



### **Light, lemons, love.**

These name 3 aspects of the memorable experiences we had helping to pick and press apples with the welcoming community of John, Simon and others of Sun Hill Farm.

We arrived at Sun Hill farm, where it seemed a few folks were testing

the theory of Sir Isaac newton- one high up amidst the limbs shook while others, now including us, gathered the dropped fruit.

Apple cider with a definite lemony flavor graced our lips. These unique apples were among the first pressed; and I know my son Jacob and I were in awe of the amazing flavor and the presentation in glass champagne flutes. Having such fresh & delicious beverage in this setting was over the top, blessed and shared with much gratitude, just outside the pressing room at The Putney School.

The light of the day was spectacular, and we were graced with bountiful sunshine and warm temps for picking the drops which then became cider as we took turns pressing. I have a lot of pride in Jacob's reverence for helping out and for his sentiment and appreciation of community, which he expressed outwardly. Love in action.

Lip smacking fresh, cinnamon infused doughnuts and the terrific fragrance of freshly made sweets was somewhat tantalizing as a picker passed the white bag of tasty treats among us as we collected the apples on the ground.

Different rows of apples, different buckets and different people all came together going up and down the different aisles.

We enjoyed meeting new people & enjoyed watching soccer in the apple orchard and then the fun, love, camaraderie continued as we celebrated and were treated to a terrific feast. There were stories (and a birthday) on an outside deck with sunshine and fellowship.

We are grateful to be a part of The Sun Hill family. Our connection was sown when our son and brother Solomon, was an intern there several years ago. It has been our good fortune and blessing to continue our friendship and this marks year #2 that we have made cider with the Sun Hill Gang!

This was love in action with a delicious end result.

Jennifer Botwick



A Video Interview of The Crew of builders, led by Jonathan Klein.  
Here is the link to the video: <https://youtu.be/jnoLve4Yfa4>



A Video Interview of Justin Bramhall, Sun Hill Farm Farm Manager.  
Here is the link to it <https://youtu.be/R3rcRE9Se68>

## Monica's Letter about her time in Nepal



Hello all,

I'm back from Nepal where, as many of you know, I was teaching in a Tibetan Buddhist monastery for 5 months. I am excited to tell you about my travels through this newsletter! When I landed in Kathmandu, I was greeted by a monastery volunteer, and two of the eldest Shedra ("college") monks, Sangye and Kunga, who stood among the sweating crowd in red and gold robes, smiling hugely and eating potato chips. They welcomed me to Nepal, tore the chips bag open wider, and encouraged me to eat. Sangye and Kunga offered me water, tossed my bags into the back of a beaten-up Toyota truck, and Dawa, another monastery employee, drove us through the dirt roads of Kathmandu and up the steep hills to Shyalpa Monastery. Kunga and Sangye were goofing off in the back seats, singing along to Hindi radio, joking in Nepali, trying out their English on me, discussing which monk has how many girlfriends, and which holds the record score of their favorite combat video game. They could not have been further from the kind of meekness and austerity I had expected of monks. I promise: nothing was as you'd expect it to be. For this alone, it was so delightful.

When we nosed up to the monastery's gates, baldai ("gatekeeper-brother") opened them wide and we rolled in. "Heaven," Sangye announced from the backseat. "We are in heaven now." Since that first arrival, the days held so much sweetness, comedy, and learning. I had taken on four classes and developed close relationships with my students. I taught a class to six senior shedra monks, aged 17 to 23, who had taken a particular interest in English language learning. We all crowded around a single copy of a book or story, read together, and talked. Class was always relaxed, filled with curiosity and lots of good-humored teasing. I sensed they genuinely enjoyed themselves, and I always felt lucky to be in the company of such lovely, humbling guys.

I also taught the nuns, of which there are twelve. Most in my class were about 15 years old, but the full range was 9 to 23. The nuns were double-y as humbling. In the Tibetan-Buddhist tradition, nuns cannot be fully ordained. That, plus a strictly patriarchal society, seats nuns at the bottom of the monastic hierarchy. In our monastery, as in others, this means they are the

unseen maids—pulled out of class to scrub the fountain or weed the gardens. They did the work given them, and attend to their studies with seriousness and dedication. Somehow, they afforded themselves time for play, too, and over the months I had spent many hours in the ani gumpa (nun monastery) hitting a badminton birdie or jumping rope. One day the nuns were half an hour late to class—because the chanting master had kept them...and then they went to get popsicles outside the gate. I stayed in the ani gumpa, with a view of the valley, the hills, and a thousand swallows swooping, while ani genla (nun teacher) told me, in the small mutual vocabulary we shared, of her escape from Tibet as a young nun. There is so much more I wanted to know about her story, but I didn't have the time to ask her then, as the nuns had arrived, with lips stained bright red from their popsicles.

My most challenging class and, perhaps for this reason, the class I felt most bonded to was Class 5 monks of the loptra (primary school). Class 5 was a group of 7 fourteen- and fifteen-year old boys, the eldest of the loptra. My supervisor had hesitated to assign me this class, as they were notoriously crazy—the previous English teaching volunteer had called them demons. Of course, they were not at all demons, though they knew how to give a teacher hell. They were just extremely silly, moody, self-conscious boys, with the best hearts, who didn't give a hoot about the English language. Often with class 5, I felt my role was not to be their English teacher, but to be a present adult who cared for them, because down at the dasha, the monk's quarters, it was boys looking after themselves, and boys raising each other.

My fourth and final class was with His Holiness IX Kyabgon Jedrungpa Rinpoche. He is called Yangsi Rinpoche for short, an honorific title given to some tulkus, or incarnate lamas, that literally means—yang—appear—si—again. Rinpoche translates to precious one. Yangsi, now 12, will have to shed that title as he matures and adopt Jedrungpa Rinpoche as his new title (a change that I imagine will be tough for a boy who starts every essay with “Hi, my name is Yangsi.”). Class with Yangsi had its delights and challenges. Always scheming, he often tried to steer class time away from my lesson plans, towards anything else. Some days it took our entire class period to eek out one sentence, and I found I had to negotiate harder and more skillfully with Yangsi Rinpoche to get a couple chapters read for homework than I have ever had to do for a fair price from any street vendor. Other days he was hard at work on a short story, filling pages and pages with scenes from his imagination; or he'd carefully carry out research on the Nile Crocodile and write up all he learned. Some days we just chewed banana bubble gum while taking turns reading aloud from *A Wrinkle in Time*. I so enjoyed getting to know Yangsi—a curious, caring, astute, and playful spirit.

All these children, young adults, and many, many others grew my heart and cracked it open, again and again, and I'm forever grateful for the growing pains.

All the best,  
Monica