



Jill Ocone

The farm museum barn and barrel train.

barn, donated by John and Jill Shibles; a farm museum barn, donated by Friends of the Spring Lake Five; the picnic pavilion, donated by Robert and Lorraine McGirr of Clayton & McGirr Funeral Home; and an indoor animal barn, donated by Barbara and Donald Clayton.

Supporting Special Needs Populations and At-Risk Teens

With New Jersey rated as having one of the largest special-needs populations in the nation, Allaire Community Farm tends to that growing need at the Jersey Shore by providing a place filled with opportunities. “One of our program participants became part of our farm family full-time after aging out of his school program at twenty-one-years-old,” Burney said.

The Farm also works with mental health agencies in Monmouth County to provide a place where at-risk teens suffering from anxiety and depression can volunteer their time and, in turn, improve their confidence and self-esteem. Burney shared the story of Sarah, a fourteen-year-old feeder volunteer who first met the resident cow, Lola Grace, when she was eleven years

old. “When Sarah is here, Lola Grace works her magic, and the farm heals her. That’s the beauty of this place,” Burney said. “We only provide the venue and the environment, and the healing—it just happens.”

Pivoting During the Pandemic

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a major loss in donations and revenue that fund

the farm’s operations, including the cancellation of the annual Hoedown fundraiser and their temporary closure due to shut-down orders. “The whole key to being successful as a non-profit, especially during a pandemic, is to be flexible and pivot as needed,” Burney said. Pivoting for the farm resulted in opening an organic produce market and providing contactless shopping. In addition, the farm allowed local vendors to sell homemade goods such as honey, candles, and baked goods in the farm’s on-site market once they were allowed to reopen, which turned into a win-win for everyone. “We’ve got a date for our 2021 Hoedown (Saturday, August 21), and we hope it will be able to go on as scheduled,” Burney said.

Programs and Community Resources

Allaire Community Farm is open six days a week and provides a number of resources and programs for the community while continually expanding and fine-tuning its offerings.

Farm Market. The farm market is open during operating hours and sells fresh produce, eggs, fair-trade products, seasonal items, and goods from local vendors.

Petting Zoo. Zoo tours, barrel train rides, wagon rides, and more are available during operating hours thanks to the multitude of volunteers who help man the various attractions. Almost all of the animals were rescued from former neglectful situations. Visitors will encounter Nigerian Dwarf goats, sheep, chickens, rabbits, guinea hens, ducks, geese, Tofu the Turkey, a donkey, a nine-hundred-pound pig named Lily (who herself was rescued from a slaughter house), Al the Alpaca, Lola Grace the cow, and a number of horses.

To help defer costs related to the care and feeding of the rescued animals, the petting zoo entrance fee is \$5. per adult and \$3. per child. All guests need to check-in at the farm market upon arrival. Animal feed can be purchased for \$2. a bag and can only be used for the animals in the



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Items for sale at the farm market.