

OUR 2023 AGM: WE LAUGHED, WE CRIED...

It was our first in-person AGM since 2019. Hard to believe. This time, the meeting was held in Claremont United Church – rather appropriately, as the church was the place where Land Over Landings originated in 2005. We had a good turnout for this year’s meeting, despite the pall of wildfire smoke outside.

Our guest speakers were Stephen Marshall and Judy Mann, who described the creation and expansion of **Common Ground Garden**, on the Class 1 soil of a corner of Mike Robertson’s High Perspective hang-gliding field on the Lands. We heard how three gardeners soon become more than fifty – a diverse, dedicated group of enthusiastic, hard-working volunteers from many backgrounds, drawn by the opportunity to grow fresh, organic food for their families, friends, and local foodbanks.

We were shown how the garden developed and gasped at the large quantity of fresh food it’s producing after just four years, including a wide array of world foods. Several of the gardeners, from around the globe, told us of their own experiences there and what the garden means to them. This amazing project is not only building a powerful sense of community but also offers incontrovertible evidence of the value of Class 1 soil and the importance of protecting the Lands as a reliable source of fresh local food.

The garden, how it came about, what’s growing in it, and what it means to the gardeners was recently highlighted in an excellent article in the *National Observer*: “Community farmers explore new flavors, cultures through food” (July 4, 2023).

The **Year in Review** (more an 18-year review) was delivered by our Chair, Mary Delaney, in her inimitable fashion. She took us on a whirlwind tour of the decades of LOL’s existence – a distilled account that helped bring into focus our consistent gains, especially since the 2013 airport re-announcement (the one that truly galvanized us into action). Yes, they were always gains. There may have been some disappointments along the way but we never ever lost ground, not literally, not figuratively.

Mary then turned to the day in 1980 when she and her husband Joe (“both crazy kids”) moved into a dilapidated farmhouse outside Brougham, knowing nothing about the airport issue or People or Planes. Their



blissful ignorance was short-lived. Fighting to save these Lands became a way of life. With the 2013 re-announcement, Land Over Landings literally took off, its hallmarks a mix of hard work, long hours, dedication, networking and factfinding, foodland advocacy, looking after one another, and laughing a lot. Mary, as Chair

during those years, was the constant unifying force and motivator at the heart of it all. Now, she would be passing the reins to her “righthand gal,” Lexi Whalen.

It’s worth repeating Mary’s closing words: “There is so much I could say about all these people, but I will end by saying that as our community shrank, and neighbours moved away, and the kids grew up and we became increasingly isolated, these people were my community. They became family, through all of life’s milestones – illness, injury, births of grandchildren and deaths of loved ones, and one devastating fire. I cherish them more than words can express. From the bottom of my heart, thank you all.”

So yes, we laughed, we cried... And Mary, Joe, we thank you too, and wish you well. We’ll miss you more than we can say.

Board members come and go, of course, but as Mary pointed out in her speech, they somehow never really leave Land Over Landings. She won’t be any different; we’ve made sure of it. When creating the new position of Past Chair, we also assigned duties to the position (we’re not stupid), so we will still be able to benefit from Mary’s decades of knowledge and her unique set of skills.

LOL'S 2023 EXECUTIVE

Alexis Whalen, Chair

Stephen Marshall, Vice-chair

David Masters, Treasurer

Gabrielle Untermann, Secretary

Jim Miller, Research

Pat Valentine, Communications|

Gord McGregor, Honorary Chair

Mandi Brandt, Member at Large

Helen Brenner, Member at Large

Carmen Lishman, Member at Large

Abdullah Mir, Member at Large

Heather Rigby, Member at Large

Mary Delaney, Past Chair

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LAST CURTAIN AT HERONGATE

We're sorry to have to share the news that Herongate Barn Theatre is closing its doors after 50 years. Steve and Ann have been staunch supporters of Land Over Landings from the start. Over the years we attended many events at their beautiful property, both outdoors and in the theatre. At their invitation we held many fundraisers there, in particular the one in 2017 that helped fund the all-important Agricultural Study.

Please join some of us on September 10 for a delicious dinner and the last show, Bill Johnson's "Dirty Work at the Crossroads," described as a laughter-filled tear-jerker musical melodrama in period dress. Covers all the bases. Tickets may be limited, so order them now by calling the box office at 905-472-3085 – and then please call Gabrielle at 905-649-2433 so we'll know to look out for you!

Food for Thought

A GARDEN IS A CONVERSATION

*No one can garden alone.
~ Elizabeth Lawrence*

You plant a seed and tentatively await a response... There are no guarantees that a seed will reply, that it will take root or thrive, despite your best laid plans. But oh! If it does, you find yourself digging into something existentially deeper – a glimpse into the inner workings of the universe, no less, on a microcosmic level.

Read by Heather Rigby at our AGM as a prelude to the Common Ground Garden presentation.
Source: –evolve– magazine, issue no. 3

FEDERAL MONEY GOES TO REAL AIRPORTS, NOT HYPOTHETICAL ONES

In 2022, the federal government partly funded the refurbishment of one of Toronto Pearson's main runways. This past June, Ottawa allocated some \$30 million for a new pre-clearance facility at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, where travellers to the U.S. will soon be able to complete all immigration, customer, and agriculture inspections at the airport prior to departure. Ottawa says that Billy Bishop will be adding 10 or more new U.S. destinations. Target opening date for the new facility: 2025.

Then, three weeks ago, Ottawa announced it will invest nearly \$94 million under the National Trade Corridors Fund for a cargo development project (two new facilities) at Toronto Pearson, to strengthen supply-chain infrastructure. We're not sure how enhancing existing airports correlates with emissions-reduction goals but it's a far better move than building a whole new unnecessary airport on high-quality foodland.

SPEAKING OF FOODLAND...

Our local farmer's markets are now in full swing, and the produce from this area's rich farm soil is fresh, colourful, and luscious. Here's just a short list of local food and flower growers:

Carma Farms

County Left Farms

Fresh Heads by OSA

Heirloom Heather

Joyfully Organic

Judy's Tropical Garden

Reesor Farm Market

Sweetridge Farms

Check out their websites or Facebook pages to find out more.

Land Over Landings
Because food is a
GROWING concern!

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