

Bits and Pieces From the Wwoof Organiser's Desk

Hi from Andrew and Jane. We hope you're all surviving the winter, especially those down south. You're doing a great job in international relations by being part of the Wwoof network. We have had some wonderful Wwoofers stay with us, singles, couples and families, from Switzerland to Chile. Each exchange seems to teach us something new!

While having a meal with a host recently Andrew was interested to talk with his two Wwoofers about their experiences. They were passionate about their stay with their host, not because of swimming pools and Sky TV, but because the work they did each day had a direct link with the food they would eat that night. Even after a hard day collecting horse manure for the worm farm, they were excited to see that it was like a 'turbo compost' which quickly produced leachate and vermicast to fertilise the fruit trees and veges. They said they could see "the whole process from start to finish" and this was very rewarding for them.

No-Show Wwoofers

The following email was sent in by a host recently:

"It happens more and more often - Wwoofers having made a booking and you are counting on their arrival are not showing up - don't call back by phone to explain why they are not coming - is this other hosts experience too? Then it would be time to enforce some kind of reliable Wwoofers codex - in as much as Wwoofers should understand, that if they are not showing up without notice should have to be reported back to some E-mail network (for example) or if anybody has some better idea - but it's getting kind of frustrating - I would estimate now just about half the Wwoofers that have agreed to a date and all the other details of a stay - are simply never to be heard of again - and that I think is not good enough - what do you think?"

We think fair enough! Please Wwoofers, don't make it necessary to create more central controls and bureaucracy. If you can't make it, a quick phone call to the host can save a lot of time and worry. Hosts don't know if you have had an accident or got lost tramping. Also hosts get in extra food and plan their activities around someone coming. If hosts are concerned about Wwoofers not showing up they can make a note of the Wwoofers name and member no. when they phone and contact us if there are any problems.

Why Wwoofers Join

When people apply to become Wwoofers they answer a 'Reasons for Joining?' question. Brianna recently provided the following spirited explanation:

"I've always wanted to be more self-sufficient, and live simply, but I've never known how to go about learning all the necessary skills to do so. Being as I'm a hands on learner, Wwoof sounds like exactly what I've been dreaming about. I love the feeling of deserving my meals by putting in a hard days work, especially when it's something as beneficial as learning how to live a natural lifestyle. I hope I'm not making this too long, but I'm just so tired of the fast paced-ness of this world. I always have been, I know I can't escape it completely, but I can certainly choose where to put value, and what to surround myself with, and that won't be the mall or McDonalds. I don't want my future children to know what a snickers bar tastes like, I want them to be used to my homemade pies and jams, better yet, their own homemade pies and jams. I want them to make their own dolls, not be overwhelmed with 200 plastic happy meal toys. I want them to have more fun making forts in the woods and learning about how a spider makes it's web, than

watching television. People these days have too much stuff, and they have their values mixed up. Back in the olden days neighbors relied on each other, there was more community than there is now, and I think a lot of it had to do with their lifestyle. I want to be a blessing to my host family, and come back home better equipped to show my own family that it IS possible to live out my childhood dream that they assumed I'd grow out of". Great aspirations, good luck Brianna!

Host's Suggestions

Two hosts have recently made similar suggestions - one suggested that an "eduwwoof" identification be added to hosts' listings so that students of organic farming can find them more easily, the other host suggested that commercial farms be listed separately from non-commercial farms so that Wwoofers interested in learning on a commercial farm can locate these hosts more easily. Maybe one way to address these suggestions without having to re-organise the Wwoof book is for hosts to have clearly stated keywords such as "COMMERCIAL", "EDUWWOOF" or "DAIRY" etc at the start of their listing details.

Name Change?

During the 1st International Wwoof Conference in England in Oct 2000 there was discussion of changing the name of Willing Workers On Organic Farms to World Wide Opportunities On Organic Farms. The new name was seen to better capture what Wwoof is all about and was also seen as a small step toward avoiding conflict with immigration rules with regard to working. Wwoof UK have already changed to the new name. Is this a change that Wwoof NZ should also make?

As always, we look forward to hearing from hosts and Wwoofers about their experiences so please keep in touch. Remember there is a forum and host hot list on the web site that you can contribute to anytime. While Wwoof often requires a lot of input on your part, the rewards and memories can last a lifetime. All the best for the forthcoming spring.

Andrew and Jane.

Wwoof Grants Proposed

The proposal is for a grants scheme to allow hosts to undertake an environmental development project, either on their own property or in their local area. Your suggestions on how this could work would be appreciated.

Some initial suggestions are that the projects provide benefits to the environment within a specified area of land. Examples could include native plant regeneration, fencing off a watercourse, establishing a wetland area, establishing a pest free/proof area of native bush etc. Each year 4 grants will be made of around \$500 each. Any host could apply for a grant with applications including a short explanation and a simple plan/map showing what they aim to achieve.

It is hoped that the grants will, along with Wwoofers' help, provide an opportunity to complete worthwhile projects that may otherwise not have come about. Further info, including any hosts' suggestions, in the next newsletter (this spring).

It is with regret that we have lost hosts Barry and Adrienne Edens who were sadly killed in a car accident earlier this year. Barry and Adrienne lived on the South Island's West Coast where Adrienne was a limestone sculptress.

Farm Sitting Wanted

We are an English couple, 40's, who are interested in the opportunity of farm/house sitting (short or long term), whilst Wwoofing NZ Oct.2002-Mar.2003. Both are experienced Wwoofers with many practical skills, including : market gardening (organic), looking after poultry and pet animals, house sitting, tree and forestry work and some experience of working with stock. References from both the UK and NZ available.

Please contact Julia Chowanec/Pete Mannion via email - petemannion@hotmail.com - or at Tamarisk Farm, West Bexington, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 9DF (0044 1308 897784)

Horticulture Work Wanted

Qualified, enthusiastic gardener, experienced (9 years) in all aspects of horticulture including landscaping, commercial growing, tree surgery. Presently based in UK, applying for residency, seeks full-time, paid position. Please email douglas.strang@virgin.net

Sustainable Farming Stories Wanted

Harry Hadaway would like to hear from any NZ farmers who could share their real life examples of successful, environmentally responsible farming systems on the Greenpeace/Oxfam website www.farmingsolutions.org. They are looking for stories of about 800 words about who the farmer is, when they started farming in this way and what difficulties and successes they have had. There are over 60 'success stories' so far but none from this part of the world yet.

Radio Documentary on NZ Wwoof

I am a British freelance radio journalist wishing to make a radio documentary programme about the experience of being a WWOOFER in New Zealand for four weeks in the coming Spring. I am travelling to NZ in September for 3 months and have registered with WWOOF. If there are any WWOOF hosts that might be interested in my project, or hosts with many Wwoofers staying at one time I would be grateful to hear from them.

From a broadcasting point of view it would be great to track the feelings of a group of Wwoofers over a period of weeks. The edited documentary would be a four-part series of 30min programmes. I'm sure it would be of interest to my contacts in BBC World Service programming, and perhaps radio services in New Zealand will be interested in airing the project.

What's sure is that the project will alert a wide range of people to the activities of WWOOF. I've got to add I'm a keen environmentalist myself and I reckon organic farming is a subject which deserves more discussion on the world's airwaves.

Please contact me by email or post if you are interested in being involved.

Ben Lowings.

(former BBC broadcast journalist)

Email: ben@lowings.com

Great Halls, Aylesbeare, Exeter, Devon EX5 2BY.

Farm Safety

A host recently asked where they stood if a Wwoofer had an accident on their farm. The Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 requires you to take all practicable steps to:

- Provide and maintain a safe working environment;
- Include employees in the development of health and safety procedures;
- Identify hazards and apply practical controls to significant hazards (see also section 1.14, Hazard identification and control);
- Provide and maintain facilities for the safety and health of employees;
- Ensure that any machinery or plant that employees use is safe;
- Ensure that any processes that employees are involved in will not adversely affect their health or safety;
- Provide employees with information on workplace hazards, and ensure that employees are trained and supervised;
- Record and investigate workplace accidents and illness, and report any that constitute serious harm; and
- Develop procedures to deal with emergencies which may arise at work.

For the average Wwoof farm this may mean discussing with Wwoofers where not to go and what not to touch and identifying any potential hazards. Activities involving handling animals, construction, electricity, tree work, heavy lifting and heights all need special consideration. Do not allow Wwoofers to use machinery such as chainsaws, tractors, 4 wheel motorbikes etc. They may be willing but they often don't have the experience or expertise to use them safely. While ACC will cover travelers in the event of an accident (and consequently can not sue for damages, as long as you can demonstrate reasonable care was taken), the above Act requires farmers to manage their farms in a safe manner.

GE Free Register

Show your neighbours that you wish your property to remain free of GMOs. Register your property at www.gefreeregister.co.nz.

Order a Gate Sign to show your support!

"Cultivating 2002 Organic Communities" IFOAM World Congress

This is happening on 21-28 August in Canada with the theme focusing on communities, from micro-organism communities in the soil through to human communities living in an urban environment. John van den Huevel from Wwoof Canada will be representing Wwoof New Zealand at a stall he will be running.

Vacation Verde

www.wwoof.co.nz/vv

This is growing slowly. We feel that as tourism is growing in New Zealand so too will the demand for healthy organic accommodation and excursions by holiday makers. At present Vacation Verde is only viewable on the internet but in future there may be a printed copy.

If you have an organic farmstay, bed and breakfast or home-stay, or if you operate an organic café, restaurant, vineyard, olive grove or other organic activity for tourists to do during their holiday, consider placing a listing on www.wwoof.co.nz/vv or post something into us here at Wwoof and we will place your listing for you. Send photos so that guests can see what you are offering!