



# Cottage Farm

## A Farming Mental Health Recovery Community

October, 2010

### The Cottage Farm Concept

Cottage Farm is a planned farming therapeutic community where people with mental health issues can recover and learn to live more independently. We know from the success of similar communities in Canada, the U.S. and Europe, that working in nature, and living in a safe and caring environment can help people in ways traditional settings don't. **The foundation of the program is the organic farm and the respectful and caring relationships between the people who live and work there.**

*(Please see the links listed on the next page for similar facilities)*

### The Community Need

There are many families who have children, typically between 19 and 35 who are struggling with mental illness and living at home. With the right therapy and education many of these young people could live independent, productive lives but there are few such services available. Families typically don't have the resources to help their mentally ill member. Cottage Farm is designed to help address this need while serving the surrounding community with food production and supportive services.

### Proposed Location

A 64-acre farming property has been purchased in the Williamsons' Landing area. This summer, 20 acres will begin development as an organic farm with orchards, berry crops, vegetables and greenhouse production. The Cottage Farm Centre for Mental Health Recovery Society hopes to make this the home of Cottage Farm.

### Who will be at Cottage Farm?

**Resident clients** - There will be 36 young adults typically between 19 and 35 years old, with a mental illness and who are:

- Wanting to recover and develop independence
- Willing to work on the farm and engage in treatment
- Not actively using alcohol or substances

**Staff and volunteers** - There will be between 35 and 45 staff and volunteers on site every day with at least 6 staff living in residents lodges overnight. It is expected that other staff will also live on site in full time residence. Members will include:

- At least 12 full time staff (Director, Psychologist, Psychiatric Nurse, Mental Health Workers, Occupational Therapist, Nutritionist, etc.)
- Sessional staff including a Psychiatrist and a General Physician
- Volunteers who work with clients in the fields and other activities
- The Farmer and family

## **Life on the Farm**

The farm will offer a balance of agricultural work with support in developing the skills and stability needed to live independently. A typical day will consist of 4 – 5 hours of farm work along with other therapies and activities. The daily routine and respectful, caring environment will help people develop a sense of self worth, an ability to socialize and the skills to live independently. Residents may stay anywhere from a number of months to 2 years, depending on their assessed needs.

## **Safety for Residents and Community**

We believe Cottage Farm will be a safe and healing place for residents and neighbours because:

- Residents will be there to work, engage in treatment, gain lifeskills and graduate
- People with a history of violent or sexually predatory behaviour will not be eligible for admission.
- Residents will be required to cooperate in taking prescribed medications.
- Residents will not be allowed to use alcohol or illicit drugs at Cottage Farm.
- There will be a high level of staff and volunteers to clients present on site.
- People will be on a daily schedule and staff will know if someone is missing from their activities.
- Other similar therapeutic communities visited (6 in the U.S. & Canada) reported that they have had no issues with clients causing problems in their surrounding neighbourhoods.

## **Community Involvement**

Cottage Farm plans to work with local community organizations and individuals to create opportunities for volunteering, networking with local food producers, educational day programming and meals for interested groups such as seniors. We will also work closely with local health service providers so that Cottage Farm may bring coordinated health care opportunities to the Sunshine Coast.

## **Timeline**

- Land will be prepared for farming starting spring of 2011
- A change of use application will commence in late fall of 2010 to request that the farm also include a therapeutic farming community.
- A farmer will move on to the land and begin to manage the farm by early 2011
- Farming activities will begin in spring of 2011
- The opening is of Cottage Farm is planned for 2013

## **Meeting the Community**

Members of the Cottage Farm team are currently meeting with neighbourhood groups and community organizations to talk about the concept and get input.

**Please contact us if you would like to talk about Cottage Farm or would like to become involved.**

susann.richter@dccnet.com

**Cottage Farm Chair - Barrie Forbes**  
**Property Owner / Developer - Wolfgang Duntz**  
**Cottage Farm Project Manager - Susann Richter**

### **Links:**

[www.cottagefarm.ca/](http://www.cottagefarm.ca/)

[www.cooperris.org/](http://www.cooperris.org/)

[www.peaceranch.com/](http://www.peaceranch.com/)