

Andover's Two Mountain Farm has a New Farmer

Andul Sundaramurthy is from a farming family

By Jackson Bicknell, for the *Beacon*

In mid-April, Andul Sundaramurthy became the resident farmer for Two Mountain Farm, located on Shaw Hill Road in Andover. Andul replaces former farmer and Andover resident Kat Darling. At the height of Kat's career at Two Mountain Farm, she was running a 30-person CSA, grew vegetables on more than two and a half acres, sold produce to several markets in the area, and ran a horse logging operation in the winter.

"Tough shoes to fill," says Andul, "but this is my first time being my own boss, and I love it!"

Andul, a chipper and animated young woman, has a ceaseless smile that has not yet wavered in spite of rainy farmers markets, endless weeding ventures, and the time she punched a hole in the farm greenhouse with the tractor. Her positivity is absolutely contagious, but her work ethic is hard to match.

One could say farming is in Andul's blood. Her grandfather was a farmer, and her father spent much of his early life farming before moving to Canada and then the United States to work as an engineer.

"I feel like our society has lost at least

one full generation of farmers who teach their children the ways of farming. Nobody has parents to ask anymore, only grandparents now," said Andul.

Her smile returned when she voiced her optimism about the new generation of young people who want to be farmers. "It's exciting to see and be a part of this movement and shift of consciousness that is bringing people back to farms," she said.

Andul moved to Wilmot at the age of 10, first residing on Pleasant Lake to be closer to her mother's side of the family, the Stearns, an old New England family that can be traced back to two brothers who sailed over to the Americas on the Arabella. "My mother's side of the family, the Stearns, have been in Wilmot for a long time, about five generations," said Andul.

The North Wilmot Congregational Church was built by Isaac Stearns in 1829 and to this day remains the oldest church building in Wilmot. Andul's grandmother, Cathy Stearns, owns Bog Mountain Farm, also in Wilmot, which has been in the family since the late 1800s.

Andul is taking over the farm operations as part of New Hampshire's two-year Journey program, which is a mentoring-from-a-distance program for young farmers. The program is through



Andul Sundaramurthy works among her tomato and basil plants at Two Mountain Farm in Andover. Photo: Jackson Bicknell

the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) and helps young farmers transition from working as a farmhand to becoming an independent farmer. The previous Two Mountain farmer, Kat Darling, helps to mentor Andul.

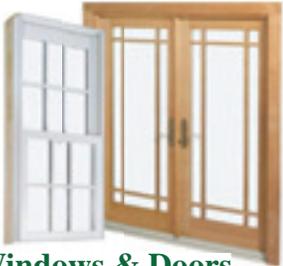
Before her work started at Two Mountain Farm, Andul gained farming experience through her work as a farmhand, primarily at Muster Field Farm since 2003. Andul graduated from Hampshire College in 2008 with a major in Ethnomusicology, the study of various music cultures. After graduation, Andul worked for four winters grooming horses in New Zealand, returning to Muster Field in the summers to work.

In 2013, Andul moved to Massachusetts for a year, working part time as a nanny while pursuing her dream of running her own farm. "While looking for land, I signed up for every farm-oriented mailing list I could find," said Andul. She received an e-mail notice about Two Mountain Farm looking for a new resident farmer from NOFA New Hampshire in January and applied within a few hours. "I was thrilled with the prospect of returning close to home."

Andul has several short- and long-term plans for the farm that she shared while weeding her rows of carrots. "It's important to start small when implementing change," she emphasized.

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