens, the sense of overwhelm we experience daily from the challenges we've set ourselves begins to make more sense. We need time and space to look deeply at ourselves, to assess our own faults, strengths, passions, capacities, and weaknesses, as well as the needs of the wider community, available resources, barriers and options that exist. We need to radically embrace the reality of what *is*, while envisioning, and trying to create, what could be.

Kranz' leadership model was based on the premise that one can solve any problem if one does so thoughtfully, intentionally, and step-by-step.

1. Define the problem
2. Determine goals/objectives
3. Generate an array of alternative solutions
4. Evaluate the possible consequences of each solution
5. Use this analysis to choose one or more courses of action
6. Plan the implementation
7. Implement with full commitment
8. Adapt as needed based on incoming data

This is what we plan to do during our sabbatical.

Since we are limited in terms of the knowledge we can bring to bear on these matters, we will be traveling a great deal this year to seek wisdom and perspective from others, both within and without Shii Koeii's wider community. Your loving feedback and help on this journey will be most appreciated.

We ask your patience with us, your tenderness, your prayers and good wishes, and your continued faith. Our most profound desire is to live, work, and love in community with others, on this beautiful land, in a way that will meaningfully serve the needs of all. We have faith that, given time and room to breathe, we can figure out a better way forward, together.



SHII KOEII'S INTERNS AND APPRENTICES, 2008-2017

Stories, memories, laughter, holding hands at meals, harvesting vegetables, pasturing goats – all of this is intimately made from our life with interns. We thank and honor all of you.

Thomas Miller * Haley Carpenter * Salem Sol * Jean Glaub * Jonah Womack * Emma Owecke * Christopher Cordeiro * Kolby Taylor * Mohammad Taher * David Birdsell * Cait Coyle * Nathan Belanger * Jennifer Bostick * Amber Due * Jesse Nielsen * Rebecca Pitocco * David Park * Sara Klementovic * Stephanie Ledesma * Ivan Castaing * Austin Cox * Justina Taylor * Jaime Sawyer and Mallory * Ben Park * Marisa Rudolph * Kai Kressek * Sophia Abraham-Raveson * Mia O'Reilly * Diana Furikawa * Zoe Wood * Kristen LeBlanc * Cat Coyne * Jean-Luc Gallic * Kait Wright * Nico & Daniela Mendoza * Kalyn Parker * Guillaume Chonion Garza * Beaman Martin * Nikolai Lawton * Warren Jacinto * Lindsey Myrick * Zach Sklarsky * Nolan Molly Roy * Alex Cole-Hollie Conger * Rosie Samuel Putnam-Ripley * Marie Reibel * Lucy Sexton Chasteen * Will Burney * * Austin Bauer * Crystal May * Maureen Meagan * Anton Johansson Ben Lawrence * Olga Kreimer * Holly Wickham * Alicia Kelly * Caitlin Fogarty * Dion Kauffman * Indy Partridge * Bobby Valentine * Ali Lord * Kaitlyn Duthie-Kannikkatt * Mica Taliaferro * Kevin Hayes * Kellie Hummel * Reanna Putnam * David Lamme * Lauren & Josh Doshier * Carrie Peters * Zennon Krupa and Andrea DeVivo * Camille Sumner * Arthur de Robert * Marjanneke Vijge * Daniel Moffatt * Laurie Rochardt * Julie DeSmet * Julie-Marie LaBarbe * Cici Claar * Haley Richardson * Andy Johnson * Emily Zolkower * Amanda Coleman * Trevor Smith * Ron Buehler * Jeff Drouet * Tegan Tyler * Robin Greenwood * Paba Mihindikulasuriya * Jessica Anderson * Ryan Boykin * Benjamin Capron



Spahn * TJ Moody * Brandt * Matt Mosca * Nash de la Lisa Jade * Jennie Kogan * Todd * Irina Esteban * Israelle Christian Wolff * Gina Rullo * McMahon * Carrie Reece * Weiss * Dustin Neidhart * Melero * Vito Santangelo * Sean Reid * Alexis Jeannolin * * Tanja Gaiswinkler * Josh Garth Johnson * Kari Buckvold

Hanlon * David Mickler * * Susannah Spero *

Shii Koeii's Expenses – 2017

Garden/Animals: \$3250
Intern and “First Farm” Program: \$6730
General Operating Expenses: \$3380
Resident Steward Sabbatical: \$4280

Total: \$17,640