

FROM THE KEYBOARD TO THE FIELD

SALT CREEK FARM



photos by Doug Hendrickson

Students from Suzanne Grey's online Environmental Studies course at Peninsula College recently traded in their laptops for workboots and headed over to Salt Creek Farm for an afternoon of hands-on education.

They met for the first time in person while transplanting strawberries.

Farm owner Doug Hendrickson along with seasonal apprentices John Ludwig and Laura Giannone began with a tour through the greenhouse, barn and fields.

Then they passed out forks and hand tools, and the class dug in.

The class wanted answers to big questions: "How can we nourish ourselves without depleting our environment?" and "What kind of work is being done in our community to respond appropriately?"

As a former apprentice at Salt Creek Farm, Suzanne knew just where to take her students for a real-world look at sustainable farming.

Salt Creek Farm is a small-scale organic farm that embraces a diversity of techniques that rejuvenate soil and encourage native habitat.

As part of the online classwork,

Suzanne assigned readings and projects, including an essay by Michael Pollan, and creation of a "100 mile meal" that used only ingredients found within a 100-mile radius of Port Angeles.

At the farm, students saw well-loved 1950s-era tractors, the root cellar and tomato starts under cold frames — all evidence that a successful food shed requires commitment, hard work, ingenuity and a supportive community willing to buy their food from farmers.

They learned about cover crop, rotation, irrigation, water conservation, tools, yurts, goats, chickens and basically what does it mean to wake up every morning and go to work on 8 acres in the Salt Creek Valley.

Students left with dirt under their fingernails, strawberries to transplant at home, and a greater appreciation for small farmers.

>>> Doug Hendrickson has been running his Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program for 19 years and was the first on the North Olympic Peninsula to offer such a program.

CSA subscribing members receive a wide range of produce and herbs in their weekly share boxes May through November.

CSA's goal is to cultivate a community that is responsible for the social and economic well-being of the farm.

Salt Creek Farm can be reached at 360-928-3583 or on the web at www.saltcreekfarm.org.



Laura Giannone, one of Salt Creek Farm's apprentices, talks to an environmental studies class from Peninsula College about small-scale, organic farming.