Over the past year, Equity Trust has been supporting the **Pioneer Valley Workers Center (PVWC)** as it develops a worker-run farm with seven of its worker-members. They were offered access to part of a ten-acre field in Western Massachusetts not far from Equity Trust’s office, owned jointly by the Kestrel Land Trust and the City of Northampton. Together with **All Farmers**, a local organization supporting refugee and immigrant farmers, Equity Trust helped PVWC obtain written land-use agreements this spring and we are now working with them to develop a longer-term lease to ensure secure tenure for the farmers as they develop their business.

> "I love farming because from a very young age, my grandfather taught me to work the soil. And it means a lot to me. It makes me happy to know so much about how to grow food from the earth."
> - Eduardo, Riquezas del Campo Founding Member

PVWC is committed to building institutions that directly represent the interests of working people, and in collaboration with the TESA Collective, they are providing cooperative development training and resources for the farm coop members. The seven founding members bring decades of experience working as farmers throughout Central America and New England to the goal of growing food to feed their community and meet their own basic needs.

*Continued on p. 4.*

**Remembering Monica McGloin**

We are saddened by the loss of our good friend and long-serving board member, Monica McGloin (January 4, 1941 – October 2, 2019). Monica was a member of our board of directors since 1994, including a term as Board President, and served on several committees, most recently the Governance Committee. Previously, she had served on the board of the Institute for Community Economics, a precursor of Equity Trust. Former Equity Trust Co-Director Gail Daneker spoke for us all, saying, “I greatly respected Monica and was very fond of her.”

A nurse and member of the Dominican Sisters of Hope, Monica was involved with numerous local and national organizing efforts over the years, including the Community Land Cooperative of Cincinnati. She was a key player in Equity Trust’s religious lands efforts, a program aimed at helping religious orders consider how to deal with the large amounts of property they own.

Monica served on the Dominican Sisters of Hope’s Land and Building Committee and the Earth Council of the Dominican Sisters in Committed Collaboration. In Cincinnati, she advocated for low income affordable housing, a living wage, and community decision making. She also served on the boards of Children, Inc. and West End Emergency Center, serving homeless and low income people, and volunteered with the Universal Healthcare Action Network.

Former Equity Trust Board member Kathy Ruhf summed it up, reflecting, “I was inspired by Monica, as I’m sure many others were too. A loss to all.”
Hudson Valley program demonstrates appeal of our work

Equity Trust’s Hudson Valley Farm Affordability Program has changed the way farm protection is being done in New York. In just six years, the farm affordability tools our program introduced to the region have gone from generally unknown and untested in New York to being implemented by half a dozen land trusts, in a similar number of counties, with many more land trusts across the state showing interest in adopting them as well.

Between 2013 and 2019, our program helped to protect a total of thirteen working farms, comprising over 2000 acres, ensuring they will always be available to farmers for an agricultural price. Most of these farms are protected with conservation easements that include resale restrictions designed to ensure that when the farm is sold, it transfers to another farmer for an agricultural price—If there is a proposed sale that wouldn’t meet these goals, the land trust holding the easement has the right to purchase the farm at its agricultural value, or assign that right to a farmer. Three of the easements also require active food production at a commercial scale on the property. Three other farm properties are non-profit owned farms, where affordable, secure tenure for farmers is assured through long term leases.

The farms range in size from 62 to 444 acres, and include dairies, pastured meat operations, diversified vegetable production, fruit farms, and more. While preserving these working farms, our projects also helped new farmers get on land, supported retiring farmers passing on their farms, prevented the sale and disappearance of much-loved farms, supported farms’ financial stability, and helped sustain the agricultural economy of the Hudson Valley.

But the impact goes much farther than these individual farms. Equity Trust and our partners have demonstrated that farm affordability protections can be used successfully with both state and federal agricultural conservation programs, which is critical to expanding their use. Beyond that, these successful projects also provided an essential example that advocates could point at to win public funding for farm affordability protections through New York State’s farm protection program—a victory we celebrated last year. Whereas previously working farm protections had to be paid for entirely from private charitable funds, they are now eligible for partial funding from the state.

Most importantly, Equity Trust’s broad strategy of promoting farm affordability as key to preserving working farms has been embraced and is being promoted by many organizations that were ambivalent or disinterested just six years ago. While there is more work to do, there is now a growing coalition committed to protecting not just farmland, but the farm affordability and farmer access that are essential to preserving working farms.

Windfall Farms, NY

Farmer’s Daughter Farm, NY
Loan Fund benefits Southeastern U.S.

The Equity Trust Fund made its presence felt most notably in the Southeastern United States this year, with six new loans benefiting people and communities there. One went to Koinonia Farm, an intentional community stewarding land in Sumter County, Georgia. Members emphasize simple living, racial equality, nonviolent resistance, the sharing of resources, and cooperative work. Koinonia was a pioneer in the property stewardship movement out of which Equity Trust itself eventually emerged, and it is still going strong more than seventy-five years after its founding in the 1940s.

Equally exciting is our growing relationship with the Black Family Land Trust, a conservation organization working primarily in the Southeast to help African American landowners preserve and protect land assets. Our partnership with BFLT is motivated by the goal of stemming and reversing a more-than-100-year trend of shrinking African American land ownership. Along with several allied organizations, BFLT is in the trenches on this issue, and Equity Trust has offered to provide financing to help specific projects succeed.

We know that ownership of land is crucial for enabling opportunity and economic security for African American families today and into the future. Productive use of one’s own land makes it possible to build equity and to invest in the community, and our loans are helping that happen.

We made our first two loans to BFLT clients last year, and this year added three more. Two were made to small farmers to finance infrastructure improvements on their farms, and one helped a family secure its ownership of ancestral land and start a small farm.

Other loans with a Southeastern locus include one to Hart's Mill Ecovillage and Farm, an intentional community in North Carolina that will be building homes using a limited-equity ownership model; and one to the North Carolina-based Jubilee House Community, which runs the nonprofit Center for Development in Central America in rural Nicaragua, helping small farmers organize into cooperatives for the production, processing, and marketing of a variety of crops including peanuts, cotton, sesame, and coffee.

It became a flashpoint in the 1950s when the KKK attempted to force it out of the community with violence and boycotting. To cope, members created a mail-order business selling pecan products to a worldwide network of supporters, which it is still operating today. In fact, our loan is financing the expansion of its pecan orchard and upgrades to processing equipment. In the 1960s, members began a project to build decent, affordable housing for their neighbors, which eventually grew into Habitat for Humanity International.

These days, Koinonia is still doing important work, such as providing support for immigrants and refugees being processed at a nearby detention center. The farm hosts those allowed to leave camp while awaiting a court date and also families visiting those not allowed to leave. Equity Trust is honored to be working with this iconic organization.
Rebecca Fletcher moves to CFNE

In September, longtime Equity Trust Project Manager Rebecca Fletcher accepted a position with the Cooperative Fund of New England (CFNE) as a loan and outreach officer responsible for lending and technical assistance to co-ops and other democratically owned enterprises in Western Massachusetts, Western Connecticut, and New York.

Rebecca had been with Equity Trust since 2005 and worked on almost all of our major farm protection projects during that time, including Good Humus Produce, Caretaker Farm, North Amherst Community Farm, Grow Food Northampton, and many of our Hudson Valley Farm Affordability Fund projects of the last six years. With passion and experience, she provided counseling, technical assistance services, and education to individuals and groups across the U.S. including farmers, land trusts, municipalities, community groups, and others using shared equity models for ownership of farms and housing, helping to spread the benefits of access to property more broadly and equitably.

She also contributed to the writing of our Farms for Farmers resource manual and administered our loan fund for part of her tenure.

Rebecca states, "It has been an honor to serve a mission I care about so deeply, and I will forever be grateful to have been afforded the opportunity to learn all that I have here, and to have been a part of carrying forward a tremendous legacy of thought and such an important body of work."

Although she will now be devoting her talents to another great organization, we know she will continue to support Equity Trust in any way she can and look forward to working with her on a joint CFNE-Equity Trust Fund lending opportunity at some point down the line.

Thank you, David Abromowitz!

This fall, after 25 years, David Abromowitz stepped down from the Equity Trust Board of Directors. We are extremely appreciative of his many years of service.

An attorney with Goulston & Storrs PC, David joined the board in 1994 and for two and a half decades has provided invaluable guidance on all aspects of our work, particularly around land tenure innovations, such as our ground lease for farms, based on an affordable housing model he also contributed to. He also served many years on our loan review committee.

Throughout, David has been a passionate advocate for Equity Trust’s mission and for broadening the reach of our work and ideas. He is currently the Chief Public Policy Officer for YouthBuild USA. We are grateful that he remains an advisor, ally, and friend.

Supporting immigrant farmers  (Cont’d from p. 1.)

Many PVWC members faced conditions in their home countries, caused in part by U.S. government policies, that made survival untenable. Employed as farm workers in the U.S., members grow an abundance of organic fruits and vegetables, which are sold at high prices that they themselves cannot afford. Although many farm workers have experience running businesses and cooperatives, as immigrants they face challenges to starting their own enterprises including language barriers and access to capital.

PVWC sees this project as an essential part of a multi-racial, cross-class food justice movement – fighting to improve labor conditions and planting the seeds of an alternative economy where farm workers can become farm owners. Equity Trust shares this vision. We are committed to supporting secure land tenure and pathways to build equity for farmers who have been historically excluded from ownership opportunities, especially for farmers who are Black/Indigenous/People of Color.