

La Vista CSA open house hopes to show journey from farm to table

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
May 3 2018 1:38 PM



GODFREY – Among the rolling views and greening trees of Levis Lane, beyond a sign decreeing it is not a “thru street” lies the La Vista Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

The farm is nestled on five acres of land provided by an order of Catholic priests called the Oblates, who call the verdant property on the bluffs home. It is maintained by second-year head farmer Phil Beile, who said he has worked in greenhouses since he was a teenager and has been a farmer for the better part of half a decade. He was only about seven years old when the farm was founded, however, by an Oblate priest named Father Maurice Lange, who had a small plot of land and studied CSA programs in the Northeast, and current Chairperson Cindy Gelsthorpe, who still works at the farm with her husband, current President Tom Bechtold.

An open house will be held this coming Sunday, May 6, from 1-5 p.m. at the farm, which is located at 4350 Levis Lane in Godfrey. It is open to shareholders, friends of shareholders and anyone who is curious to see how the food makes the journey from the farm to the table.

While not certified as organic by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the farm does not use pesticides in the growing of its food.

“All we have to go on is our word,” Beile said. “People can come out and see me out here pulling weeds, and see how hard it is to grow this food and know we don't use sprays.”

Plots at the farm are \$600, and will allow shareholders to collect fresh produce each week. Beile said a typical harvest will reward shareholders with 25-30 items per collection, or around the equivalent of two grocery bags worth of produce. Half-shares are also available at a rate of \$340, and will grant people either a half load every week or a full one every two weeks. There is also a four-week mini-share for \$100. Shares are still available on the CSA's [website](#).

Every Saturday morning deliveries are made to Garden Heights Nursery for St. Louis shareholders and Tuesday evenings at Green Earth Grocery for Edwardsville shareholders.

During a typical growing season, Beile said the farm can produce thousands of pounds of food. He said one harvest can garner as much as 25 pounds of fresh greens and hundreds of pounds of potatoes – with many more awaiting under the surface of the dirt.

This year, Beile said the range of vegetables is expanding. He said he tries to expand the crop each year, adding he was able to attain some seeds from an Oblate priest. While the Oblates have given the land to the CSA and started farming a small plot of land, they are not directly affiliated with the La Vista CSA. Beile said they are directly interested, however.

“There is always a novice with a green thumb,” he said. “We had one last year help me save seeds. He brought me some Texas squash, which tasted like dessert. He had so many seeds, that we're still coming up with names for the vegetables he brought us.”

Currently, Beile said the farm is growing onions, various squash, kohlrabi, various greens and other produce within its greenhouse. He said the biggest issues so far are the cold and wetness of the current climate and early pests.

“We've had some moles and groundhogs,” Beile said. “They like to eat greens just as much as we do. We don't kill anything here, so we round them up and find them a new home about 10 miles up the road.”

Moles and groundhogs aren't the only animal companions on the farm. Beile said a beekeeper keeps hives of bees on the property as well – and they contribute to the crops.

“There is a noticeable difference with the bees here, especially with our fruiting crops like tomatoes,” Beile said. “A lot of plants are self-pollinating, but you can definitely tell having bees here helps. But, you know, sometimes they do try to chase me off the tractor, too.”