PUTTING DOWN ROOTS
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

After 77 years educating people about the importance of small communities to a healthy society, we made a bold move: we bought a farm. We are putting down roots on Agnisia. Now, for the first time, The Arthur Morgan Institute for Community Solutions has a chance to demonstrate what it means to develop local self-sufficiency and resilience; a place to showcase soil and ecosystem regeneration; a place to encourage local food production and spur re-localization of our economy; a place to regenerate our communities and our relationship with the land. But our dreams are much bigger than being a good neighbor—we want to be a model that others can visit and be inspired to replicate, while there is still time to get from our unsustainable present to a future where there is hope for our children.

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The Arthur Morgan Institute for Community Solutions seeks to educate people about ways to make their communities more resilient, vital, and capable of withstanding dramatic shifts due to climate and economic disruptions.

Photography: Danielle Eagleston, Amy Harper, Susan Jennings, Sage Pence
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OUR STORY

Agraria encompasses 123 acres of rolling farmland on the outskirts of Yellow Springs, Ohio. Bought at auction in the spring of 2017, the farm is being transformed into an educational and research center to explore and demonstrate the benefits of regenerative practices at multiple levels—from the environmental, economic, psychological and social, to their impact on human health and well-being. Soil regeneration is the root-bed of this work.

The purchase of Agraria was enthusiastically supported by the Yellow Springs community and individuals who are interested in the conservation of farmland and the restoration of Jacoby Creek, which runs through the property and is part of the watershed that supplies drinking water for the surrounding area.

Over the past year we have developed a plan for Agraria that supports our communities near and far, furthers the organization’s mission, and provides for long-term financial sustainability.

With the help of dozens of volunteers, we’ve begun the transformation of Agraria, with plantings, building renovations, and invasive clearings. We’ve also held multiple educational and festive events, and welcomed visitors from local schools, universities, non-profits, farms, and surrounding communities.

What’s next? Rebuilding our 100-year-old barn to better accommodate events and workshops; construction of an educational building; installation of bike and walking paths; and completion of landscaping plans.

WHY SOIL?

Damaged soils are at the root of many of the earth’s most pressing problems, including hunger, poor nutrition, climate change, refugee crises, and war. Soil and nutrient run-off contribute to water woes, leading to widespread algal blooms and dead zones in lakes, rivers, and water basins. Many researchers also link exponential growth in some chronic diseases to pesticide residues and soils that have been robbed of their nutrients. In 2015, the Year of the The Soil, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that if soil degradation continues at its present rate, there would be enough topsoil left on earth to farm for only 60 more years.

Yet increasing awareness about the promise of soil regeneration is kindling hope for climate scientists, ecologists, farmers, and citizens alike. Regenerative practices restore and enrich soil health, improve water quality, and build healthy ecosystems, above and below the ground. They increase biodiversity and pollinator habitat along with the ability to withstand drought and pests. They improve productivity and produce nutrient-rich food, resulting in healthier people and healthier communities. They also capture atmospheric carbon in the soil and are considered one of the best tools for countering, and even reversing climate change.

Soil regeneration joins our strategic focus areas into a practical, actionable, and replicable set of practices that can help regenerate resilient ecosystems and communities.
ROOTED IN REGENERATION

Regenerative agriculture research and practice is exploding across the planet as farmers explore new ways to build soil and repair ecosystem functions. Recent articles in the New York Times, podcasts from NPR and other media, and a spate of books about soil are raising awareness about how regeneration of our soils can spark regeneration of our local food systems and our personal and community health.

One of the biggest challenges to furthering the practice of regenerative land use is the lack of a network of demonstration sites that model "regional recipes for regenerative farming." Agraria fulfills a critical role in the development of that network, given our location in the nation's cornbelt.

Until recently, our acreage was conventionally farmed in a corn/soy rotation, crops that are grown on 190 million acres of farmland nationally. Our goal is to model the transition to a polly-diverse landscape that encompasses animals, trees, perennial plantings, native grasses, organically grown annual crops, and heritage grains. This includes demonstrating the regenerative potential of biodynamic soil amendments, water catchment areas, agroforestry, and biochar-enriched soils.

We started our land stewardship by cover cropping all of our fields in a mix of nine species and are now partnering with organic farmers to further the restoration of our farm fields.

We are also partnering with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) on the restoration of Jacoby Creek. Over the next few years, the TNC will remove invasives along Jacoby Creek and its tributaries, re-meander the channelized creek, restore wetlands, and replant the riparian zone with native species. Fifty-five acres of Agraria are included in the restoration plan. Eighty acres of Agraria will be covered by a permanent conservation easement.

"The Nature Conservancy in Ohio is very excited to be partnering with Community Solutions on the Agraria stream and wetland restoration project. This will help enhance and protect the water quality and wildlife habitat of Jacoby Creek, which is an important tributary to the Little Miami River, a national and state iconic river. It will also serve as a sustainable land use model for farmers and will be part of building a world where people and nature thrive."

David Schenk
Jacoby Restoration Project Lead
The Nature Conservancy

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ROOTED IN COLLABORATION

The spirit of community and collaboration gave birth to Agraria, and we carry it forward in the strong partnerships we are developing to advance the study and adoption of regenerative, life sustaining practices—not only in this region but throughout Ohio and the nation.

Our partnerships with area colleges and universities enable faculty and students to use Agraria as a field site for studying soil and water health and the impact of regenerative farming on ecosystem services, the environment, the local food system and economy, and human health. They also open up on-farm internship opportunities for students interested in regenerative and organic agricultural practices.

Our collaboration with The Nature Conservancy on the restoration of Jacoby Creek and surrounding wetlands creates fertile ground for research and education about the ecological and economic benefits of agroforestry, which has been called “the next step in sustainable and resilient agriculture.” This is the first time TNC has collaborated with a landowner on a project that combines restoration with agriculture, and this project will serve as a model for practical applications of agroforestry in this region.

Agraria also offers a host of opportunities as a living laboratory and educational resource for area K-12 schools. We served as a field site this year for local elementary and middle school students studying macro-invertebrates and soil health. The goal was “for each student to consider themselves a Soil Steward.” We are helping make the connection between healthy soil, healthy ecosystems, and healthy people, one learner at a time. We are also partnering with the Springfield (Ohio City) School District on a series of workshops and learning opportunities for citizen scientists of all ages.

U.S. Department of Agriculture funded Farm to School project and support the work of SOUP, an organization dedicated to increasing food security in Springfield.

If you help your soil, you will know that for the rest of your life, you just helped the next generation a little bit more. If you help your soil, you helped yourself a little more, too. A little goes a long way.

— 3rd grade student.

RESEARCH & EDUCATION PARTNERS
Antioch College
Central State University
Greene County Career Center
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Greene County
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Ohio State University
Ohio University
Rural Action
Soil Carbon Coalition
Springfield City School District
Springfield Urban Farm Folk (S.U.F.F.)
Trumbull Land Trust
The Nature Conservancy
United Plant Savers
University of Dayton
Wittenberg University
Walnut Creek Seeds
Xenia Community Schools
YSI/Axion
Yellow Springs Montessori School
Yellow Springs Schools
ROOTED IN OPPORTUNITY

Through opportunities for farmland rentals and business partnerships, Agraria is promoting a thriving local economy and a resilient regional food shed.

Affordable and secure land access has been cited as the leading challenge facing beginning farmers. Community Solutions is one of the few organizations in the nation addressing this issue by dedicating 45 acres to beginning farmers through long-term, affordable lease arrangements. This year we are renting land to four farmers who are committed to organic, regenerative agricultural practices and producing food for the regional community.

Agraria is also dedicating space for businesses that serve the community and nourish the land. Startups under development include an organic waste pick-up service for residents of Yellow Springs, compost and biochar production businesses, and a Montessori summer farm school.

We expect to fund a significant portion of our operations through our own businesses, including barn and facilities rentals. We’re exploring the development of an Agraria Apothecary, as well as a soil amendment and seed business.

We are part of a local conversation on social impact investing, and retrofitted our house through social impact funds. Other opportunities for investing include a small eco-village for staff, and a slow money fund to support our partner farmers and businesses.

“We know that if we provide students the opportunities to be stewards of the earth now, they will take their experiences into adulthood and be responsible, educated advocates for the invaluable resources of our earth.”

Edward and Melanie Ricart
Children’s Montessori Cooperative

“Agraria has given me the opportunity to operate my own farm by providing access to affordable local farmland. Now, I’m finally able to move from working for other farmers to developing my own startup and hiring more women, young people, and beginning farmers.”

Mandy Knaul, Wiggle Run Farm
ROOTED IN COMMUNITY
Community is more than a geographical location on the map. It exists in our connection to one another, in what we author Arthur Morgan called the “spirit of fellowship” among people who “plan and work together for common ends.”

Founded in 1940 by engineer and educator Arthur E. Morgan, the 350-acre campus of the Miami Conservancy District and first chief of the Tennessee Valley Authority, Community Solutions has stayed true to Morgan’s vision of community as “the seedbed of society,” actively working to build people’s capacity to enact their own place-based solutions to the challenges of the modern world.

Its founding Community Solutions has hosted over 60 conferences, produced short and feature-length films, published magazines and books, and hosted educational events for national audiences. Our 2016 strategic plan laid out focus areas of resilient communities, regenerative land use, energy democracy, and being the change.

The purchase of Agraria has enabled us to deepen and expand our community reach and to root our education in hands-on, place-based solutions.

SUPPORTERS OF AGRARIA

FROM THE LOCAL
• Expanding project-based learning opportunities for area schools
• Offering educational workshops for people of all ages
• Sponsoring community events

TO THE REGIONAL
• Strengthening the regional food system and economy
• Increasing access to fresh, healthy food
• Providing a demonstration site for regenerative land use practices
• Increasing regional self-sufficiency and resilience

TO THE NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL
• Serving as a model for regenerative practices
• Hosting conferences & skill-sharing classes
• Contributing to national databases on soil regeneration

TO THE BIOTIC COMMUNITY
• Repairing and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem functions
• Providing a hopeful model of how we might collectively rebuild our planetary home

• Planting a sense of belonging among those that share the land

Lisa Noel
Aliza Abella
Will Alexander
Catherine & Donovan
Paul Antez
Brian Appleby
Jane Barker
Bob Baldwin
Peter Bane
Carrie Bead
Paul Beck
Paulette Bentz
David & Sally Bernstein
Ruth & Tony Best
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Oliviero Carevich
Jeannine and Max
Laura Cottrell
Roberta Dalio
Stefano Danton
Massimo D’Aloja
Dyson Foundation
Allison Dobbins
Gerritso Demoro
Colby Donahue
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Elyce Diamond
Mary Jane Donovan
Dianne & Ken Dunn
Roy & Helen Eidsen
Karen Eise
Clay Exon
Lerry & Socia Friedman
Lenny & Barbara Field
Terence Fifield
Colleen Ford
Cary & Ginger Freeman
Henry Freeman
Veronica Frost
Sharon Gall
Eugene Goldberg-Hamond
M. Gentle
John & Barbara Goff
Larry Gerber
John Gibbons
Bettie & Jordan Gross
The Greater Dayton
Conservation Fund
Ted and Sharon Stueber
Ludwig Greiner
& Judy Krupinski
Kumul Island
H.H. Wood Foundation
Audrey Hallabeck
Joseph Handley
Rowe Hanway
Amy Harper
Eric Hausner
Vivian Harney
Virginia Harvey
Lena Hecht
Don Hollebone
Robert Hollohan
& Catherine Donohue
Andy & Beth Helmann
Julia & Tim Hoeflin
Morgan Holland
Robin & Todd Hiser
Joan Horn
Howard Horsman
Eric L. & Grazia Marshall
Blake House
Kenneth Hubbell
Margaret Herrman
Bob & Mary Illick
Dr. Carl Hyde
Wee & John Jacobson
Ella Jacobs & Charles Nickle
Susan Jennings
Eric Andre and Patrick Hart
Joyce & Gilbert Johnson
David Jarm
Bob & Beverly Jacob
Helia Kael
Sam Kellett
Lori Kuhn
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Jeremy King
Sarah King
Lauderdale DeTar & Todd Drake
Shelby Kistler
Kim Lindblom
Eric Ling
Tom Liberato
Claudine Lewis
Tim Lawrence
Roxi Lee
Ned & Ross Lewisberg
Noah and Evelyn Leop
Kathleen Lemmerz
Nancy Longworth
& George Cooke
Will Low
Christy Lydd
Marion MacGregor
Nidle Morgan & Andy Carroll
Elise MacLeod
Tom Mulry & Suzanne Hasland
Tim Martin
Cory Mazza
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Jan Mueschak
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Richard Posner
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Schwarz Family Foundation
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Kane Smith
Dinah Stoebner
Perry Stewart
Austen Stewart
Anne Studer
Garth Swede
Joan Symonds
The Nature Conservancy
Honoree Fund
Thaddeus Tang
Jared & Deby Terry
Jerry Terry
Bert Trצילום
Curtis Tiddens
Joseph & Pamela Tietze
Kathy & Rob Upton
Village of Yellow Springs
Elizabeth Walker
Kat Winter
Gwen Watts
Barbara Yelen
Carnell Wexler
Robert Webster
Jody Whitehouse
Davis & Helen Wooten
Foundation of the Miami Valley
Matthias Wexler
John Wharton
Samantha Wile
Kathleen Wills
Brenda Wilkins
Harriet A. & Kevin Woods
Curtis Windisch
Clair Wintz
Ted and Nancy Winterberg
Karen Witek
James & Jackie Witsell
Henry Lee Wood
Hannahโหลด
Wayne & Linda Wolfe
Thomas Yoder
Timmy Yoder
Yellow Springs Credit Union
Yellow Springs Community Foundation
Yellow Springs Opera Center
Yellow Springs Friends Meeting
Marty Zin
10
11
WAYS TO GIVE

From the moment we learned about the farm auction, our community has supported us financially, strategically, and with gifts of time and talent. The stream of gifts has included tangible items like a riding mower, prairie grass seeds, funding for an orchard, mulch, trees, artwork, furniture, and plantings of all sizes. Volunteers from the community helped us paint our farmhouse, clear honeysuckle, and document our progress. Agraria is truly being fostered by a broad community of supporters. Over 20 volunteers shared 1200+ hours of their time with us during our first 15 months.

We are launching our campaign. Putting Down Roots, to continue to build equity and opportunity for our organization and community. Your gifts of any size will help Agraria flourish, expand our educational reach, and ground us in long-term financial sustainability.

Make an Online Gift
www.communitysolution.org
Online giving is fast and secure.

Make a Campaign Pledge for up to 5 years
Divide your pledge into easy installments.

Donate Stock
Stock donations can have multiple tax benefits.

Naming Opportunities
Honor your friends and family by donating in their name. From barn boards to benches to programs to buildings, we have naming opportunities for every budget.

For more information on the Putting Down Roots Campaign, contact:

Susan Jennings, Executive Director
Box 243
Yellow Springs, OH 45387
937-767-2161 or 767-2826
sjennings@communitysolution.org

CAMPAIGN PRIORITIES

BARN UPGRADES $500k
Agraria’s 7000 sq. ft. barn barn is an oaken beauty. At 100 years old, the barn is in need of loving care, including the repair of siding and doors, and the replacement of beams and flooring. Composting toilets, a composting space, ceiling fans and lighting will enhance our ability to host educational and festive events.

BIKE AND WALKING PATH $500k
Installing a bike and walking path between our barn and the Yellow Springs High School will open up Agraria to students and community members of all ages. The path will also connect through the village to the Little Miami Scenic Trail—a 78 mile trail between Cincinnati and Springfield.

CENTER FOR EDUCATION $1 million
Our vision for the center includes classrooms, a teaching kitchen, and a gathering space for conference guests. A $50,000 grant from The Dayton Foundation is funding preliminary building design as well as a master plan for the campus between the center, the barn, and our offices.

ANNUAL FUND
The purchase of Agraria doubled our organizational expenses overnight. Contributing to our annual fund will help Agraria thrive while our educational and business endeavors get off the ground.

For more information, contact:
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