



Shotaro Sessions, 8, of Amherst picks a string bean to add to a squash blossom and lettuce for his snack at the Farm and Garden Camp.



Lukas Fletcher, 6, of Hadley creates yarn from a length of wool he carded himself during an activity session at camp on the working farm at Hampshire College in Amherst. The wool came from the farm's sheep.



Jasper Fletcher, 6, of Hadley sews the sides of a felt pouch he made from the sheep's wool.

Budding farmers have some fun



From right, Tanya Mathers, 9, of Enfield, Conn., Jonah Abrams, 8, of South Hadley, Tara Brown, 7, of Deerfield and Adeline Rogers, 7, of Northampton take turns feeding two calves, Sugar and Spice, during the morning farm and garden chores.

Photos and text by
KEVIN GUTTING

How did you spend your summer vacation?

For some local kids, that answer is learning to farm.

Three area women — Hope Guardianier, Alya Soffer-Kolosyzc and Meg Taylor, all mothers and educators — have been conducting the Farm and Garden Camp, a series of six week-long sessions where children have been tending to the animals and plants on the working farm at Hampshire College in Amherst.

Each morning at 9 a.m. the campers, ages 6 to 12, take on a slew of chores, which, first and foremost, include feeding and watering — and in some cases grooming — the animals: goats, pigs, chickens, calves, sheep and even the barn cat.

The campers are then divided into three groups and throughout the day rotate among several activity areas: the barnyard and animals, the children's garden, and agricultural arts, where they learn such things as carding and spinning wool or making ice cream.

The camp, which wraps up this week, is not all work as there is time in the afternoon for games and water play — but any free time can instantly turn into a game of tag or “21.” On Fridays, the last day of each session, everyone gathers for a noon feast showcasing the fruits of the labor from the current and previous weeks.

By 3 p.m., as Guardianier, Soffer-Kolosyzc and Taylor say in their brochure, another day of learning to “care for the animals and plants that feed, clothe, and nourish all of us” has ended.



Camper Tara Brown gets a hand from volunteer Amanda Bennett, right, a Deerfield Academy senior, with a bucket of soil, one ingredient for a sheet mulching garden her group was building.

At right, Carrie Ellis, 8, of Hatfield waters some lettuce seeds she just planted.



Instructor Hope Guardenier, with the guitar, leads the singing in a tribute to the worm during the daily morning sing and stretch.

