



Vibrant Volunteers

Fall 2024 Edition



deCordova Hearts - Photo Credit: Anchor Imagery

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Dedicated hearts like yours
Are not so easy to find.
It takes a special person to be
So generous and kind.

To care so much for your fellow man
Is a quality all too rare.
Yet you give of your time and talents,
For all in need to share.

So thank you for being a volunteer,
We're privileged to work with you.
We want you to know how appreciated you are,
Not just today, but the whole year through.
~Author unknown

As the leaves fall and the year winds down, it's the perfect time to reflect on all we're grateful for, and at the top of that list is you—our incredible volunteers.

Whether you've been welcoming visitors, planting native species, restoring habitats, or working behind the scenes, your efforts have made a lasting impact on the land we all care so deeply about. This work wouldn't be possible without you! Your time and commitment are greatly appreciated.

Volunteers are the heart and soul of this organization, and we are so grateful for all the work you have helped us accomplish.

Thank you for making a difference and for helping us support our mission.

2024 Volunteer of the Year

The Trustees is thrilled to name
Elnora Thompson as its 2024
Volunteer of the Year!!



Elnora is one of the longest-running, most-determined volunteers to infuse her passion for community across the Boston Community Gardens network decades before the network was even part of the Trustees. Elnora has been a member of the Nightingale Community Garden for at least 35 years – much of the time serving as the garden coordinator.

The garden formed after the Nightingale school burnt down. Neighbors slowly began growing vegetables and flowers on-site with various infrastructure improvements happening over the years. “In those early days” Elnora proudly recounts “there was nothing. You just claimed a little piece of land and it was yours. Your plot could be huge until someone else showed up and wanted a piece. Now we have 140 plots, a shade structure, shed, composter, plot dividers, concrete pathways, a water system and an orchard”

Elnora with her team of two co-coordinators handle plot requests, wait lists, dues collection, host frequent volunteer groups and tours, help gardeners who have fallen behind in maintenance and so much more all in a garden with about 10 languages spoken. She often boasts that while the garden may have a lock it is rarely locked with members of the community coming and going. She collaborates with our engagement team to host and run various events and programs at the garden to ensure remains a hub of community activity. The garden has hosted everything from mixology, how to pickle your harvest, dance parties, and Juneteenth celebrations.

Blessed with the gift of gab there’s been more than a few times that Elnora left a conversation and said “they want to give us money for X” and sure enough her way with words has helped fund orchard and raised bed renovations and fund a replacement of a shed just this year alone.

Elnora is a beloved resident of Dorchester who has spent decades improving the lives of her fellow community members. Boston Community Gardens would not be what it is today without her dedication, spirit, and knowledge.

To watch a video interview and learn more about Elnora, click below to visit the [2024 Volunteer of the Year – Elnora Thompson Trustees Community page.](#)

Volunteer of the Year (Continued)



If you drive down Park St in Dorchester and look into the garden it's a rare event to not see Elnora busily working away inside doing any number of things. Certainly, she tends her own plot full of sweet potatoes, collard greens, black eyed peas, rhubarb, and green cosmos and so much more. She also tends a plot for produce-to-pantries ensuring that the less fortunate in the community have access to nutritious local food. She collaborates with myriad community groups weekly though often-times even more frequently. Sometimes that means she is available to

give tours where everyone leaves with a handful of peppers or lemon balm for their own garden but more often than not she is putting those groups to work weeding, harvesting, or tending the compost. Many of the groups she works with are youth as Elnora strives to ensure the next generation understands where their food comes from. She inspires young and old to put their best foot forward, to grow together, and to be good neighbors.

Elnora holds her gardeners accountable ensuring plots are maintained throughout the growing season and are put to bed for winter, that folks are properly using the composter, are not using any chemicals, and that folks are not overharvesting from the communal fruit tree's. It's no easy feat to run a 140 plot garden but she does it year in and year out. While she's always ready with a pleasant story about growing up in Mississippi or her years working for the telephone company you best believe she doesn't suffer any fools is always ready with a stern warning of how to do well by your fellow gardeners. She has an eye on sustainability issues collecting rainwater and installing perennial borders to prevent stormwater from washing out into the street. Pesticides and herbicides have no place in her community garden and extra produce is always donated to those in need.

"I come from a family of preachers. So we just keep talking" is a famous quote that Elnora utters just about anytime I see her and it's true. She is always ready to lead a group or to speak to a reporter. She has been quoted in various articles including in the Boston Globe.

2024 Volunteer of the Year Nomination



Volunteer Spotlight: Appleton Farms Monday Morning Group

By Diana Nicolo, Volunteer Services Associate & Editor

Shining a Spotlight on Our Talented Woodworking Volunteers at Appleton Farms



Appleton Farms, located in Ipswich and Hamilton, Massachusetts, is the oldest continuously operating agricultural and dairy farm in America. The farm was established in 1638 by Samuel Appleton and was maintained by the Appleton family for over nine generations. In 1998 the Appleton family entrusted the property to the Trustees of Reservations organization and today it operates as a sustainable farm.

Appleton Farms spans over 1,000 acres of rolling pastures, woodlands, and historic farm buildings. As you can imagine, maintaining a property of this size can be a monumental task. Thankfully, there is a team of dedicated volunteers which help with all sorts of projects around the farm

At Appleton Farms, we are incredibly fortunate to have a woodworking-based volunteer group that meets each Monday morning that never hesitates to lend a hand. Over the past year, this skilled and dedicated team has collaborated with every department on the farm in one way or another, leaving their mark on countless projects that enhance the farm experience for all.

Here are just a few of their impressive accomplishments from the past year:

- Innovative Solutions: Built protective boxes for the new meat CSA freezers, which double as tables for vegetable CSA distribution.
- Supporting Wildlife: Crafted new bird boxes for the bluebird monitoring program.
- Comfort and Connection: Built and refinished picnic tables to encourage outdoor engagement.
- Play and Education: Created a play structure, a little free library, and a cow-milking stand for the education garden.
- Farm Maintenance: Repaired and built windows, barn doors, kiosks, and gates across the property.
- Retail Enhancements: Designed a new bread display for the farm store.
- Accessibility for All: Built accessible planter boxes for the Moraine Farm community garden.
- Community Spirit: Framed the truck and trailer for the Trustees Pride float.

What sets this group apart is their creativity and resourcefulness. They make excellent use of leftover lumber and repurposed materials from around the farm, turning scraps into functional and beautiful structures. It's no exaggeration to say that wherever you stand at Appleton Farms, you're likely within sight of something they've built or repaired over the years.

Volunteer Spotlight: Appleton Farms Monday Morning Group

Meet the Appleton Farms Monday Morning Carpenter Group



Bruce, Jerry and Ian replacing the door trim

John Desmond is the Stewardship Manager at Appleton and Moraine Farms and helps oversee the day-to-day, non-agricultural, maintenance of these properties. He has been at Appleton since 2018 and with the Trustees since 2011.



Will, Jerry, Ian and Don with the tractor they built

"I like the fact that there is always something to do and everything we accomplish is really appreciated and valued. And, there is always a thank you involved. It is nice to be "below the radar" with things at Appleton throughout all the changes in management. We just keep trudging along."

— **Don Ruzecki** - Volunteer for over 26 years

"I am a retired engineer and owned my own cabinet shop for several years after I retired from the corporate world. I enjoy working with our group of four retired woodworkers and feel that we've made a significant contribution to the upkeep of the Appleton Farm buildings. Our work also includes construction of picnic tables, benches, gates and fencing. Altogether it's a great place to work and our efforts are greatly appreciated by staff."

— **Will Holton** - Volunteer for 3 years

"We can see the results of our labor and watch visitors to the farm enjoy our contributions."

— **Bruce Reilly** - Volunteer for 22+ Years



Jerry Major has volunteered since 2009



Bill Whiting has volunteered since 2000



Bill on a caterpillar he built for the education garden

"There are many things I like about this volunteering opportunity! First, I enjoy working on projects that make a tangible difference to the Farm and to the Trustees' mission. It is thrilling to me to be able to walk around the Farm and point out the many things I've helped build or repair. We work on a variety of interesting projects that touch many aspects of the Farms' operations. A few of our projects include livestock gates, barn doors, picnic tables, windows, chicken roosts, bluebird houses and even a pastry case for the Farm Store.

It's also a joy to work with, and learn from, my fellow crew members as well as J.J. and the dedicated staff at the Farm. It's a great way to build skills!"

— **Ian Hayes** - Volunteer for 6 years - since the Summer 2018

To our woodworking volunteers:

Thank you for all your contributions. Your skill, dedication, and ingenuity are truly appreciated!

Welcome to Our New TerraCorps Members

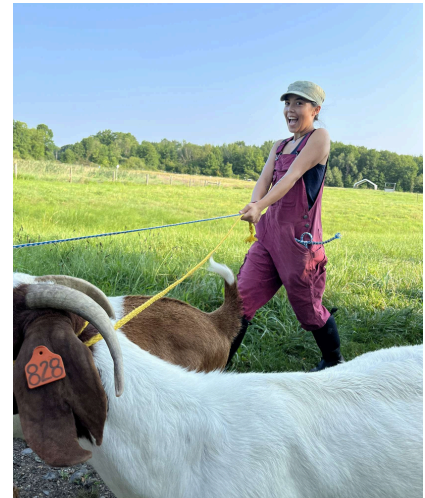
TerraCorps is a Massachusetts-based nonprofit organization that helps to prepare and connect emerging leaders with nonprofit organizations to address conservation and community challenges. Each year the organization partners with host sites across Massachusetts and Rhode Island that focus on topics such as environmental conservation, agriculture, land stewardship, and community education. The Trustees is one of the TerraCorps host properties where recent college graduates can gain work experience within the environmental conservation sector by completing an 11-month assignment.

This year, we welcome Angela “Angie” Houh (Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator) and Adam Sussbauer (TerraCorps Land Stewardship Coordinator) to our community. Angie has been working on Agroecology projects at Appleton Farms such as the Willows monitoring program while Adam has been coordinating Nest Box monitoring across the state and biodiversity monitoring using the app iNaturalist.

Meet Angela “Angie” Houh

“Hello! My name is Angie, and I am serving for the Trustees as a Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator. I was introduced to TerraCorps through a former mentor I had worked with one summer. The program seemed like a great opportunity to explore the field of conservation, while also serving the local community. TerraCorps also grants an education award for successful completion of your service term, which was appealing to me as a new college graduate.

So far, I have had countless wonderful experiences here at the Trustees. It is refreshing to serve alongside likeminded people who are passionate about regenerative practices. At the agriculture-based properties, I am able to help and share my ideas among all the different operations, from livestock to vegetable farming. I feel grateful to learn from professionals in all facets of agriculture and always look forward to growing my knowledge with help from the people around me.”



Meet Adam Sussbauer



“Having grown up in Ashfield with a very outdoorsy family, I’ve been hiking on Trustees properties such as Bullitt and Bear Swamp since I could walk, where my parents would teach me and my brother about the beautiful environments that we were fortunate enough to grow up in. My early exposure to this field led me to study Earth & Environmental Science at Wesleyan University, where I conducted research in many fields, including planetary geology, geochemistry, volcanology, and archaeology. I am now thrilled to continue in this field while serving with the Trustees as a TerraCorps member!

Even just a few months in, I have learned so much working with Julie Richburg on the Ecology Team—things I had never considered before, such as identifying all of the different species of goldenrod. To this end, I am now incapable of walking through a forest without pulling invasives when I see them. These first few months as a TerraCorps member have been such an amazing experience, and I am so excited for what’s next to come!”

Interested in Helping Monitor Nest Boxes? Volunteers for Nest Box Monitors are needed at Bird Park, Chestnut Hill, Notchview, and Bartholomew’s Cobble (Sheffield), Bird Park (Walpole), Jewell Hill (Ashby), Field Farm & Mountain Meadow Preserve (Williamstown), Notchview (Windsor). Search for “Nest Box” on the Volunteer website for more information.

Farm Education Volunteer Training Program at Appleton Farms Winter-Spring 2025



Are you interested in learning more about Appleton Farms' organic crop and grassfed beef production, agroecology projects and conservation efforts, and sharing that learning with others on the Trustees' flagship farm? If so, this exciting opportunity might be for you!

We will be launching a new volunteer opportunity and are looking for volunteers who would like to become trained farm naturalists and ambassadors.

As a Farm Education Volunteer (FEV), you will complete a 5-month training course, with a cohort of ~10 volunteers and given the knowledge and resources to share what you learn with visiting groups of youth, adults, and the general public.

This training course will take place in-person at Appleton Farms in Ipswich and will consist of ~10 sessions total (2 weekday evening sessions per month with a mix of classroom and field sessions).

Training topics will include the following areas:

- Environmental education pedagogy and methods
- Our Sustainable farming practices
- Local natural history and ecology
- Local history and culture.

Once trained, FEVs will have the opportunity to lead and support education programs, serve as interpreters at farm events, help with education garden & barnyard upkeep, and collect environmental data for community science projects.

Commitment:

- Volunteers will be required to participate in at least 80% of the training sessions.
- Once trained, FEVs are asked to commit to at least one year of volunteer service, with ~2 volunteer engagements/~5 hours of volunteering per month.

Qualifications:

- NO previous outdoor, science, and education experience is required - so don't let the application questions deter you if you do not have such prior experience.
- We are looking for those who are passionate about learning and interested about farming and environmental literacy/education.

Learn more about this New [Farm Education Volunteer](#) Opportunity

Volunteer Opportunities

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

It's That Time of Year Again!

WinterLights Help is needed at Stevens Cooliage House & Gardens and Elenor Cabot Bradley Estate



WinterLights will be open Wednesdays-Sundays from November 29-January 4 at both locations. (Closed 12/25).

Stevens Cooliage House & Garden

Volunteers are needed to greet visitors or manage the Wishing Tree station during the event.

WinterLights Event Volunteers shift is 5pm-8pm.

Wishing Tree Volunteer shifts are 5pm-7:30pm.

Eleanor Cabot Bradley Estate

WinterLights Event Volunteers are needed during the event. The volunteer shift time is 3:00pm-8:30pm.

Be part of this magical experience which celebrates the holiday season with thousands of sparkling lights.

Appleton Farms Opportunities

Rabbit Groomers are needed to help keep our 4 Angora rabbits, Violet, Oliver, Charles and Mable, looking beautiful for visitors and prevent them from getting wool block and other skin and health problems. No Experience necessary.

Education Livestock Herd - Assist the Livestock Educator with daily chores and operations concerning our education livestock herd consisting of chickens, baby goats (kids) and calves.

Bird Nest Box Monitors Needed

We are looking for volunteers to help monitor bird nest boxes on our properties across the state.

This position will conduct weekly site visits to assigned property/boxes from March-August to monitor and clean them.

You will be required to participate in training to learn the protocols for nest box cleaning and monitoring but the box visits occur weekly on a self-scheduled basis.

Signup now to get on the list to be contacted for training that will be conducted late winter.

Opportunities for grassland bird monitoring are also needed and will be posted soon.

For more information go to the [Volunteer website](#) and search "Nest Box" to find properties with Net Box monitoring opportunities.

Volunteer Connect

Search for [Volunteer Opportunities](#)

Check out [Resources](#)

Learn About [Community Volunteering](#)

[Corporate Volunteering](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)