Social Farming Support Service

Rural Support

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY - JUNE 2024

The Social Farming Support Service supported 18 active farms to deliver 30 weekly sessions to 96 individuals over the first half of 2024. Approximately 40 new farms were supported to work towards their readiness through training, preparation and checks. The SFSS continues to promote and develop Social Farming across Northern Ireland, below are some of the highlights of our work so far this year.

Training

Queen's University Belfast provided the SFSS with funding to deliver three training and learning workshops to wider engage the farmer group to work with refugees and asylum seekers. The group finished off the workshops with a visit to Jubilee Farm who have been working with this service user group since 2019. It was great to hear personal experiences from the participants.





In the January to March period the farms completed manadatory training in Emergency First Aid at Work and Safeguarding children and adults. An Introduction to Social Farming course was also held with input from experienced Social Farmer Robert Davis followed by a visit to his farm - Laurelview Farm.

Promotion





May saw the start of the busy summer agriculture show period – Rural Support were delighted to have the Social Farming Support Service stand in the busy horticultural pavilion at Balmoral Show again this year. The stand displayed Social Farming activities and experiences on the farms across Northern Ireland through beautiful artwork, plants, vegetables, window boxes and pictures donated to tell the story of Social Farming and all the varied range of activities offered. It was brilliant to have active farmers and participants join us to speak to those interested in of Social Farming.





Three farms were also presented their Social Farming Standards award at the show. The farms have shown an excellent service provision in three pillars - a safe farm environment, a place for all, and a person-centered service. Well done to everyone at Bradkeel Farm, Creggandduff Farm, and Faughanvale Farm.







Three Social Farms - Jubilee Farm, Castlescreen Farm and Laurelview Farm & Equestrian Centre, Templepatrick - took part in this years Bank of Ireland Open Farm Weekend.



Visitors to Jubilee Farm had a chance to connect with all aspects of the farm, agriculture, where food comes from, farm jobs, nature, and aspects of our community involvement.





Robert and Linda Davis of Laurelview were also busy across the weekend showing visitors the fantastic facilities, horses, and beautiful Irish Moiled cattle. There was even opportunity to take part in some welly wanging!





Visitors to Castlescreen Farm had the opportunity to meet their indigenous pedigree dexter cattle (one of the smallest breeds of cattle in the world), pedigree Highland cattle, various breeds of sheep, miniature donkeys and yoga goats.





In May the SFSS delivered an information session to students and staff at North West Regional College. A student has now completed work experienced at a Social Farm. We look forward to buiding on our relationship with education providers.

Developments

January 2024 saw the implementation of a new contract arrangement with NHSCT Learning Disability services contracting directly with Rural Support to oversee Social Farming initially on 3 farms (Laurelview Farm, Templepatrick, Jigsaw Farm, Coagh and Jubilee Farm, Larne). This partnership working model was initiated with a new working group set up involving staff from NHSCT, Rural Support and DAERA. All farms involved have achieved Social Farming Standards. The farms currently support individuals on a weekly basis to become involved in farming in supportive way. The contract was officially launched at the NHSCT Rural Conference in the Tullyglass Hotel on the 17th of April 2024, with Rural Support CEO Kevin Doherty a key speaker on the day. Rural Support look forward to continuing the successful working model with the NHSCT and developing further farms in the area, we acknowledge and thank everyone involved for the significant work involved with all parties to achieve this new arrangement.







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