

Bobby Alexander is a high school senior at Shining Mountain Waldorf School. His chosen senior project is to build a mobile greenhouse in partnership with Dharma's Garden, a local nonprofit educational farm. The project is well underway, and Bobby has started a fundraising campaign to complete the project: charity.gofundme.com/bobbyalexander

A Small Farm Inspires A Big Idea

My interest in work on an organic farm was awakened while I was on my semester program with Kroka Expeditions. While we traveled south through New England, we visited many farms where I and 11 other students would provide our labor for a day or two, and in return, we would camp on that land and be showered with food to take with us down the river. Through this experience, I developed a connection and interest in sustainable and organic agriculture. When I returned home I decided to leave my previous job behind. I came to the conclusion that bussing at a restaurant chain was work that was comfortable for me but not meaningful. I wished to put my effort into something I felt was making positive change in the world. I researched a handful of farms and actually landed a job at Aspen Moon Farm. Yet because I do not have a car, I realized this position would not work for me. I was unable to find a bike or bus route that would realistically fit.

I attended Boulder Waldorf Kindergarten as a toddler, playing and learning on the land next to the open property which would later become Dharma's Garden. I had forgotten about this special place which is strongly connected to my childhood. My mother had met the farmers at Dharma's Garden years before, yet was not connected to them. I was encouraged to knock on their door and introduce myself; I was nervous because I assumed it would be odd to ask for a job in this fashion. When I rode my bike over, I found Farmer Tim in his front yard working, with his dogs lounging in the grass. I felt more comfortable as soon as I made contact and coincidentally the summer solstice was just a few days ahead. I was invited along with the rest of the Dharma's Garden community to attend the summer solstice application of a biodynamic spray. This preparation 500 includes a horn and manure from a cow, which has been underground all winter. In the spring, the contents in the horn are emptied and stirred into water.

When we arrived at four in the morning, we were greeted with hot chai and took turns stirring the mix of biodynamic preparations. As the sun rose, we applied the spray onto all the plants which encompassed the property. It was a freeing experience for me to wander the land with no motive except to reach every living being within the space. All of these sprays heal the earth as a living organism. I have become very interested in biodynamic agriculture in the past six months; Dharma's Garden practices this as well as regenerative and sustainable agriculture, and permaculture. I feel drawn to biodynamics strongly because I see a great deal of value in working with nature to produce food. Natural ecosystems are much older than human beings and have a lesson to show us—we are not put on this earth just to suck out resources until there is nothing but trash and dust left. There is another way, people can harness the wholeness of nature and create an environment where all systems of a farm are supporting one another.

Late in the summer, I decided I would love to complete my senior project in partnership with Dharma's Garden. I was so happy to work in the summer and learn from the land that I did not want to disconnect during the winter. I already had over a hundred and fifty hours of work experience on the farm, and I wanted my project to be practical and expand on my knowledge of what sustainable agriculture will look like in the future. As there is less and less farmland and water, the demand for products will only grow as the population grows. Greenhouses can create an environment that is extremely productive for plants to grow. If energy is conserved as much as possible through proper construction, a greenhouse can offer an amazing amount of product with very little space. Tim and I are building a mobile greenhouse on a trailer, which I will be able to tow and show off at Shining Mountain when it comes time for senior project presentations. Dharma's Garden has been paying for this project so far, and we are working to gather our needed materials locally and at the lowest cost we can. If you wish to support or sponsor my senior project, on behalf of myself and Dharma's Garden, we would be very grateful. Donations can be made online at www.dharmasgarden.com/bobbyalexander or by check. Please write on the memo line "Bobby's Senior Project" and make the check out to Dharma's Garden at 4081 Garnet Lane, Boulder, CO, 80304. If you have any questions, please contact me or Tim and Kerry.

Dharma's Garden is in a very unique location as a working farm within the city of Boulder. Being within close proximity to a dozen schools, there is immense potential for valuable educational experiences. In today's world, many humans young or old are not aware of the energy and process that goes into stocking their food on the shelves of the grocery: growing the ingredients, preparing, packaging, shipping, refrigeration. Generally, all of this is not sustainable, especially when importing products from across the world. Local food sourcing can greatly reduce your carbon footprint and it is magical how much better fresh organic produce tastes. Because this property is located in an urban environment, people can easily visit and get their hands dirty if they so choose. Having these experiences changed my perspective on food and deepened my connection to nature. I love to see people come to the farm and connect with one another and the land.

Dharma's Garden is a place where community thrives, even in the modern world (especially in Boulder) where everything is individualized and divided up. There is little space for community in our society and I feel this is quite tragic. Humans are social creatures, helping one another and sharing in a community can invoke people to thrive. Tim and Kerry along with many others wish Dharma's Garden to grow in the years to come and represent a place for people to learn, grow, and thrive through connecting with the earth and one another. My senior project not only serves my education and growth as a young person, it has the potential to provide food and inspiration to our community in the years ahead.