Growing the Local Food Economy

Letter from CISA’s Board Chair and Executive Director

In 2013, we celebrated CISA’s first generation of work and we began to plan for the next 20 years! It was a year of honoring those who came before us and who made our present work possible. We held a reunion and potluck for 200 at our annual meeting. We thanked the 75 former board and staff members, and the hundreds of volunteers who served CISA over its first 20 years, and we were honored to have Congressman James McGovern as our keynote speaker. During 2013, we also launched a strategic planning process to position CISA for the future. We believe that our work will create a stronger community and contribute to a more sustainable world for our children and our children’s children.

We are always amazed at how much happens in just one year. Our 2013 highlights included:

- Release of *Eat Up and Take Action for Local Food*, a new publication which provides inspiration and resources to encourage residents to bring their passion of local food to their workplaces, town meetings, and friends and family.

- A new report on the challenges in commercial meat processing in the Pioneer Valley. The study provides recommendations for improving the system for meat processing, especially cutting and curing.

- A reopening of the CISA Emergency Farm Fund in response to the February 2013 blizzard. Three farms received no-interest loans to rebuild or repair lost greenhouses to minimize future harvest losses.

- Ensuring the Food and Drug Administration heard the concerns of farmers and the community regarding the impact of their proposed safety regulations.

- Successfully raising $50,000 in new dollars, leveraging an additional $100,000 in matching funds from the Anniversary Fund set up by major supporters. These new monies will go to assisting beginning farmers, expanding our presence in Hampden County and growing the local food economy.

Overall, CISA is now reaching more people, including farmers, entrepreneurs, reporters, elected officials and residents. CISA believes that we all have a role to play in growing a robust local and regional food economy. To ensure success we will need everyone involved. Our job is to help Pioneer Valley residents stay engaged, informed, and enthusiastic about this work.

We believe that our work will create a stronger community and contribute to a more sustainable world for our children and our children’s children.
So what does this mix of energy, creativity and a healthy dose of reality look like on the ground?

More farmers—CISA is helping beginning farmers gain the business expertise they need to grow their farm businesses and succeed.

More committed consumers—CISA is expanding its presence in Hampden County where two out of three people in the Pioneer Valley live.

More food-related businesses and institutions who buy from our farmers. Every day we are providing assistance to businesses that want high quality, locally sourced ingredients.

A strong local food economy will take time to build, but we have now travelled the road long enough to know that our small steps can make a big difference!

So please join with us. Every time you shop or cook or talk about all your reasons for buying from our local farmers, you have an opportunity to share a taste of the world you want to create. We are here with you and for you, every bite, of every meal, of every day!

Sincerely,

Risa Silverman
Chair, Board of Directors

Philip Korman
Executive Director

CISA is now reaching more people, including farmers, entrepreneurs, reporters, elected officials and residents.
Many successes in our 20th year

*Eat Up and Take Action for Local Food!*

The year was filled with opportunities for eating, learning and working together. We kicked off 2013 with a panel of farmers, each reflecting on the last 20 years and considering what’s to come on their farms in the next 20. Throughout the year, the CISA community came together: at farm tours, farm dinners, and a festive reunion of people involved in CISA’s early days.

In the fall, we published *Eat Up and Take Action for Local Food*, an inspirational guide to action for a robust local food economy. Pioneer Valley farmers and residents joined thousands of people across the country in urging the Food and Drug Administration to create food safety regulations that are effective and workable for small and diverse farms.

*Strong and creative farm businesses*

CISA’s 2013 winter workshop series focused on financial record-keeping and farm business decision-making, and benefitted from thoughtful presentations from several Local Hero member farmers. Fourteen women participated in our “Whole Farm Planning” workshop series, and we held 13 additional workshops and networking events.

*Reaching all residents of our region*

In 2013, we committed to increasing our impact in Hampden County by dedicating more staff time to work in our most populous county. We are beginning this work by improving our outreach to Hampden County farms and food businesses, offering workshops and technical assistance activities, and strengthening our partnerships with community groups. In 2013, CISA’s Senior FarmShare program served 365 people in all three counties, and we held Winter Fare events in cooperation with farmers’ markets in Springfield, Amherst, Greenfield, and Northampton.

*Strengthening the local food economy*

Research in 2013 focused on meat processing and ways to improve producer/processor relationships. We held three workshops for meat producers, two in cooperation with Adams Farm Slaughterhouse, and one with local chefs and meat buyers. CISA continued to provide staffing for Pioneer Valley Grows, a collaborative network dedicated to enhancing the ecological and economic sustainability and vitality of the Pioneer Valley food system.

*Twice as much local food!*

We estimate that 10–15% percent of the food Pioneer Valley residents eat is locally grown, and we’ve set an ambitious goal to reach 25% in the next 20 years. Use the Local Foods Calculator on our website to estimate the percent of local food your family eats. You can also get a sense of the impact on job creation and our local economy if we all commit to eating more locally grown food.
## Financial Notes

As we end our 20th Anniversary year, CISA is in a good financial position thanks to our supporters and investors. CISA has closed each of the last four fiscal years with a surplus, due to our continued success in obtaining grants and the significant growth in unrestricted donations.

CISA’s 20th Anniversary Fund provided an incentive, in the form of a match, for donors to increase their contributions to CISA and that resulted in our highest level of support ever at $455,620. These unrestricted funds have enabled CISA to pay off the second mortgage on our building, reach our goal of growing CISA’s cash reserves to cover six months of operating expenses and consider future investments in the organization, such as buying a new donor database and increasing staffing levels.

The CISA Emergency Farm Fund began in 2011 in response to the damage caused by Hurricane Irene. A total of 11 loans were made to farm operations that sustained losses (two loans have already been paid back, ahead of schedule). Due to the strong financial position of the Fund, it was reopened in early 2013 in response to a severe snowstorm that damaged greenhouses and other structures, with three farms receiving loans at that time. At year end 2013, there were a total of 12 loans outstanding with a total principal balance of $70,892. In addition, there was $90,199 in cash available in the Fund to be loaned when the next weather-related disaster occurs.

Moving forward, increasing CISA’s unrestricted donations remains vital as grant money from state and federal agencies becomes more uncertain even with the passage of the long-delayed Farm Bill in early 2014. CISA will continue to focus on investing in the organization to improve long-term financial stability.

Signed,

Michael Wissemann
Treasurer

Philip Korman
Executive Director

### 2013 Financial Summary

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<tr>
<th>Revenue and Support</th>
<th>2013*</th>
<th>2012</th>
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<td>1. Grants and Government Contracts</td>
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<td>2. Donations</td>
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<td>3. Emergency Farm Fund Donations</td>
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<td>4. In-Kind Donations**</td>
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<td>5. Local Hero Membership Dues</td>
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<td>6. Rental, Consulting and Fees</td>
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<td>7. Advertising</td>
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<td>8. Miscellaneous: Interest and Merchandise Sales</td>
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<td>Total Revenue and Support</td>
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<th>Expenses</th>
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<td>1. Program</td>
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<td>2. Community Education</td>
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<td>3. Fundraising</td>
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<td>4. Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Expenses</td>
<td>$992,890.21</td>
<td>$890,104.00</td>
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</table>

| Change in Net Assets                 | $384,755.95 | $306,350.28 |

| Net Assets, Beginning of Year        | $578,266.28 | $271,916.00 |
| Net Assets, End of Year***           | $963,022.23 | $578,266.28 |

* Unaudited figures. Audited figures are available upon request.
** Includes restricted Emergency Farm Funds in 2013 of $170,812.
*** Includes over $58K of in-kind support from a graduate team of the Isenberg School of Management/UMass Amherst.

Chart photos: CISA photo (nasturtium); Jess Cook (beans and pods)
Blossoming Acres

Local Hero farm profile

Lenita and Jeff Bober grow vegetables, bedding plants and cut flowers, and operate an on-farm bakery on 80 acres in Southwick, Massachusetts. Southwick sits in the jog in the Massachusetts border with Connecticut, just south of Westfield, where Blossoming Acres and several neighboring farms offer an oasis of farmland amid golf courses, shopping centers, and residential neighborhoods. The farm also operates expansive stands at the Lanesboro and Longmeadow farmers’ markets, and they are well known for their fall pumpkin patch and baked goods.

Lenita and Jeff farm in partnership with Jeff’s aunt and uncle, Lois and Bob Davis. The couple met at the University of Massachusetts’ Stockbridge School of Agriculture, and began farming on land owned by the Davis family. In 2006, the foursome bought the Putnam farm, which offered an historic barn and farm stand with bakery.

Lenita Bober is the primary farmer and she’s involved with everything from seed ordering to greenhouse work, brand design, marketing, and harvesting. Though her favorite place to be is in the field, she often manages by phone from the farmers’ market. “Business owners don’t always get to do what they want, and you can’t have people doing the things you wouldn’t do yourself,” she explains. Jeff works part-time off the farm, delivering oil. Lenita notes that staff retention is one key to the farm’s success. “We have some great people, and we treat them like family, so they come back year after year.”

Blossoming Acres strives to use as few chemicals as possible, and relies on advice from the University of Massachusetts Integrated Pest Management program. Lenita is forthright with her customers: “I tell them, I’m not going to spray the crop to death. There might be a cabbage worm in the broccoli, but its fine—all it’s been

Local Hero Members
I wish when I was at Stockbridge they had more marketing. McCray’s Farm and Mayval Farm Mockingbird Farm Mapleline Farm Martin’s Farm Mayval Farm McCray’s Farm and Country Creamery McKinstry’s Market Garden, Inc Meadowbrook Farm Mockingbird Farm Moss Hill Farm Mountain Orchard, LLC Mountain Pasture Farm Mountain View Farm Mount Warner Vineyards The Mulchy Farm Natural Roots New Lands Farm New Salem Preserves, Inc. Next Barn Over Farm North Hadley Sugar Shack Northfield Mount Hermon Farm Nourse Farms Nuestra Raíces Old Depot Gardens Old Friends Farm Open View Farm Educational Center Outlook Farm Park Hill Orchard Paul’s Sugar House The Pieropan Christmas Tree Farm Pine Hill Orchards Pioneer Valley Farm & Vineyard, LLC Pioneer Valley Growers Coop Pioneer Valley Heritage Garden Pioneer Valley Popcorn Plainville Farm Plante Farm Pop’s Farm Potash Hill Farm Raspberry Patch Farm Ravenwood Greenhouses Red Barn Honey Company Red Barn Farm Red Gate Farm Education Center River Maple Farm River Rock Farm Riverland Farm Riverside Gardens Roaming Farm Robert’s Family Farm Rock Ridge Farm Rootmass Greens Sangha Farm Sapowsky Farms Sawyer Farm Sawyers Farm Seeds of Solidarity Farm Sentinel Farm Shattuck’s Sugarhouse Shinglebrook Farm Shoestring Farm Sidhill Farm Simple Gifts Farm Small Ones Farm Smiarowski Farm Stand and Creamery Sojourner Design at Sojourner Sheep Songline Emu Farm South Face Farm Spring Water Farm Steady Lane Farm Stockbridge Farm Stone Soup Farm Stony Brook Valley Farm Sullie’s Vegetable Farm Summit Farm Sunrise Farms Sunset Farm Sweet Morning Farm Sweetwater Farm Szalowksi Potato Farms Tanstaaff Farm W & W Farm Southam pton & Am herst, Greenfield, Northampton & Southampton VRetailers

Bakery

Big E’s Supermarket

Blogs

Barstow’s Dairy Store & Bakery at Longview Farm, Inc

Big Y World Class Markets, Amherst, Greenfield, Northampton & Southampt

BOOKS

Lenita attends every farmers’ market herself. At the bustling Lanesboro markets, open two days a week from late April through November, the farm runs as many as four check-out lines. “I’ve been at the markets so long now, I sell to people I remember as kids, who now have their own children!” Lenita’s customers know it’s worth waiting in line for her crops, which are selected for flavor and freshness. Sometimes, to get sweet corn on the truck for the farmers’ market, crews will be out with headlamps as early as 2:00 a.m.

Baked goods are an important part of the farm’s business, and one the Bobers had to learn when they took over the Putnam Farm. “When we were in negotiations, the previous owners wanted to know how soon we could take over. Since all of my farmers’ markets end by the first of November, I thought that would be fine—but I forgot the holiday season!” During Thanksgiving week, the farm sells 2,500 pies, many using fruit from local farms and all made from scratch.

Marketing has also been a learn-as-you-go experience. “I wish when I was at Stockbridge they had more marketing and benches were still good.” With the help of the loan, the Bobers replaced one greenhouse and rebuilt two others.

Lenita has farmed her whole life. “I love the seasons, I love the way time passes.” In a steamy greenhouse in February, she shows off trays of geranium cuttings, taking root. The Bober’s winning combination of high quality production, customer service, and direct markets make it likely that their neighbors and customers will be able to enjoy their pies, flowers and vegetables for a long time to come.
Com m unity M em bership

We invite you to join CISA as a community member. Help us strengthen local farms and build the local food economy.

Together, farmers and their customers have created a renaissance in our local food economy, one that promises long-term benefits to our health, our environment, and our communities. To fully achieve this promise, we need to maximize the power we wield as consumers, and take action for local food in areas beyond the marketplace as citizens, workers, volunteers, parents, and community members.*

Your membership support will help us raise awareness, create new programs, and provide learning and networking opportunities to member farms and food businesses. You will also receive individual benefits including discounts at Local Hero restaurants and businesses and first dibs on tours at Local Hero farms throughout the year.

CISA connects residents of the Pioneer Valley with each other and with local farms and food businesses. Our local food system is growing and many consider local farms—and the food, festivals, rural vistas, and economic activity they generate—to be essential to the culture and quality of life of the region. Your CISA Community Membership is one important way you can do your part to contribute to local agriculture.

Help ensure the future of local agriculture in the Pioneer Valley. Go to buylocalfood.org and become a CISA community member today!

Thank you.

*Learn more about what you can do to help the local food economy at home and in your community, by reading CISA’s latest publication, Eat Up and Take Action for Local Food, available online at buylocalfood.org.

RE S T A U R A N T S
30 Boltwood/ The Lord Jeffery Inn
Alina’s Ristorante
Apollo Grill
The Bakers Oven Bistro
Bistro Les Gras
Black Sheep Deli
Blue Heron Restaurant & Catering
Bottega Cucina
Bridgeside Grille
Bub’s BBQ
Chandler’s Restaurant
Chez Albert
Coco
Cup and Top Cafe
Deerfield Inn
The Dirty Truth
Eastside Grill
El Jardin Bakery
Esselon Café
Et Al ... Hilltown Catering
The Farm Table at Kringle Candle
Fitzwilly’s
Gill Tavern
GoBerry, Amherst & Northampton
Great Wall Restaurant
Hillside Pizza
Hope and Olive
Hungry Ghost Bread
Jake’s
Johnny’s Tavern
La Cucina/3 Cafe
Latitude Restaurant
Local
Lone Wolf
Magpie
Monarchs Restaurant
The Night Kitchen
Northampton Brewery
Paul & Elizabeth’s
The People’s Pint
Roadhouse Cafe
Roberto’s
Sam’s Pizzeria and Café
Seven Sisters Market Bistro
Spleoto Group
Sylvester’s Restaurant
Taylor’s Tavern & Restaurant
Wagon Wheel Restaurant
West End Pub
The Whately Inn
Wheatberry Bakery & Café
Woodstar Cafe
Zanto Restaurant
SPECIALTY PRODUCTS
Appalachian Naturals
Artisan Beverage Cooperative
Forest Products Associates
Hedge’s Hot Stuff
Maple Valley Creamery
Mother’s Inc
Pioneer Valley Vinegar Works
Ponders Hollow Custom Moulding & Flooring
Real Pickles Cooperative
Relish the Harvest
Richardson’s Candy Kitchen
Roberts Bros. Lumber Co.
The Turkish Kitchen
Tornado Firestarters, LLC
Valley Malt
GARDEN & LANDSCAPE
Andrew’s Greenhouse
Annie’s Garden and Gift Store
Broadfork Permaculture
Haddy Garden Center
Megan’s Valley Garden & Landscape Supply
New England Wild Flower Society
INSTITUTIONS
Amherst College
The Arbors at Greenfield
Baystate Dining Services
Baystate Franklin Medical Center
Baystate Mary Lane
The Bement School
Cooley Dickinson Hospital
Deerfield Academy
Eaglebrook School
Farm to Preschool and Families
Greenfield Community College
Hampshire College
Northampton Survival Center
Northfield Mount Hermon
Rockridge Retirement Community
ServiceNet Prospect Meadow Farm
Smith College
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Community Membership

Sidehill Farm tour, Molly Babine photo
Community Members

Anonymous
Ron Ackerman
& Cleo Gorman
David Ahlfeld
Joseph Alfanio
Tracy Allen & Karl Mutchler
Don & Edith Adams Allison
Lucy Alman
Jean Alward & Beverly Montague
William & Nancy Ames
Betty Andersen
Sakare Anderson
Teri Anderson
Max Antes
Montserrat & Mike Archbald
Marie Armentano
Ann Armon & Len Huiker
Kanthie & Dhanika Athukorala
Nancy August
Jerry Auth
Mollie Babize & Mary Quigley
Erin Bach & Kyle Hume
Roy Bachinsky
Claire Bailey
Gary Bailey
Nancy Bair
Katharine Baker & Peter Titelman
Carol Ball & Randie Handlerman
Joanna Ballantine
Brooks Ballenger
Sharon Band
David Barnes
Carol & David Beauvais
Pam & Chuck Bell
Peter & Ellen Berek
Phyllis Berringham & Peter Greenwald
Justine & Harry Bertram
Channing & Marie Bete
Andrew Betsold
Vincent Biggs
Blaise & Linda Bisailion
Lance Black
Dan & Gail Blanchard
Caitlin Blaney
Christine Bluhm
Manuela Boisvert
Marlene Borer
George Bowers & Shayne Beede
Teresa Bragg
Susan May Brano
Andrew Bresciano
Laura Broad
Barbara Brown
Bruce Brown & Mary Thorpe Brown
Lyla Brown
Virginia Brown
Mark Brumberg
Trina & Jessica Bryant
Matthew Burak
Nicole Burelle
Mark Burton
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Erin Buzvizis & Ann Gillard
Polly Byers & Mac McCoy
James Cabral
Remember Cadieux
Alan Calhoun & Barbara Aiken
John Califano
Brandan Call
Denise Caputo
Stacy & Shawn Carkonens
David Carlson
Cate Carulli & Linda Sinapi
Christine Casagrande
Devon Castillo
Janet Caswell
Scott Cavanaugh
Netty Centeno
Lorraine Ceto
Anneliese Chang
Stacey Chapley
Madeleine Charney & Rudy Perkins
Annie Cheatham & Ann Gibson
Fiona & Jeffrey Chevalier
Michael Childress
Eric Chilson
Robert Chisman
Kenley Clark
Samuel Clark
Jeremiah Clarkson
Clem Clay
Sarah Coe & George Critides
Adam Cohen & Jendi Reitner
Kelly Coleman & Amir Flesher
Carolyn Collins
Jackie Compton
John & Marianna Connolly
Lynne Connor
Louis Conover
Jeffrey Correa
Joan Coryat & Art Silver
Amy Cotler & Thomas Powers
Joseph Cotter
Gretchen Courage & Karen Browne
Alice Cozzelino & Amy Pulley
Mary Alice Crim
Luis Cubillos
Colleen Currie
Carrie Cuthbert & Scott Laidlaw
Steven Daiber
Scott & Joanie Daniels
Barbara D’Arthenay
Cary Dash & Vivian Miller
Christopher Dean
Debra & John Deane
Brian & Joanne Despard
Crystal Diamond
Bruce & Ruth Dickinson
Berquist
Jan & Robin Dizard
Karen & Chip Doherty
Linda Donnelly
Deborah Duchin
Lauren Duffy & Elizabeth Mullin
Ray Dunn
Christine Duston & Donna Meller
Kofi Dumfour
Alfred Eipper
Vahram Elagoz
Stacey Elliott
Matthew Emmershoff
Jamie Escamilla
Beth Eustis
Julie & Jerry Feinland
Joseph Fernandes
Rebecca Fil
Christopher Fillon & Suzanne Whitman
Bernard Fine
Daniel Finn
Kathleen Fischbach & Jeff Kellog
Ed & Janie Fisher
Raya Foldi
Jocelyn Forrest
Chelsi Fortier
Greg & Lisa Franceschi
Sage Fratneovich
Donald & Margaret Freeman
Kathryn Gabriel
Sara Gagliarducci
Amy Gazin-Schwart & Ave Schwartz
Frances Gebhardt
Michael Gentner & Mary Riley
John & Phyl Gerber
Kim Gerould
Alex Ghiselin & Diane Welter
Gina Gigante
James & Harriet Gilman
Wayne Glaser & Pamela Skinner
Penina Glazer
Julie Goddard
Emma Golden
Owen Goldfarb & Priscilla Fairbank
Ellen Goldsmith & Sam Levitt
Lee & Betsy Goss
Scott Goss
Valerie Gracechild
Barbara Graf
Caroline Graham
Lisa Granlund
Jason Graves
Lyle H & Heather A Gray
Sheila & Bob Greenlaw
Ellen Grobman & Vandy Bollanger
Jean Grossholtz & Eileen Eliot
Frances Hack & Robert Chabot
Judy Hall
Lisa Hall
Mary Hale
Jayme Hannay
Bruce & Ruth Hawkins
David Hayes
Nancy Hazard
Ellen Hefferman & Paul Gibson
Matt Heron Duranti
Marjorie Hess & Rudolph Talaber
Mary Clare Higgins
Elizabeth Higgins
JoAnn & Richard Hinckley
Ellen Hirschberg & Mark Griska
Vanrong Ho
Marcia & David Holden
Sandra Hoover
Mark Horwitz & Julia Moss
Samantha Howe
Jennie Howland & Justin Kurtz
Abigail Hoyt von Trapp
William Hunt
Alicia Hunter
Gayle & James Huntress
Katherine Hutchinson & John Giurox
Paul Jablon
Lara James
Hannah Jarrell
Miriam & John Jenkins
Zachary Jenkins
Abbie Jenkins
Peter Jessop
Margaret & Skip Jodoin
John Joelson & Joanne Levin
Janet Johnson
Jesse Johnson
Keith & Jane Johnson
Mark Johnson
Theresa Johnson
Daniel Jones & Cathi Hanauer
Margo Jones
Michele Jones
Eileen Keegan & John Hoogstraten
Erin Kelly-Dill
Meg Kelsey Wright & Jonathan Wright
Diane Kelton
Robert Kieras
Susana Kimball & David Hamilton
Dave King & Joan Milan
Jan & Jeremy Klauser-Wise
Evan Kleber
Alice G Klingener
Carolyn Kohn
Jennifer & Brian Koniecny
Frederick Kool
C Walker Korby
Christopher Korczak
Philip Korman & Nora Israeloff
Amy Koscielnik
Beit Ahavah
Judith Kundl
Julie Labedz
Bonnie Lambourn
Susan Lantz
Kacie LaRochelle
Nancy Lavenderie
Carrie Leach
Helen & Donald Lennon
Walter Leutz
Jim Levey & Christine Olson
Mark Lewis
Cazual Liebenow & Elaine Holder
Paul & Marcelle Lipke
John Lippmann
Dick & Suzanne Little
Eva Lohrer
Andrew & Angela Long
Bobbie Longo
Beth Lorenz
Susie Lowenstein
Lucinda Lucey
Joyce E & James H Lutat
Samantha Lyman
Rebecca & David Lyons
Lynda Mahieu
Claire Mahoney
Flora Majumder
Manuel Maldonado
Mohammad Malekniazi
Holly Malinowski
Sahar Manzoor
Steven & Michele Marantz
Jennifer Mark
Kristen Martin
Amy Martyn & Amy Waldman
Diane Mason-Arnold & Fred Arnold
William & Suzanne Massy
Erin & Daniel Matica
Kim Mastland & Linda Farmer
Peter & Nicki McAvoy
Matthew McCarthy
You. Yes, you. You make a difference now, and, with a little planning, your impact can continue long after you are gone.

“Planned Giving” doesn’t just have to be for other people. It could help you make a lasting statement about what is important to you!

Each year CISA relies on gifts, big and small, to support our work and expand our mission. It is easy for you to continue your support beyond your lifetime:

- **Name CISA as one of the beneficiaries (or contingent beneficiaries) on an IRA or 401K.** While it would be taxable to your children, your IRA will pass to CISA income tax-free.
- **Name CISA as a beneficiary on a life insurance policy or pension.**
- **Work with your financial advisor and/or attorney to consider more intricate planning options.**

Anyone can plan to make a gift from their estate—it doesn’t have to be big and it doesn’t have to be fancy. But it does matter. A lot. Legacy gifts create and inspire a sustainable foundation for CISA’s future. Please visit buylocalfood.org for more information and click on “Support CISA.”

Thank you.

**Join CISA’s Legacy Circle by donating a planned gift**

**As easy as 1-2-3**

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**Make a lasting statement about what is important to you!**
Christine Crutchfield
Karen & Joseph Curran
Carrie Cuthbert
& Scott Laidlaw
Trina Cycz
Sandy & Angie D’Amato
Karen & David Davis
Susan Dechter
Sheila Dennis & Tom Henry
Sheryl Derderian
& Wraye Dugundji
Florence & Peter DeRose
Bruce & Ruth
Dickinson Berquist
Joan Dickson
Elizabeth Dickson
Bruce Diehl
Jen Dieringer & John Frey
Lori Divine-Hudson
Angela Dodge
Dianne Doherty
Clare Donoghue
Lisa Dorsey Tucker
Kathleen Dowd
Sheila Dusza
Leslie Dwight
Meggin & Donovan Eastman
Vahram Elagoz
Denise Elliott
Eve Endicott
William Ennen
Beth Epstein
Elizabeth Erickson
Laurie Estes
Equine Business Institute
Richard Evans
Barry Feingold & Marci Yoss
David Fersh
Fred & Eva Fierst
Sebern & John Fisher
Tara Fitzpatrick
Jerry & Marcia Fix
Maureen Flannery
Elliott Frankin
& Martha Nathan
Yvonne Frecero
Rebecca & Thomas Fricke
Dorothy & Hugh Friel
Carole Fuller
Meg Gage & Stephen King
James & Marianne Gambaro
Katherine & Jose Garcia
John & Gail Gaustad
David Gengler
Becky George
Abby Getman
Stephen & Mary Getman
Beth Girshman
David Glassberg
Larry & Sue Godard
Ellen Goldsmith & Sam Levit
Leslie Goldstein & John Mosimann
Nancy & Bruce Goldstein
Steve & Gay Goodwin
Kathy Goos & Barry Werth
Spencer Gordon & Mark McHugh
Tetty Gorfine
Mari Gottdiener & Joel Russell
Tzivia Gover
Kathie Gow & Holly Lee
MaryAnn Gracia
Myra Grassfield
Ashley Griffith & Marcia Curtis
Al & Sally Griggs
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CISA staff members, past and present, Jason Threlfall photo
Mike Wissemann

Board member profile

Mike Wissemann stewards a farm with a long history. On Warner Farm’s website, there’s a list of Warners who have farmed in Sunderland, that goes back to 1720. Mike’s son David is the tenth generation in the family to farm this land, now 150 acres in Sunderland, Northfield, and Greenfield. Many factors are probably responsible for this long success, including hard work, luck, creativity, and some stubbornness. Mike’s approach to the farm today reflects a little bit of all of these.

“People are really yearning to know where their food comes from.”

Warner Farm embraces an unusually wide variety of marketing approaches. Long a well-known supplier of sweet corn and asparagus to wholesale accounts, the farm now offers CSA shares, attends three farmers’ markets, and welcomes more than 8,000 people each fall to an eight-acre corn maze. Mike’s Maze is known for its creative subjects and complex designs, ranging from Andy Warhol’s Campbell’s soup can to Salvador Dali. Games, challenges and activities related to the year’s theme—and a new Corn Café and mini-maze for small children—ensure that the maze offers something for everyone.

Warner Farm now benefits from the perspectives of both Mike and his son, David, who returned to farming full-time four years ago. In February, planning for the upcoming season and for the long-term future of the farm, Mike considers many factors, including the enterprises that are most appealing to the two farmers. “You’ve got to keep it interesting,” he comments.

At conferences as far afield as Pennsylvania and Michigan, he gleams ideas that feel like a good fit for the farm. Although several other large-scale sweet corn growers in the Pioneer Valley have gone out of the business, Mike doesn’t intend to eliminate his wholesale accounts. He would however, like to increase his average return per acre, allowing him to reduce his use of far-flung fields or eliminate inefficient activities. Another advantage, Mike notes, is the opportunity to offer better paying jobs to employees, including adding some year-round positions.

When Mike first made a corn maze in 2001, it was the first in the region. Now, the maze faces increased competition from other “agri-tainment” activities. “People are really yearning to know where their food comes from,” Mike notes. In planning changes or additions to the maze, he wants to respond to that desire by maintaining a clear connection to agriculture, food, and the land. “CISA is partly responsible for that interest on the part of the public,” Mike says. “And it’s all good for farms, even though it’s different than working alone in the field.”

Mike was a member of Sunderland’s Select Board for six years. He still sits on the town’s Community Preservation Committee and its Agricultural Commission. He brings this community experience to CISA’s board, along with his knowledge of farming in the Valley, his sense of humor, and an ability to recognize both the big picture and the important details (or, as Executive Director Phil Korman quips, “to see the corn field and the kernels”). “CISA’s role was instrumental in recognizing the importance of agriculture in the Pioneer Valley,” Mike notes. “People cared about farms, but the Local Hero campaign helped bring that concern to the forefront, and gave people a way to act on it.”
CISA strengthens local agriculture by building connections between farmers and the community.

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