

every second year to replant the older pastures in succession to make each of them more useful and productive. I am hoping the wildflower seeds scatter to provide even more spectacular spots of color.

11. Outreach

Not being a farming community any more, at first I was unsure how to tell others about my project. 2003 was the 150th anniversary of this town, however, and as a member of the Lakeville Arts Council I helped to organize an open studio tour as one of the anniversary celebrations. I saw this as an opportunity to talk to potential visitors about the integration of land improvement, flock of sheep, quality of fiber produced, and then the spinning and weaving process in the studio. Our final product, after all, depends on the symbiotic relationship among all these elements.

We had good publicity for the studio tour (farm and studio, in our case). Two local gazettes and two city papers carried pictures, information, and directions. Signs, posters, and maps directed visitors to the studios of the ten participants. At our farm we had sixty visitors. They had the opportunity to walk down a lane through the farm to the studio and hear about the two new pastures; they got to inspect the flock and look at raw unprocessed fleeces; finally they came into the studio and saw us demonstrate spinning and Navajo weaving; they were also able to look at our handspun wools and hand-loomed weavings. Based on our open house that day several people signed up for weaving classes, several sales of wool were made, and several sales of wool flock lambs were made to people with small homestead type farms. From lambs sold that day others have called to talk to be about how to make a small acre or two more productive and appropriate for raising lambs for 4-H or back-yard projects. We are planning another farm tour for the coming spring.

Based on my feeling of success in this project, I heard about another grant possibility from one of my cooperators, and I applied for and received a Farm Viability grant. Twice I have had farm visits from Rick Canole and other members of Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Program (SEMAP) who see my start with the SARE grant as an important beginning to take my farm from being the hobby and lifestyle of a family of teachers to being an economically viable community asset that could grow into a family business that features the value-added products that we spin and weave.

Submitted by Richard S. Tripp on January 22, 2004.