

**News**

# Full Moon Cooperative celebrates first harvest

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**Last week the farmers of Full Moon Cooperative celebrated their first harvest of the season.**

Fresh vegetables, herbs and flowers were washed and the flowers were tied with ribbons.

All items were placed in reusable grocery bags to be picked up by 20 of the 50 total shareholders.

A cooperative is an association formed to enable its members to purchase goods at a better price by eliminating the middleman's profits.

Full Moon Co-op is an organic farm affiliated with the University and conveniently located 5 miles from downtown Athens.

It provides the community a chance to get their food directly from the farmers and the opportunity to take part in its production and harvest.

The cost of membership in the cooperative ranges from \$300 to \$400 for the harvest season of June through November.

Members receive weekly delivery of organically-grown food and flowers accompanied by an informative newsletter.

A work program is also offered, and students are encouraged to participate in exchange for fresh produce.

"We welcome students from the University to come and learn



**Margaret Goerig, a recent University graduate, sits with her sister Hillary Goerig Bilheimer left and Daron Joffe right at Full Moon Co-op last Wednesday. (Shauna Intelisano \* The Red & Black)**

**Full moon co-op**

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about sustainable agriculture through hands-on experimental farming," said Daron Joffe, 25, of South Africa, a farmer at Full Moon Co-op.

The founders of the non-profit organization seek to create a learning environment that also contributes to research.

Carl Jordan, professor of agricultural ecology, owns the 100-acre tract of land on which the farm is located.

Previously, the location was used for graduate students to research farming techniques. However, the process of setting up a new farm environment took up too much of their research time, so Jordan said he decided it would be more beneficial to create a working farm on the property to provide a more productive learning environment.

He was able to begin the task of creating a farm after receiving a grant from the Center for Subtropical Agricultural Research, a consortium of four universities funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"Through the University grant, we were able to buy supplies to pay for the first two years. It is going to take a couple of years to get it going," Jordan said.

With over seven years experience in organic farming, Joffe said he recognized that this was a valuable opportunity and became a key player in establishing the farm.

He also received crucial funding that contributes to the project's budget, the Joshua Venture grant, which is a Jewish social entrepreneurship grant.

"Our farm is unique due to its diversity of research, education and market farming. Joffe said, "We are the only community supported agricultural farm in Athens."

Some of the research currently underway involves intercropping leguminous hedgegrows, a family of nitrogen-fixing plants.

Jordan said the plants take nitrogen from the air and contribute it to the soil, suppress weeds and reduce erosion.

The farm, which has only been operating for four months, has hosted two accredited interns through the colleges of ecology

and landscape architecture.

Joffe recruited three other farmers: Laura Brams and Jason Man of San Diego as well as Jerid Grandinetti of Boston.

Within four months, they have restored the farmhouse on the property, compiled literature to inform the public, attracted local shareholders, and cultivated four acres of land.

"Next year we hope to double, nearly triple, the clientele and yield," Joffe said.

With limited space for their first season, the farm has reached full capacity. They have plans to hold summer camps as well.

They are looking forward to hosting an eight-week empowerment program this summer for the "People of Hope," formerly known as the Garden Springs Community.

Jordan said the department of ecology has hired a new director who is expected to start July 1.

He said now is a good time to open discussion with the University about ways it can get involved to insure a long-term role in researching economic and ecological farming techniques.