

[Print Page](#)

Learning from a farm

Angelic Organics program lets kids connect to farmlife

By Hillary Gavan
Daily News staff writer

CALEDONIA - "It's a fascinating classroom."

That's what Angelic Organics Program Director Deb Crockett said about the unique partnership between the nonprofit learning center and the adjacent farm offering community supported agriculture (CSA).

While the 50-acre farm offers organic produce, the learning center has an array of educational programming for both children and adults. From classes on cheese making to long-term courses on organic farming, Angelic offers a little bit of everything natural.

As a provider of CSA, the farm offers people the opportunity to become shareholders. For about \$30 a week, shareholders can receive a box of fresh, seasonal herbs and vegetables. Crockett said the box is a generous amount for a family of four. Two vegetarians, however, may find the three-quarter bushel box just the right fit.

In the spring, boxes offer earlier vegetables such as lettuce, spinach, radishes and scallions. Later in the summer, tomatoes will shore up in the boxes as well as sweet corn and peppers. A cookbook can give recipe ideas for unique vegetables. Although shareholders have to eat what they get, Crockett said the system forces people to try new foods such as Swiss chard or celery root.

Crockett explained that the farm uses Biodynamic principles of Rudolf Steiner. Biodynamic agriculture is a method of organic farming that treats farms as unified organisms that can sustain themselves without help from outside the farm. At Angelic, for example, the manure from the horses and cows can be used as compost when mixed with herbs grown on the farm like yarrow or chamomile.

It's not surprising the farm is owned by John Peterson, a farmer and an artist. The documentary, "The Real Dirt on Farmer John" tells the story of how he converted the farm to an organic operation back when it wasn't so popular.

Currently, the farm is thriving - feeding more than 5,000 people. Many of the customers are in the Chicagoland area and get deliveries via truck from the farm. Those in the Stateline Area - about 50 customers - usually go to pick up produce at the farm on Rockton Road.

At the Angelic Organic Learning Center, programs are set up to teach children about the vegetable fields, pasture, woodlands and more. Children get the opportunity to interact with the chickens, goats, cows, horse and beehive. The center has programs that reach out to children from urban areas.

Recently, a group of children from Polaris Charter Academy in Chicago was touring the farm.

"Children are able to feed the goat and milk it. They get connected with where food comes from," Crockett said.

Kaelan Starks, 8, said he was one of the few brave kids who dared to milk a goat. Miaisa Davis, 8, explained how she saw 55 worms in the composting pile, compared to only nine in the neighboring field.

For more information on Angelic Organics, its children's activities, adult classes or available produce, visit the Web site, www.angelicorganics.com.