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For more information contact:
Patti Candelari 845/985-2291, ext. 237

Garden and Barn Expansions at Frost Valley YMCA Educational Farm Camp

CLARYVILLE, JUNE 10, 2005: In the last year Frost Valley YMCA Educational Farm Camp has grown in size and scale. The expansion includes the construction of a new dining hall, doubling the size of the garden, increasing the number of animals, the addition of a 15-camper lodge, and new programs.

This 600-acre summer camp is located on the East Branch of the Neversink River, in the heart of the Catskills Forest Preserve. The new farm managers, a dynamic husband-and-wife team, Penny and Rick MacLeod, have made a number of improvements to this idyllic facility.

The new dining hall has the look of an old farmhouse yet incorporates a 100-year old stone fireplace. It has a modern kitchen where three hot meals will be served daily as well as home-made snacks and treats.

There are now more animals than ever before and new varieties like four peacocks and a herd of horses. Spring brought three baby goats, five piglets, two foals, and a calf. Part of the charm of this program is taking care of all the animals. Feeding the rabbits and sheep, collecting eggs and peacock feathers is what makes this camp so much fun.

The garden expansion includes more flowers and vegetables. The hot-house from years passed remains and massive amounts of produce are anticipated. There are sunflowers, zinnia, squash, broccoli and much, much more. The fresh eggs are a real treat and campers collect them every day from the chicken coops.

Fruits and vegetables are harvested during each of the four two-week sessions. The most popular yields are the strawberries during the First Session, blackberry picking during Second Session; taking blueberries right off the bushes during Third Session; and collecting row after row of raspberries during Fourth Session.

A third yurt has been erected for the summer of 2005. Adding another Mongolian-style tent increases by 14 the number of campers housed each session. Space remains limited for this special sleep-away experience, accommodating a total of only 168 children each year.

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Located on the East Branch of the Neversink River, the Educational Farm Camp gives children ages seven to 15 an experience in a camp community that embodies both past and present. Exploring the woodlands, spinning yarn, swimming in the river, blacksmithing, and watching horse-shoe demonstrations are just a few of the enjoyments.

The farming heritage of the Catskills Mountains thrives during the summer season at Frost Valley, and coupled with the YMCA's 104 years of camping tradition, the Educational Farm Camp combines the natural beauty of the landscape, the YMCA's outdoor recreation expertise, and traditional agricultural activities for a wholesome and fantastic summer vacation.

YMCA programs embody four core values: responsibility, respect, caring and honesty. The Farm program offers these strong character traits for campers to acquire as well farming lifestyle values such as strong character, proper stewardship of the land, protecting natural resources, and a sense of pride in a job well done. The campers transform themselves from casual to committed as they embrace the Farm as a home away from home.

True farm living and cultivating the food they eat gives each camper an opportunity to reconnect, distraction-free, with living on the land and caring for domesticated animals, while developing a sense of ownership and serenity.

As they live and work together in a traditional agricultural setting, they also share chores, games, clean-up, horseback riding, farm crafts, and simple cooking. The Educational Farm Camp opens young eyes to a rich history.

The expansion and additions at the Farm are very exciting and will allow more campers to attend than ever before. Thankfully, measures are in place to ensure this growth would in no way belie the natural aesthetics and charm of the Farm's intimate culture.

Frost Valley YMCA is a year-round camping and conference facility serving 35,000 people annually with family weekend programs, environmental education for students, and summer camp options. Frost Valley's focus on spirit, mind, and body promotes positive character traits, outdoor activity, and the value of nature.

For more information about the Frost Valley YMCA Educational Farm Camp call Pennie or Rick MacLeod at (845) 985-0510, email farm@frostvalley.org, or visit www.frostvalley.org.

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