

Description for Long-term Volunteer

Plowshare Farm Lifesharing Community is an anthroposophically oriented, farm centered community. Our mission is to serve people in need of special care, to share the archetypes of traditional farm life, both with adults and children, and to positively affect the sustainability of our planet. Our community facilities include four houses, a community building, an apartment, a cabin, some out-buildings, a barn, gardens, a pond and 200 acres of fields, forest, and marshes. Our environment is quite different from an institution. As all of us live here we are more like traditional extended-family homes and a shared farm, all of which includes people with special needs. Residents (adults with developmental disabilities), co-workers, and volunteers work side by side in completing projects, with the individual needs of each person being considered in the planning of the day. Our year is full with a variety of activities. During the summer we become a summer camp for the developmentally disabled, with all the accompanying activities, some weeks in October and May we host school classes for farm experience trips. We are rural. The closest real town is 6 miles away; the closest city, Keene, is 30 minutes away, yet Boston, a major metropolitan hub, is about 1 ½ hours away. The seashore, a very busy and lively place during the summer, is a bit more than an hour away.

For most of the year we are about 16 residents, 6-8 volunteers, and about 7-8 co-workers sharing our lives in community. Additionally we have 2-3 coworkers and 3-4 people with special needs who join us during the day program. During six weeks of the summer we offer a summer camp, at which time we add about 5-6'campers' and 1-2 short term volunteers. The summer camp is both a fun and challenging time with much hard work and many recreational activities.

Many of our residents need help with daily bodily care (teeth-brushing, bathing, etc.). Some of the residents have seizure disorders. All of our residents are able to walk and to attend to most of their own physical care. We offer a volunteer opportunity for people who seek orientation and experience in the following areas:

- ❑ General care and guidance of persons with mental retardation, autism, seizure disorder (epilepsy), obsessive-compulsive disorder, phobias and other special needs.
- ❑ Aspects of organic farming and gardening
- ❑ Building and general carpentry skills
- ❑ Therapeutic vocational activities that include cooking, woodworking, household care, building projects, crafts, baking and farm work.
- ❑ Therapies, which at various times can include eurythmy, painting, music, color therapy and massage.
- ❑ Intermittent work with children
- ❑ Participation in local community activities such as theater, concerts, shopping, excursions, sports, Special Olympics, festivals and other varied social events.
- ❑ Sharing a social life with people with various challenges.

As a volunteer, we encourage your self-initiative in the following responsibilities:

- ❑ Help in some of the various workshops: farming, building, gardening, baking etc.*
- ❑ Help with meal preparation and other household tasks.*
- ❑ Participation in household and community life such as daily meals, social interaction and leisure activities in the house or outdoors.*
- ❑ Help with fulfilling hygienic needs of the residents.*

At least a couple hours of each day are filled with activities like cleaning-up after meals and housekeeping. Much of this work is activities, which simply must be done, like laundry, snow-shoveling, and feeding the animals. You do not need to know how to do these things in advance, we will show you, but it is important that you realize that these activities are significant to us and take a good portion of the day.

A unique aspect of our work is that most of our 'workshops' are actually projects that need to be done in which we include our less able friends in the activity. Through this method of working the person with special needs does not become the product of the work, but an active participant in the community and the work which needs to be accomplished. For the volunteer, this method of working allows room for learning new skills, for becoming involved in projects, and for independent initiative.

We have found our most successful, and happiest, volunteers to be people who carry strong self-initiative and enjoy sharing themselves with others. Who, after an orientation period, can see what needs to be done or what might be enjoyable to another, and do it out of personal initiative and motivation. We like to be light-hearted and cheerful, even as we are accomplishing tasks, and we enjoy this quality in others. The day is not all work. The residents enjoy going for walks, Special Olympics preparation, canoeing, swimming, and going to local events.

Some free time is to be had every day. Behind our farm are 2,000 acres of Federal Reserve land, which is wonderful for hikes, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. Canoeing, and swimming are activities which can be done very near by. Locally, in our small surrounding towns, are restaurants, movie theaters, musical and dramatic events, bowling, pool, and other activities. Many of our volunteers have bought cars when they arrived in the States because not much is in walking distance. Insurance regulations do not allow personal use of Plowshare Farm's vehicles. There are several lifesharing communities within a 20-minute radius of us. Each of these places also have volunteers and the volunteers from all of our places usually form good friendships and explore the region together.

Plowshare Farm co-workers will provide you with support and direction in the areas described above. You will be able to discuss, on a regular basis, any questions you may have concerning the needs of any of our residents. In addition, you will meet with a co-worker to talk about any questions you may have about your participation in daily life at Plowshare Farm. Additionally you will participate in a weekly community meeting for looking at the weekly schedule, planning of activities and general sharing.

The first week at Plowshare Farm is an orientation week in which all volunteers live together, sharing rooms in one house. After that week you will be provided with a private room and meals while you are a volunteer with us (Short term volunteers who come just for Summer Camp do not receive pocket money and should expect to share a room with another volunteer). Each month you will receive pocket money. Plowshare Farm is closed, or at reduced numbers, for 6 weeks per year: 3 weeks in August, 2 weeks at Christmas, and 1 week in the spring. If your service begins in the spring you will have 2 weeks off in August and 1 week at Christmas. If your service begins in the fall, you will have 2 weeks off at Christmas and 1 week in April.

Plowshare Farm does not allow alcohol or drugs on the premises, smoking is only permitted in designated areas, which are all outside (even in the winter). Volunteers caught consuming alcohol on the premises will be asked to leave Plowshare Farm. Generally our people sleep early so the houses are quite by about 9pm, however in one home there is a place where night time noise (conversation, TV, music etc. is less disturbing). A weekly schedule of your participation will be worked out once you arrive. Our day begins at 7AM and, unless there is a special event, our homes are settled in for the night by about 8:30 PM. Morning, lunch and evening time is the 'lifesharing' aspect of our day when we are involved in our household and its members; sometimes with tasks and sometimes not. Our 'workshops' are from 9-12am and 2-5pm. We ask that during the day you take part in the home life and/or vocational therapeutic workshops. We also request that you be present during the night hours most nights, unless otherwise arranged. You will have two full days off per week (except 6 weeks each year during summer camp in which there is often just one day off per week) as well as an additional evening or workshop.

Volunteering at Plowshare Farm is not an easy task. We have many community members who are able to perform portions of tasks. What we are looking for in volunteers are wide awake people who see tasks through to completion, have pride in work and great compassion for other human beings. Also, although we welcome people of all beliefs, we are a community that is based on an understanding that there is more to each human being than the physical – there is also a spiritual aspect and the spiritual aspect of another is not ill or less valuable than our own. This attitude brings a great depth and respect into our relationships with each other - even the most developmentally disabled is highly valued. It is important that volunteers share in this respect for the other.

As a farm, we grow much of our food. It is our intention to eat as naturally, locally and in rhythm with the seasons as possible. We have found that volunteers who prefer a more natural diet are most comfortable here.

*We greatly appreciate your interest in volunteering at **Plowshare Farm**. Please feel free to contact us at any time with questions you may have.*

All the best in your search for the right volunteer position.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Dorn Bay

Plowshare Farm Director

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I asked a volunteer to read over this description. He added the following:

In the end it's always up to you how much you are going to enjoy this year here on Plowshare Farm because

- *you can get your own projects in different fields you are interested in and work independent with some residents on these projects*
- *the workshops have a way bigger variety than at many other places and change from week to week*
- *you can go on outings and see thing you are especially interested in yourself (sportgames, movies etc.) if you take residents with you who are interested in the same things.*
- *you really work on things that are improving our place (like building cabinets for a bootroom, so that every residents has his own spot to store his gloves etc.) and residents are not sitting around and are bored because they are at your side, participating as they are able. So in the end of the year you can see how many useful things you have accomplished*
- *In your weekly schedule, people can be flexible and can try to make things work for you, if you are flexible and help out when its needed, and you are able.*
- *you get to know other places with German volunteers in the area or also further away, for example when you go to New York to pick up residents from Camphill Copake and Triform to spend their summer vacation at Plowshare Farm*
- *you can take campers (residents on vacation at our place during the summer) on bigger daytrips to the White Mountains or the ocean.*

Also there is a lot to do in this part of New England. During the summer you can go to the ocean (1 ½ hours away), during the winter you can go skiing (closest ski area 20 min. away), you can always go hiking in the wonderful New Hampshire nature and if you are lucky you might see a moose or a bear, you can go clothes shopping in the especially cheap tax-free shops in New Hampshire, sightseeing in Boston, New York City and Providence and camping in the Acadia National Park in Maine or in Cape Cod, Mass.