



TROY R. BENNETT | BDN

Falmouth High School English teacher Mark Melnicove (right) works with seniors Sam Skop (left) and Graham Hauptman on a campus mulch pile on Tuesday during an elective Food, Culture and Literature class.

## Locavore lessons

### Falmouth High School students get hands-on food, farming education

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE  
BDN STAFF

Reading, writing, arithmetic and ... weeding? During the last period of the day, as some students eagerly await the final bell, members of Mark Melnicove's humanities class at Falmouth High School were outside with their hands and wheelbarrows full.

"I didn't know you could compost leaves," said one senior after working for an hour in the school orchard, composting, mulching and putting garlic to bed.

Though, "weeding is a hassle," another admitted, the English class relished the opportunity to step away from desks and dig in the dirt.

Armed with clippers, loppers and shovels, Melnicove's Food, Culture and Literature students

are doing more than pruning forsythia bushes and wintering crops with hay. By working in their school's orchard, where apples, Concord grapes, blueberries and raspberries grow, they are helping their fellow classmates eat healthy and giving their digital tools a break. They are able to connect with the earth while enabling the school, which receives their fresh bounty in the cafeteria, to become more self-sustaining. In the process, these 17 year olds are learning new ideals.

"I am not wasting as much food," said senior Charlie Woolsey, who like most students in this class is reaping what he sows.

Schools across Maine and the country are allowing students to drop their backpacks, step away from their desks to plant seeds, transfer crops and understand the inner workings of science, ecology, math, the econo-



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Falmouth High School senior Casey Anderson covers a campus garlic bed with hay on Tuesday during an elective Food, Culture and Literature class.

my and even literature through farming.

A national program run by the USDA, Farm to School is flourishing. It encourages schools to buy local or start their own farms. The benefits are many. According to a recent USDA census, 75 percent of participating schools that responded report an uptick in school lunch programs. They spend less because they are buying local, receive greater support from parents and the community, and cut food waste because local food is tastier and fresher.

"It's a learning laboratory," said Falmouth Superintendent of Schools Geoff Bruno, who added that he is proud that each school in town has its own garden plot. In November, the district breaks ground on a green-

house so hands-on education can thrive all year.

"It's an authentic way to learn ... [and] connects to their curriculum, certainly in STEM education," said Bruno. "Students are interested in going green. It's fascinating work."

In Maine, farm to school is more of a philosophy than a mandate.

"It's very grassroots and not well funded in Maine," said Renee Page, assistant director of Healthy Communities of the Capital Area, who coordinates the state's farm to school network.

The main pillars in farm to school participation include: school meals sourced locally; agriculturally-based education in the classroom; campus gar-

*See School, Page C2*

## Juice bar sources from local farms

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE  
BDN STAFF

PORTLAND — Where is that kale in your green smoothie from? The carrots in your just-pressed juice? Chances are the ingredients were trucked in from here, there and everywhere.

A handful of entrepreneurs are seeking to clear up such confusion when Farm Truck Juice pulls into town. Set to open Nov. 10 in Portland's West End, the worker-owned cooperative juicery puts a new spin on the popular health-forward concept of smoothies on demand.



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A worker-owned juice cooperative plans to open Nov. 10 in Portland's West End. Farm Truck Juice will tap up to 30 Maine farms for its healthy concoctions.

Focused on farm-direct purchases, founder Walter Loeman says the stand will source from 30 Maine farms in season. Organic apples, blueberries, kale and carrots grown from Palermo to Dresden to Camden will be blended with more exotic fruit such as kiwi and roots like ginger. The oranges in his sunny bunny concoction will hail from down south. "We will have six or seven proprietary drinks," said Loeman, who is no stranger to the Portland food scene.

Loeman, one of six owners/employees at Farm Truck Juice, opened a bakery in Portland in the '80s and later founded Walter's Cafe. He sold the fine dining establishment on Union Street years ago and now cooks at Union restaurant at the Press Hotel.

His partners in the business include a full-time forager, his son Joe Loeman, and former owner of the Saco Drive-in Ry Russell. The concept of a juice cooperative is similar to a buying club, where retailers such as the Portland and Belfast co-ops pool resources to buy in bulk.

The impact that Farm Truck Juice, located in a new commercial and residential building on Brackett Street, anchored by Rosemont Market, will have on the local food economy could be significant.

*See Juice, Page C2*

Rob Cushman and Jake Hearst of Blue Hill Itinerant Slaughter begin the work of cleaning a pig after killing it.



COURTESY OF ANDREW GAGNE

## Mobile slaughterhouse rolling to Maine farmers

BY ABIGAIL CURTIS  
BDN STAFF

BROOKSVILLE — Rob Cushman believes there is a better way to kill farm animals than to load them in a truck and drive the anxious pigs, steers, goats and sheep to the nearest slaughterhouse, which in Maine can often be hours away.

That's why he and Jake Hearst, both of Brooksville, have decided to turn their shared belief into a business. Blue Hill Itinerant Slaughter — known by many in the Blue Hill Peninsula as "A

Kinder Kill" — is a mobile slaughterhouse that travels around the area to dispatch animals on the farms where they have been raised. While there are many such facilities in Europe and some in other parts of the country, they have not yet caught on in Maine. That is a shame, Cushman said.

"Animals are much more afraid of being separated from the herd than they are of guns and knives," Cushman said. "I think that done well, it is a very fulfilling practice. I think we need to get a lot closer to death in our culture. For me,

*See Slaughter, Page C2*



## "Two Crusted" Apple Pie Contest

Sunday, November 15th

Maine Harvest Festival  
Celebrating Farm Fresh

Inviting entries from: Maine Culinary Students,  
Maine Home Cooks, Maine State Fair Pie Contest Finalists  
and Maine Commercial entries

For entry, judging and prize details, please visit us online at [www.maineharvestfestival.com/events](http://www.maineharvestfestival.com/events) or contact Chef, Cathy Speronis, Maine Harvest Festival Pie Chairperson, 207-570-4423 or at [cookstotasty@gmail.com](mailto:cookstotasty@gmail.com)

