

Facebook & Regular Emails: Educating on SARE & Attracting Customers

As part of our grant proposal, we committed to utilizing social media and technology as a tool for educating our community about SARE, our grant, and sustainable agriculture, in general. Regular Facebook postings and daily email updates helped us to reach new customers and sustainable-urban-agriculture-activists. Included are a few of the photos and postings that we shared throughout the year. For more posts and videos, visit us on Facebook at Omaha's High Ground: A Healthy Market Garden.

Omaha's High Ground: A Healthy Market Garden
March 23 · 🌐

As new small-scale producers on a small piece of land in an urban setting, most of what we do requires us to see things differently, to explore and implement non-traditional approaches. We have to use a different lens to see daily operations and to figure out daily problems. We cannot run out and buy a building to house our chickens. To make this work, we must build a new coop out of recycled materials we have salvaged. We cannot afford to hire laborers to weed our beds. We have to bring in loads and loads of tree mulch by opening up our property as a free dumpsite for arborists. We cannot buy new rolls or fencing. We must salvage old abandoned fencing, fix it, and rehang it. Even our location and business model itself is against the mainstream approach. We are a 3.5 acre farm in a city. Amid the manicured lawns and commercial buildings, we farm, raising chickens, goats, and a wide variety of produce and fruit.

Similarly, as we increased production, we needed to find a new way to access customers. Farmers' Markets were an option, but we preferred to use more of our time in the fields and less standing behind a table in a parking lot. We also wanted to bring people to us, to let them see where their food grew. A roadside stand seemed like a good option, but local codes would not allow a permanent structure without an incredibly expensive foundation. We needed something different, something more flexible, so we explored the idea of a portable, trailer-based building.

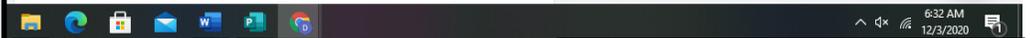
With our low budget, even the less expensive trailer-based-building was going to wipe out years of income. Desperate, we decided that our off season would best be spent writing grants. Mid-Winter we hunkered down in front of the computer and started researching and writing. These efforts paid off.

One of our grants went to an entity within the USDA called SARE, Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education:

SARE's vision is an enduring American agriculture of the highest quality. This agriculture is profitable, protects the nation's land and water and is a force for a rewarding way of life for farmers and ranchers whose quality products and operations sustain their communities and society.

SARE's mission is to advance—to the whole of American agriculture—innovations that improve profitability, stewardship and quality of life by investing in groundbreaking research and education.

SARE offers grants to producers practicing wholistic and sustainable agricultural



Omaha's High Ground: A Healthy Market Garden
March 25 · 🌐

Framing has begun on our future produce and egg stand. It was a family affair with all involved. Our friend Mike Safford was there, too, and all went well. Most child labor laws were broken, but everyone learned a lot and worked hard. Support from our customers, the community, and SARE have made this possible. Once completed, we hope to use the stand to offer our sustainably-raised products, but we are also reaching out to other like-minded growers to offer them the use of our stand and prime location to access new customers and feed more people in our area. Know of a grower who might be interested? Please share our idea.



Omaha's High Ground: A Healthy Market Garden
April 5 · 🌐

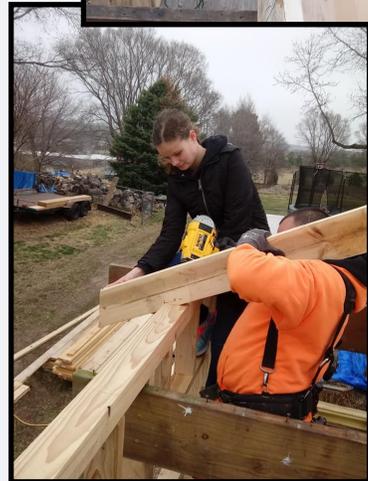
Subfloor going in, siding going on. It is rolling. Our SARE-supported roadside stand is about half done.



Omaha's High Ground: A Healthy Market Garden
May 31 · 🌐

Took advantage of the rainy day to work on the produce stand. Insulation is done. Moving on to sheeting the inside. Hoping to be up and running in the near future.

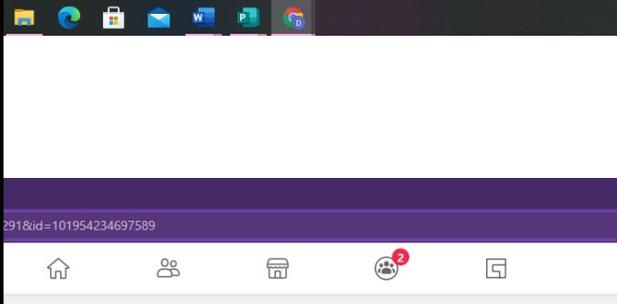
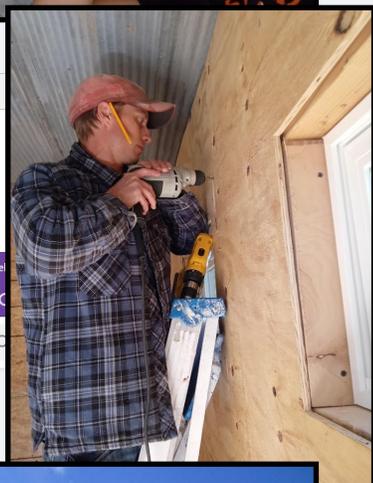
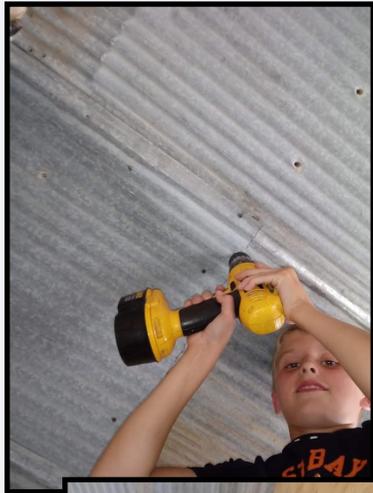
Word is spreading of our new family venture: a reporter was out to look at the SARE-supported produce stand. From the stand to the orchard to the coops, it is easy to focus on the structural developments around here, but we also want to take a moment to share our gratitude for all of our supporters and customers who keep us going. You are the foundation of all of this. Your support keeps us planting, picking, building, and improving. We have a ways to go, and without you we would never make it. With continued support, we will keep developing, feeding our local community and, through charitable giving, people in other poverty-stricken areas of the world.





One important consideration for the grant administrators and reviewers is the educational value of this grant for my family. As an organization that advocates for education, the folks who generously awarded us this grant should feel proud of the opportunity they provided for our own kids to grow in both confidence and skill. They were involved in every step of construction and sales. The lessons were innumerable. From lessons on sticking to a budget and adapting to struggles, to lessons on framing, siding, and flooring, we worked side-by-side with the kids, teaching and explaining as we went. We gave them jobs within their skill sets and patiently waited for them to “help.” Although not measured in our specific grant, SARE should be proud of the education that it has given to our four kids.

Omaha's High Ground: A Healthy Market Garden
May 27 · 🌐
Work continues on our SARE-supported produce stand. We have worked together to trench in water for irrigation and access to power for refrigeration. Produce and egg sales are ongoing; we are grateful for your continued support and interest in our products and in supporting sustainably-raised, pesticide-free, herbicide-free, local food.

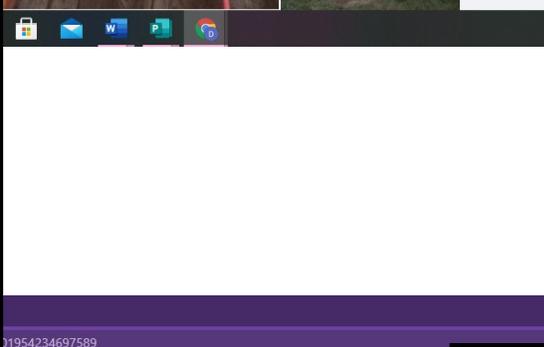
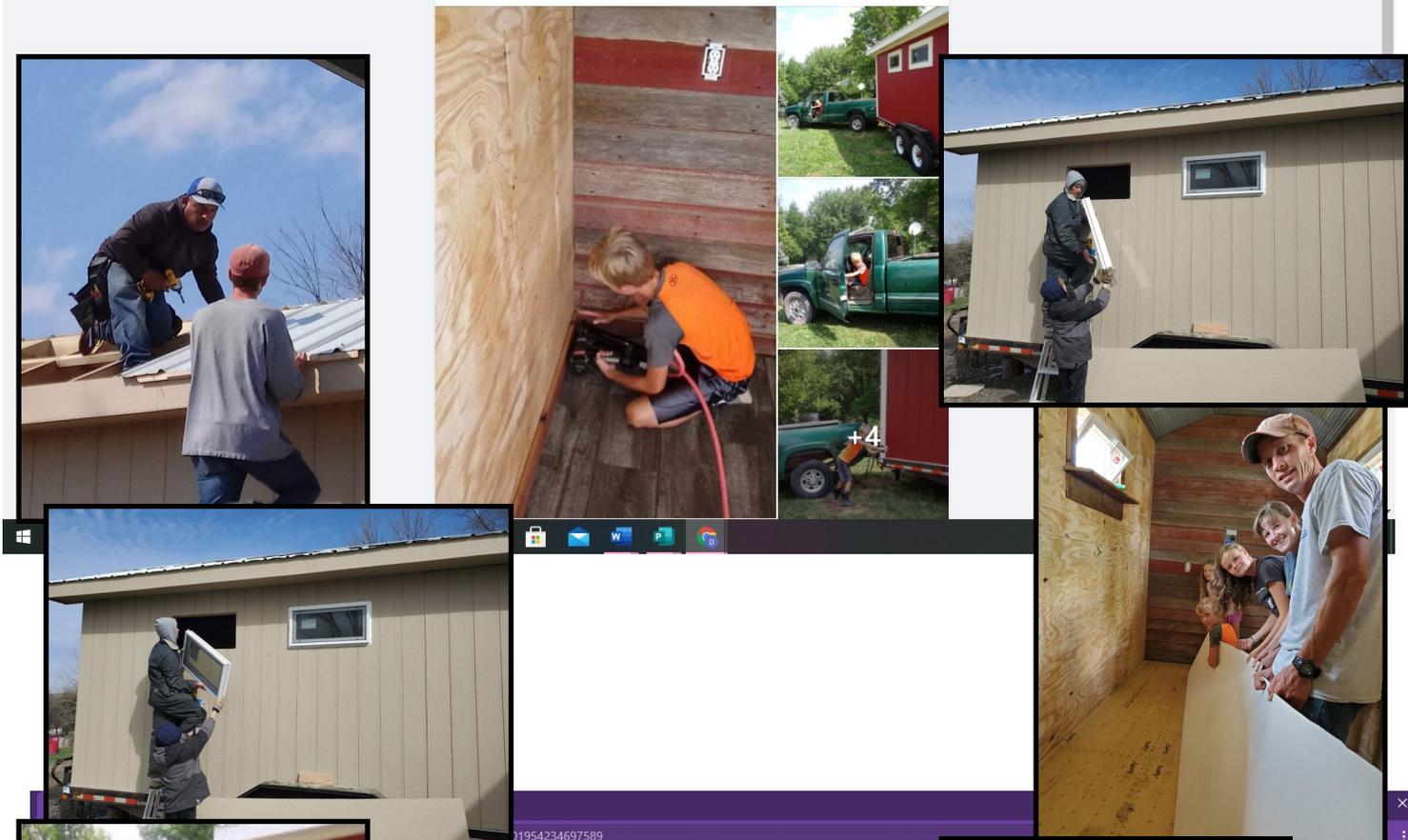


Omaha's High Ground: A Healthy Market Garden
June 15 · 🌐
Inside finish work on our SARE-supported produce stand. A barnwood accent wall is almost done.



Omaha's High Ground: A Healthy Market Garden
July 7 · 🌐

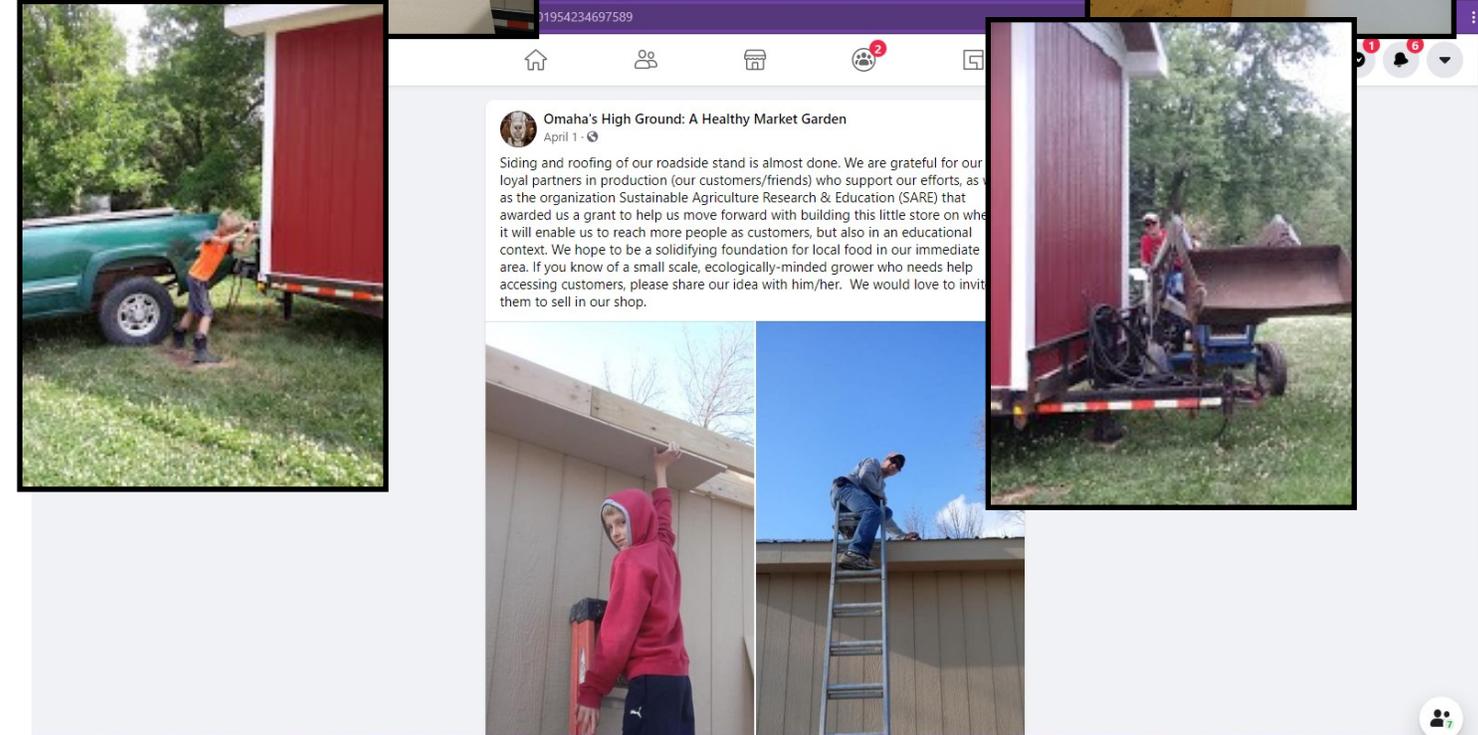
Yesterday was another big day on our SARE-Supported produce stand. We finished the baseboards and moved it into place. Shelves, lights, fridges, and a lot of luck, and we will be ready to open for business.

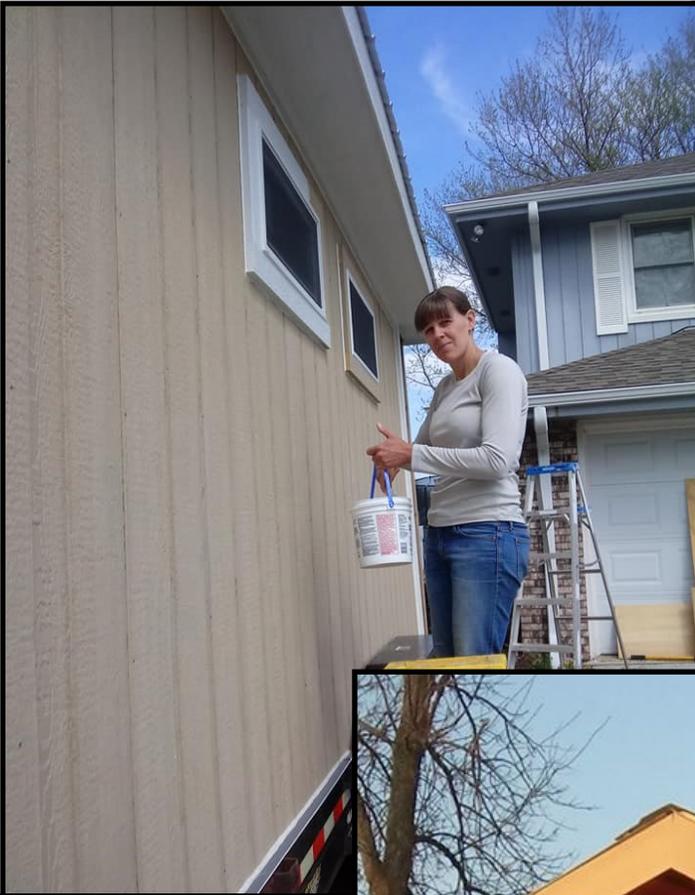


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Omaha's High Ground: A Healthy Market Garden
April 1 · 🌐

Siding and roofing of our roadside stand is almost done. We are grateful for our loyal partners in production (our customers/friends) who support our efforts, as well as the organization Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) that awarded us a grant to help us move forward with building this little store on what we hope will be a solidifying foundation for local food in our immediate area. We hope to be a solidifying foundation for local food in our immediate area. If you know of a small scale, ecologically-minded grower who needs help accessing customers, please share our idea with him/her. We would love to invite them to sell in our shop.





Anyone considering a similar project should know that we dramatically underestimated the “manhours” needed to build the structure. We didn’t keep close enough track, of our time (who does on a farm), but like most farmers, having only set aside \$1,460 dollars in grant funding to pay ourselves, we know that we made pennies an hour....the wages of a small farmer!

Other Work Must Go On!

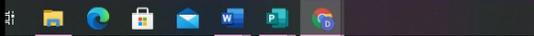
The other factor to keep in mind when tackling a project of this magnitude is the fact that the rest of the farm work must continue, and family life is important, too. We always work long days. There is always something to do and we are pulled in millions of directions at once, but the struggle and stress is even greater when you add another huge time commitment like this project.

Omaha's High Ground: A Healthy Market Garden
July 1

For those unfamiliar, we are the grateful recipients of a SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) grant that has helped us move ahead on a project that we hope will enable us to better feed our surrounding community. We are building a produce stand that will be a hub of distribution of local food. Started laying out the floor today.



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Omaha's High Ground: A Healthy Market Garden
May 6

Work continues on our produce stand. As we have mentioned in previous posts, we were awarded this opportunity through a generous grant from SARE. (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education). Hoping for a June completion. We also adopted six new chicks (month or so old). If you have kids who would like to see them, let us know.



Other Work Must Go On! And now we need more to sell!

We are so grateful for the opportunities this grant has provided. We cannot express enough how much it has changed our business and our lives. During the stress of construction and soon after the initial opening, however, we quickly realized that this blessing came with the realization: With all of these new customers, we need more produce to sell! And more work set in.



While work continued on the stand and in the fields and with the customers and with the visitors and on the grant paperwork and on social media and email outreach....



People Started To Notice

... people started to notice the great things that were going on here. For example, we found our once-obscure-mini-farm featured in a local newspaper.



Article title: Keber family's High Ground. Subtitle: June 4, 2020. Reporter: Gretna. Category: News, Uncategorized. Comments Off.



Once again, we would like to thank SARE for its support. Without this grant, our business was not going to make it. We have attempted to capture a brief glimpse into the creation of the stand and the evolution of our farm and business, but we hope, too, that SARE has a sense of how our family and quality of life has been so greatly impacted by this grant and all that it has provided.

Dave, Katie, Campbell, Lincoln, Harper, and Presley

