



## 2019 Working Farmscape Program Pilot

Report by Nick Armentrout, Co-Founder & General Manager

And Matt Day, Military & Veterans Liaison

Carlisle Academy is a dynamic, integrated equestrian enterprise offering nationally recognized therapeutic, sport, and education programs for people of all abilities.

In 2019 The Academy piloted *The Working Farmscape Program*: a 12-week experiential education course for small working groups to contribute to the everyday rhythms, seasonal planning, and management of a New England crop and livestock farm. Different from Carlisle's core programming, the course objective was to offer an opportunity for people to be involved in the purposeful, practical work of the farm itself, and to work in community - shoulder-to-shoulder - stewarding the land and animals while learning animal husbandry and holistic agricultural practices.

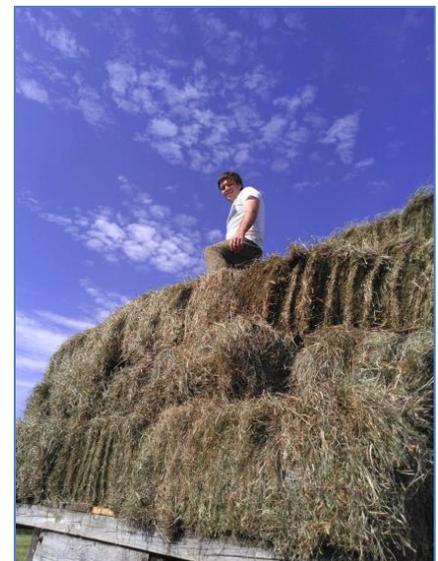


The Working Farmscape Program is predicated on organic and regenerative farming methodologies. Use of mixed tractor and draft horse power, targeted grazing and “worst-first” silviculture protocols provided working examples of viable and accountable, small-scale agricultural modalities.

Maine has a short growing season in which a great deal of work must be completed to store food, fiber and fuel for the winter. The work of the farm formed the basis of learning. There is *always* something to be done. Daily the horses, sheep, and chickens need to be tended. Feeding, grooming, trimming hooves and doctoring as necessary before moving them to pastures was all part of the process. An understanding of herd dynamics and body language made the job easier. Keeping livestock means that hay, grain and bedding production and storage for the winter months is critical. Manure was collected from barns and paddocks for composting and fertilization. Weather, ecological conditions and soil science informed our planning and field activities.

The farmstead includes a small woodlot in the southwest corner of the “Massabesic Forest South” identified as an area of statewide ecological significance. Further, this woodlot is bisected by Carlisle Brook – the Academy's namesake which forms half the adjacent Kennebunk River. This piece of woods acted as our project area for identifying tree species and health, describing management objectives and tracking wildlife. Work maintaining trails and creating access improvements would facilitate extraction of firewood and saw logs later in the season. In this case the work was guided by an ongoing forest stand improvement project the farm is establishing with support from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, a program of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The farm Suffolk Punch draft horse, “Stone,” was our partner for moving lumber from the forest floor. Training for ground driving started in the arenas and culminated with twitching tree length firewood along newly improved woods trails. Construction of a traditional 4'x8' wooden log scoot (a course-long rainy day project),



using logs extracted from the woodlot and sawn at a neighbor's mill, made removal of larger loads possible.



Two military veterans between the ages of 25-30 years old participated in the program pilot: a Marine and an Air Force Veteran. Matt Day, a veteran of both the Air Force and Navy, and the Carlisle Academy Military and Veterans Liaison, acted as “co-captain” together with Nick Armentrout, Carlisle co-founder and farm owner.

Focused work completed during the course of this program included: stable and nutrient management, animal husbandry, hoof care, herd/flock dynamics, soil health, rotational grazing, forage production, equipment maintenance, introduction to small grains and planting, tree species, trail maintenance and woodlot management, light carpentry and joinery, equine handling/grooming, ground-driving and home-scale firewood production.

The lasting impact of this program is not just education and vocational training, but at the heart it is also therapeutic and life-enhancing. Connecting as a dedicated team around a common purpose with work itself as its own reward, one cannot help but to come away renewed and fulfilled.

*“The Farmscape program has been without a doubt a positive and powerful learning experience. Between working in the fields, the woods, with the horses and learning new trades; not many Veteran programs out there are this rewarding and give you a great sense of accomplishment.”* Brandon T., 2019 WFS Program Participant



The 2019 Carlisle Academy *Working Farmscape Program* team with their log scot.

*This program was made possible because of generous scholarship funding provided by the Carlisle Charitable Foundation as well as individual donors and corporate sponsors interested in supporting Veteran engagement with agriculture and nature for education, health and resiliency.*

[www.carlisleacademymaine.com](http://www.carlisleacademymaine.com)

65 Drown Lane • Lyman, Maine 04002 • Phone: 207-985-0374 • Fax: 207-985-7937 • [info@carlisleacademymaine.com](mailto:info@carlisleacademymaine.com)