

Farm Store



*Grown or Made in
Connecticut Only*



Strong Family Farm

Annual Report
2023-2024

THIS PAGE:

The view from Meetinghouse Hill, seen while walking through the Strong Family Farm fields.

About Strong Family Farm

Strong Family Farm, Inc. (SFF), is a private non-profit 501c(3) organization. Organized in 2013, the purpose of forming the organization was, and is to take responsible ownership of the historic Strong Family Farm with the goals of preservation, agricultural and local historical education as well as modern programming designed appeal to all segments of our population.

OUR MISSION:

Our mission is to provide a historic agricultural learning center where children, families, individual and community groups can experience an authentic family farm environment.

OUR VISION:

Our vision is to provide the community with a place to go that:

- ▶ preserves the area's rich farming tradition
- ▶ educates all about agriculture, and
- ▶ provides for families to meet and embrace the tradition of farming life

A place that will be not only as learning tool, but also to:

- ▶ rekindle fond memories for older generations,
- ▶ interests everyone who visits, and
- ▶ inspire children with the experience of farming life.

The farm will preserve agricultural tradition and create a space for memories to be made, while preserving and enhancing the character of the historic Strong Family Homestead.



A Word From Our President

Dear Fans and Supporters of Strong Family Farm,

Another year of success and progress for the Strong Family Farm! A wonderful and dedicated group of volunteers led by the always energetic Nancy Strong has created a healthy and focused organization.

This past year has been wonderful and exciting. The enormity of the progress cannot really be expressed succinctly; I urge you to review this annual report for all of the exciting events and developments that have happened this year. However, I would like to mention a couple of ideas I think are important to note.

We have hired an assistant director for Nancy, Erika Phillips. Erika has responded very strongly to the font of information Nancy is. Erika is the next generation to lead us into the future and keep us moving toward our initiatives and goals and to plan for our success. And, I have completed my term as President. The stewardship of Strong Family Farm passes to Bruce Pfalzgraf. He will bring new energy and new ideas to our farm family. I cannot wait to see where his leadership takes us.

A few final words. Nancy has taken a wonderful idea and molded it into this fantastic thing we call Strong Family Farm. It is an honor to lead this organization. There are always highs and lows, but through it all Nancy is a rock. She has her hand on the tiller and keeps the furrows straight through sunshine or storms. She is a treasure for this community. I feel so very lucky to have collaborated with her on this continuing voyage and thank her and all of you for the privilege.

As always, let us remember what came before us and bring that strength, direction, focus, hard work and thought into the future. We have an organization that we can be proud of, the Town can be proud of and, if I dare say, Norman and Geraldine Strong would be proud of. We reap what we have sown, and the Strong Family Farm is the result of what has been sown before us. We continue to sow, and we see the truth of this statement in the progress made, preservation captured, and the programs and events held at the Strong Family Farm! Here is to a wonderful and vibrant future.

Brian Motola
PRESIDENT, 2016-2024

A Heartfelt Thanks

"We all thank Brian for his guidance and dedications to the farm through thick and thin. So many milestones took place under Brian's administration - establishing the store, working to help take ownership of the pastures under agricultural easements, supporting and advocating the farm with the Town of Vernon, and helping secure many grants including the present Good to Great Grant, just to name a few. Strong Family Farm owes Brian immense gratitude and we are so glad he will remain on the Board to help guide us in the future."





The 2023-2024 Year in Review

Programs and activities from this past year include:

Strong Family Farm Programs:

SUNDAY FUN-DAYS AT THE FARM

Katie Riordan Napolitan, Programs Director, has put together a summer full of fun activities for all to visit and enjoy the farm. She also made a new scavenger hunt that takes visitors all over the farm for all to have fun learning about the farm's history. This year our programming has taken off, with live music, a weekly story time in the barn, and our 3rd annual Touch a Truck with over 160 people of all ages.

CHICKEN RUN

The 11th Annual Chicken Run and Walk was a success again on May 19th, when we welcomed 168 runners

and walkers of all ages at the starting lines. Spectators and cheering squads included, there were well over 200 people at the farm for the event! Thanks to all of our sponsors for making this one of our most successful races to date.

FARM STAND

This year we welcome Deborah Winicki as our new farm stand manager! Deborah is the owner of Mon Soleil Market Garden & CSA. Store shelves are stocked full with only CTGrown and produced items including homemade canned goods – jams and relishes made by our own Master Canner Claudia Steele.

SCARECROW CONTEST

There's nothing quite like seeing our community's

creativity each October with at least 19 scarecrows surrounding the farm fence line. Sign up starts on Labor Day with information and rules on our website. This simple old-fashioned contest awards only blue ribbons – everyone else comes in second place!

GRANTS

Good to Great grant update: Soon we will go out to bid with the plans for a certificate of occupancy for the barn and create a restroom while keeping the history of the buildings. Many thanks to Robert Hurd, architect, for all his work.

Vernon Greater Together Community Fund grant: SFF is grateful to be a 2023 recipient of a \$1,500 Vernon Greater Together Community Fund grant for

volunteer management system to aid in volunteer retention and satisfaction

Educational Programs:

BACKYARD CHICKENS

This program's original creator/instructor, Alexis Carmichael, has passed the torch to SFF's "author in residence" and chicken expert Lori Sanchez, and daughter Josie Carmichael, who has been with us from the beginning. Families learn how to raise chickens alternating Wednesdays, until we bid them farewell at the Harvest Festival in October to go to other good farms to lay eggs.

RAISED BED GARDENING

The rain last season was a

SUNDAY FUN-DAY AT THE FARM

"I love that we can go up to the chickens ...

I love the vintage store, and the farm store."

- SUNDAY VISITOR





The Year in Review: 2022-2023

challenge for our gardeners last year, but they all persevered and had delicious and beautiful crops. They closed out the season October 28th when they had a potluck luncheon in the barn. Erika Phillips is coordinating the program again this year, and Vicki DeLeo, Deborah Winicki, and Karl Hasel have returned as mentors, as well as master gardener intern Karen Prewo. Each week they hold a meeting with a workshop and discussion topics, based on a curriculum created by Erika and the mentors with all welcome to attend.

THE BEES

This spring we purchased two hives of Italian bees, each with a queen. We've also welcomed Chayton Gonzalez from RHS AgEd program to assist Walt Moody with the beekeeping here on the farm. We have the BEST local honey in the area and last year yielded over 3 gallons from our 2 hives.

Pucker Up for Porky Fundraiser!

"Pucker Up for Porkie Fundraiser" Who says we don't have fun on the farm? Members of the Strong Family Farm Team competed for donations from family and friends, with the one garnering the most donations getting to "Pucker up for Porkie" and kiss our pig mascot. Lori Sanchez, our author in residence won and got to kiss our Porkie. All collected approximately \$1,000 to go towards programing expenses. Great job!



ter online - there are still openings this season.

FIELD TRIPS

This year in May we hosted the 18 homeschooled students with families through Vernon Youth Services and 23 cub scouts and families from Cub Scout Troop 221. All groups got to experience the farm with the help of our faithful volunteers gardener Erika Phillips, historian Nancy Strong, author Lori Sanchez, chicken expert Josie Carmicheal, apiarts Walt Moody and Chayton Gonzalez and a visit from neighboring miniature horse, Charlie Brown.

ROCKVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

RHS Agricultural Science Technology Education (ASTE) program students continue to volunteer on the farm as part of their school requirements. Over the past year, we have had

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Educational Partnerships:

Civil War Day Camp We partnered with the New England Civil War Museum again this year to hold a sold-out Civil War Day Camp on May 11th. Led by Frank Niederwerfer, more than 30 children mustered on the SFF field and experienced a day in the life

of an actual Connecticut soldier.

CT Kids Club Summer Camp This is our third summer partnering with Priscilla Cruz, owner of CT Kids Club, to run our farm-focused summer camp. Each week has a new farm theme offering fun, hands-on learning for ages 5 through 9. Regis-



THE SUNDAY PROGRAM:

“Enjoyed visiting this lovely farm and we got a personal tour of the barn. We’ll be back to the store to purchase more delicious treats!”

~ SFF VISITOR AND STORE CUSTOMER





SFF: We're Part of the Community



SFF Off The Farm

Being Vernon's community farm isn't just about our neighbors visiting us, we also love being out in the community visiting our neighbors! You can see or hear about us at:

- National Night Out
-
- Maple St. School Career Day
-
- The Belding Wildlife Management Area for the 3rd Grade field trips
-
- Vernon Town Wide Brunch
-
- Snowflake Fair
-
- Agway's "stuff a stocking" event
-
- RHS guidance office's Community Opportunity Fairs
-
- Ready Set School Fair

We are also active members of the Vernon Volunteers Collaborative along with 13 other Vernon nonprofits creating greater impact together. We also serve on the Rockville High School Ag Ed Advisory Board.

Follow us to find out more on our website, newsletter, and social media.

5 students help us in so many aspects for the farm. We bid graduating senior Olivia McFarland goodbye and best wishes in her future endeavors.

4-H MEETINGS HOST SITE

SFF hosts the Hop-A-Long Gang 4-H Club under the excellent direction of their leader, Esther Machnik. In exchange, the club supports us in many farm activities. All the Strongs were supporters and participants in 4-H and we are happy to have the tradition continue.

Fixtures on the Farm:

MEMORIAL ORCHARD

A few of our fruit trees didn't survive the wet seasons and extreme heat of recent summers, so we are consulting with a and use specialist to help determine the best placement for new trees to thrive for your enjoyment and remembrance.

FENCE POST

MEMORIALS Take a stroll and see the names that our neighbors and friends have placed on plaques to honor or remember special people. All of our posts have been sponsored, and we now have 58 more rails available to dedicate. A thank you goes out to Dan and crew at CT Fence Tech for replacing the broken fence posts this past year. Also, to Jacob Niemczyk, a former AgEd student who still volunteers to attach the plaques on the fence for us.

STRONG FAMILY FARM

PASTURES Hytone Farm, run by the Perrachio family, continues to lease the land for prime agricultural use. They are good stewards of the soil, and distantly related to the Strongs through marriage. The trails are maintained twice a year by our friend, Robert Arthur, and this is funded now by the many generous donations to the Morgan G. Strong Memorial Fund.

THE CIVIL WAR ERA

RED BARN Located on Route 30 across from Vernon Center Middle School, the barn has a new roof this year thanks to Dean Pinto and crew from Dzen's Residential Roofing in South Windsor and donations from the Strong family. Strong Family Farm is whittling away the long list of repairs, but with a new foundation and roof, it will be there for generations to come.

A Peek into the Near Future:

MUSEUM AREA Nancy Strong has expressed that before she is gone, she would love to see a Strong Farm Heritage Center installed in the dairy part of the barn. This will document the history of an active local "family farm" through the decades starting at the beginning in 1878; the future project will trace the trials and tribulations facing not just the Strongs, but all the family farmers at the time.





2023-24 Board of Directors

SFF is ever grateful to have a wonderful team of dedicated volunteers who serve on our Board of Directors. Board members invest countless hours to see our mission carried through, and many serve on one or more of our committees, such as the Finance Committee, Programming Committee, Building/Grounds Committee, Garden Committee, Store Committee, Marketing/Publicity Committee, and Fundraising Committee.

If you are interested in joining any of these committees, please email us at: info@strongfarm.org for more details.

Board of Directors

Brian Motola
PRESIDENT

Wendy Wanchak
VICE PRESIDENT

Don Bidwell
TREASURER

Claudia Steele
ASST. TREASURER

Nancy Strong
SECRETARY

BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE

Christina D'Amato · Dr. David Emery · Dr. Ellen Marmer
Michael Nelson · Bruce Pfalzgraf

STAFF

Erika J. Phillips, **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**; Katie Riordan Napolitan, **PROGRAMS DIRECTOR**;
Deborah Winicki, **STORE MANAGER**; Emma Skidgel, **STORE CLERK**;
JoMarie Hofmann, **COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT**; Jen Manley, **BOOKKEEPER**



SFF Big Numbers



1600+

VISITORS TO
STRONG FAMILY FARMS
IN 2023



146

YEARS OF STRONG
FAMILY FARM



900+

PEOPLE ENJOYED
SUNDAY FUN DAYS AT
THE FARM IN 2023



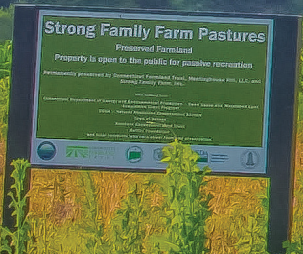
60

VISITORS TO THE FARM
FOR FIELD TRIPS IN 2023

“Let us remember what came before us and bring that strength, direction, focus, hard work and thought into the future.”



Strong Family Farm is committed to maintaining and preserving the Strong farm and providing activities for all ages to experience life on the farm. Our visitors create their own memories and new stories of the farm.



168

PEOPLE PARTICIPATED
IN THIS YEAR'S
CHICKEN RUN

“We think the
world of Nancy
and Strong
Family Farm!”

- MIIRIAM AND HOWARD,
SFF VISITORS

19

ENTRIES IN THE
SFF ANNUAL
SCARCROW CONTEST

“This is the
best day of
my **WHOLE**
entire life!”

- KINDERGARTENER
ON A FIELD TRIP



20

GARDEN BEDS
RENTED FOR THE
SEASON

“I like that a
volunteer
brought over a
caterpillar!”

- SUNDAY FUN-DAYS
VISITOR

16

- KIDS ENROLLED IN
OUR BACKYARD
CHICKEN PROGRAM
IN 2023

“I love it!
So cute and fun!
And it’s
educational, too!”

- SUNDAY FUN-DAYS
PARENT/VISITOR



SFF Volunteers

Thank you to our amazing 2023-2024 volunteers

We truly are an organization that runs on volunteers! They don't just enrich our organization, they are the very heart of Strong Family Farm. We work hard here, there is always lots to do: lots of programming to plan, weeds to pull, events to organize, funds to raise. But there is also lots of fun here! Getting together for our common goals and interests, whether in the Volunteer Center in the garage, Nancy Strong's dining room, or out working around the garden beds, we get so much done and have such fun doing it! Seeing so many of our friends and neighbors use their skills and give their time and energy to SFF is so unbelievably heartwarming. We appreciate our volunteers more than we could ever adequately express.

VOLUNTEER IMPACT

Here are some of the ways volunteers made an impact this year:

- Programs committee
- Helping with crafts on Sunday Fun-Days
- Weeding
- Painting
- Maintaining fences
- Graphic design
- Hanging flyers
- Photography
- Creating a visitor survey
- Assisting with summer camp
- Building garden beds
- Sweeping out the barn
- Cleaning the farm stand
- Giving demonstrations for canning, local pollinators, spinning fiber
- Maintaining compost
- Mentoring gardeners
- Directing parking
- Passing out snacks/water at Chicken Run

There are so many different ways our volunteers have helped, and each and every way has helped us move forward!

Join the SFF Volunteers!

Three times a year SFF holds Work Days for volunteers to work as a team to clean up and prep for major events at the farm. We gather in April for spring clean up; in May, the Saturday before the Chicken Run; and in October on the weekend prior to the Harvest Festival. We accomplish so much more when we work as a group! And have so much more fun! If you think you could attend a Work Day or would like more information, please reach out to Erika Phillips at info@strongfarm.org.

SFF BIG NUMBERS

150 "A wonderful and dedicated group of [150] volunteers, led by Nancy Strong, has created a healthy and focused organization."

~ BRIAN MOTOLA



Volunteers

Special Thanks to all who helped make 2023-2024 a success!

A Special Thanks To:

Alexis Carmichael, for leading our backyard chicken class since the beginning in 2013. She has touched so many children's lives and shared her love of chickens with so many families throughout the years. Alexis created a wonderful class that we are forever grateful to have as a program at SFF.

Liz Bologna, for serving as our communications specialist for 5 years. She has helped keep us linked to our community, writing our newsletters, updating our website, sending out press releases, and crafting flyers. We wish Liz nothing but the best in her professional positions, such as at our neighboring nonprofit Arts Center East.

Christina D'Amato and Jenn Hunting, for serving on our Board of Directors and Finance/Fundraising committee when we needed their clarity and excellent organizational skills to help us with our "big picture" and new fundraising initiative.



Thanks to Our Faithful Volunteers ...

- All the Board of Directors
- Programs Committee members
- Michalina Pietras, CPA
- Lori Sanchez, author in residence
- Josie Carmichael
- Judy, Joanne, Miriam & Howard, our chicken supporters
- Jon Roe & Vernon Volunteers Collaborative

- Vernon Historical Society
- Roger Barker
- Theona Wheelock
- Barbara Muldoon
- Jacquie Roraback
- Erika Phillips
- Vicki Deleo, master gardener
- Robert Hurd, architect
- Walt Moody, apiarist
- All the SFF RHS AgEd students

- Michael Lewis
- Richard & Claudia Steele
- Lloyd Johnson, plumber/gardener
- Lynn Johnson
- Nick and Donny West
- Karl Hasel
- Beth Quinby Andresen
- Cynthia Ferguson
- Nina Ovrυν Design, For this annual report

OUR FARMER FRIENDS

- Hop-A-Long 4-H Club
- RHS AgEd Department & Students
- Aussakita Acres Farm
- Hytone Farm
- Mon Soleil Market Garden

SFF PHOTOGRAPHERS

- Andre Garant
- Matthew Lindahl
- Community Voice Channel

... and to all those who took time out of their lives to help us out!

“Seeing so many of our friends and neighbors use their skills and give their time and energy to SFF is so unbelievably heartwarming. We appreciate our volunteers more than we could adequately express.”





2024 Sponsors

Special Thanks to all who helped make 2023-2024 a success!

A New Year, New Initiative!

This year we took a new approach to sponsorships! We consolidated our individual sponsorships, and requests, to have year-long SFF sponsorships. This new initiative replaces our event sponsorships and gives more visibility to our generous sponsors, look for them not just on our Chicken Run t-shirts, but on our website, on the new banners on the Big Yellow Barn, in our newsletters, and at the Harvest Festival & Craft Fair in October.

Our community responded in an overwhelmingly positive way! Our sponsorship fundraising increased 63% over 2023! Thank you to each and every sponsor. And a special thank you to ProHealth Chiropractic Center for signing on as our inaugural Barn Raiser sponsor this year!

We are so very thankful that these local businesses answered when we asked. We couldn't be this successful without them!

For more information on how you can become an SFF sponsor now or in the future, email Erika Phillips at info@strongfarm.org. In-kind donations welcomed!

Strong Family Farms Sponsors		
BARN RAISER		
HARVESTER		
FARM PRESERVER		
FARM STEWARD		
CHICKEN RUN ONLY		

SFF BIG NUMBERS

63%

“Our sponsorship fundraising increased 63% over last year! Thank you to each and every one of generous sponsors.”

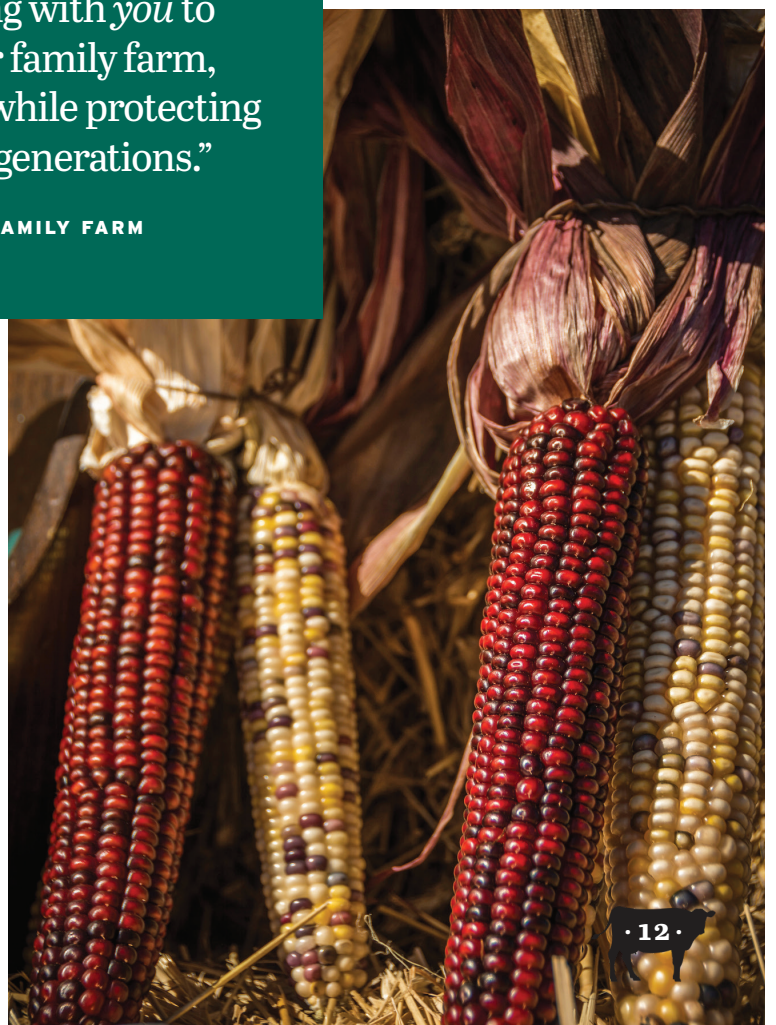
~ STRONG FAMILY FARM





“Strong partnerships are everything. We are excited to be partnering with *you* to preserve our family farm, for all to enjoy while protecting it for future generations.”

- STRONG FAMILY FARM



JOSEPH
Merritt
& COMPANY since 1908

Thank you to
Joseph Merritt & Company
(Hartford office) for helping
us print this annual report.



Thank You to Our Members

Thank you to all of the Strong Family Farm Members
from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

BLUE RIBBON LIFETIME MEMBERS

Beth Quinby Andresen
Carol Nutile Burke
Ronald C. Burke
Richard & Julie Clay
Dorothy & Gerald Davies
Karl Hasel
Linda Niederwerfer
Dick & Barbara Quinby
Richard Jr. & Lisa Quinby
Strong Family Assoc.
of America
Nancy Strong
Don Tenerowicz
Wendy Wanchak

HAYMAKER

Andresen Electrical
Services LLC
Sande Brittian
Barbara Campbell
Charles Iadaresta
Barbara & Richard Jubinville
Devin & Melanie Keyes
Lawrence King
Bruce E. Pfalzgraf
Jon Roe
Emily, Steve, Lilly &
Paul Westerberg

CULTIVATOR

George & Shirley Arthur
Merrilyn Niederwerfer
Cummings
Joe & Etienne Duplessie
Miriam & Howard Epstein
Cynthia Ferguson
Carol Formica
Katherine Fowler
William & Diane Gutzmer
Bob & Lorraine Hurd
Kurt & Ann Johnson
Joyce Jordan & Dave Conant
Suzanne Langone
Stephen & Marsha Ledger
Ron & Maryann Levesque
Donald J. Lewie
George Males
Dr. Ellen Marmer
David McQuade
Walter and Erin Moody
Kirk & Maryann Morris
Brian & Penny Motola
Ann & Rich Nevelos
Wil & Julie Nicholson
Karl and Sue Niederwerfer
Nancy Orlowski
Amy & Gordon Paterson
Charles & Kerry Piader

Glen Potter
Wayne Reiske
Jacqui & George Roraback
Maureen Standish
Richard & Claudia Steele
Nancy Steffens & Bob Felber
Nancy Talyor Dunn
Joanne Wright

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Michael & Judy Annati
Tom & Donna Barnas
Mariellen Baxter
Don Bellingham
Laurie Brooks
Paul Brown
Ron Burr
Cindy Butler
Jerylne & Christopher Caron
Antonia Carterud
Carol Chappel
Phyllis Chase
Charles & Carol Chatterton
Family
Audrey & Joe Courtney
Stan & Judie Culy
Rebecca Daigle
Mary DalPorto/Michael Fulks
Thomas Davenport
Ellen Donadio
Michele Eddy
Stuart & Norine Edwards
Matt Faherty
Carol A. Gadbois
Edward Gaines
Maureen Gregoire
Tembra Gregus
Thomas & Linda Hamlin
Lempi Hannaford
Mary Ann Hansen
Judy Hany
Cheryl Hazen

Barbara Hinsdale
John & Marcia Horan
Lucille Horn
Gordon Howard
Jennifer & Eric Hunting
Beverley Hyde
Karin James
Claire Janowski
Lynn & Loyd Johnson
Beth Kellogg
George & Marge Kelly
Judy & Russel Kelly, Jr.
Chris Kunz
Peter Ladd
Sara Landon
Ed & Louann Landsberg
Daniel J. Leblanc
Ann & Bob Letendre
Kathleen & Christopher Lewis
Michael Lewis & Family
Jean & Bruce Luddy
Bob & Kathy Lyle
Susan Malanga
Paul & Pat Margelony
Steve & Candy Malinoski
Jim & Gail Martello Family
Gloria Martocchio
Sandra McNally
Karen Meehan
Lewis Merrow III
Gail Meyers & Ed Jaworski
Gloria Miller
Cassie Miller
Nancy Mocado
Julio Morales Jr.
Meredith Moseley
Barbara Muldoon
Jessica Muraski Bonomo
David Murphy
Mike Nelson & Family
Al & Marilyn Newton
Marcy O'Keefe

Ann Olcutt
Bill & Millie Oliphant
Mary Palmer
Dorothy & Lee Paquette
Lisa Perrone
Becky & Ross Person
Erika Phillips & Dan Roper
Wayne & Julie Polansky
Family
Kelsey Proctor
Shireen Rhoades
Barbara & Gordon Richmond
Joanne & Winston Rose
Sue Rubinstein
Carol Rudert-Lyons
Laura Saller
Lori Sanchez
Sherrie & Ron Schallack
Tom Schirmer
Sarah Severson
Al & Diane Sheridan
Ann & Tony Silvestro

Barbro Simmons
Ed & Carole Slattery
Rose Spafford
Madeline St. Germain
Mark & Molly Stephanou
Elly Swan
Tom & Lynn Sweet
Mr. & Mrs. John Talcott III
Sharon & Frank Tarala
David Thomas
Julianne Thouin
Nancy & Steven Trinks
Thaddeus Valenski
Vernon Police Association
Doreen Ward
Betty & Bill Wardrop
Nancy Weissmuller
Theona Wheelock
Dan & Isabelle Whelton
Michael & Phyllis Winkler
John and Gloria Wraight
Lisa Young

**A special thank you to Karl Hasel
for donating his required distribution
from his Roth IRA this year!!!**

Many members like Karl make an annual charitable IRA distribution to Strong Family Farm. If you have an IRA and are 72 or older, you are required to take a minimum distribution from it every year. Consider joining others and donating it to the farm and getting a tax benefit.

ALWAYS GIVE BACK

“My family has always been deeply seeded in the Vernon community . . . They instilled in their children to always give back to without second thoughts and that it always takes a “Village,” working together for the benefit of all.”

~ NANCY STRONG



“How dear to my heart are scenes from my childhood,
when fond recollection present them to view.”

~ SAMUEL WOODWORTH





“There are very few investments in life that are permanent. Preserving a family farm is one.”

~ NANCY STRONG, FOUNDER & SECRETARY, STRONG FAMILY FARM



Strong Family Farm • 274 West Street • Vernon, CT 06066 • info@strongfarm.org.