

on the *Banks*

A Social Publication for the residents of River Creek
April 2021



Meet The Herrera Family
Happy Easter!

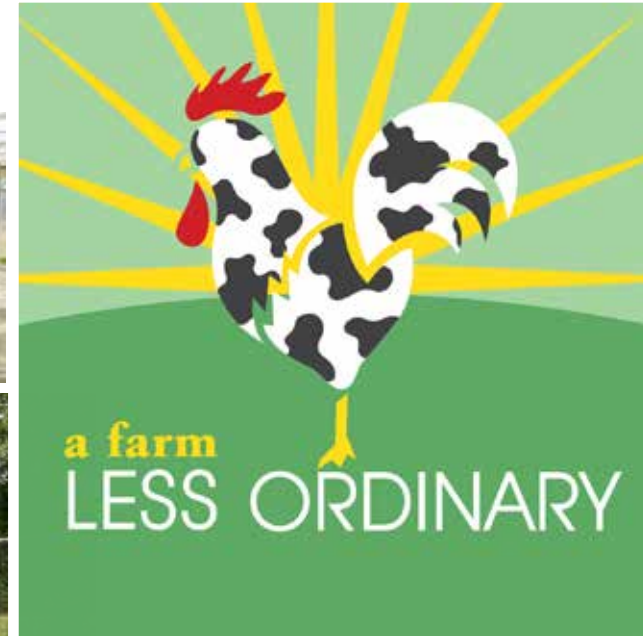
Photo by Tara Kennedy Photography

YOUR STORIES. YOUR PHOTOS. YOUR COMMUNITY.

Growing Vegetables, Providing Opportunities

making a difference

By resident Christie FitzGerald



A Farm Less Ordinary (AFLO) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide employment and a welcoming community to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD), while sustainably growing organic vegetables. They encourage a sense of self-worth and independence for the “growers” through employment opportunities. Two Loudoun parents, whose son has autism, launched AFLO in order to help address the fact that 80% of adults with ID/DD are unemployed once they leave the school system.

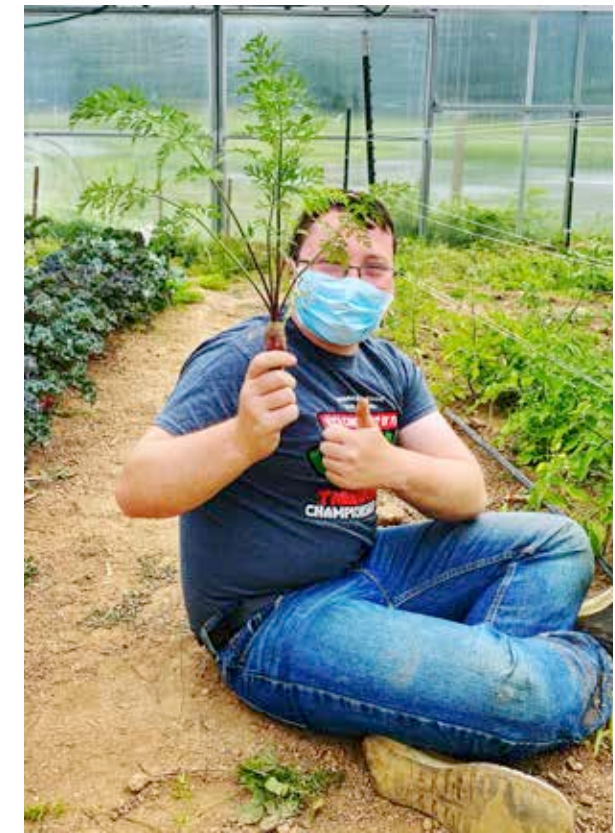
A typical day on the farm (located at either the Lovettsville or Leesburg location) begins with a meeting among the growers and the farm manager. Tasks are assigned based on each grower’s abilities as well as their particular talents and interests. A crew leader works nearby, checking in on those who can mostly work independently and working more closely with growers who may need a bit more support to complete the task correctly.

Our focus with our growers is to promote habits, social skills, and behaviors that can be used in any work setting. These include coming to work

on time, treating their coworkers with respect, taking appropriate breaks, asking questions and advocating for oneself, and paying attention to and completing assigned tasks. For many growers, this is the first job they have had, so you can imagine how meaningful it is for them to contribute and ultimately receive a real paycheck for their efforts.

In addition to job training, AFLO also helps growers feel connected to a community of other people whose talents, abilities, and personalities are “kaleidoscopic.” AFLO makes room for everyone, as long as they are willing to get their hands dirty and work. Hard work certainly builds camaraderie. After planting, maintaining, harvesting, and packaging vegetables, our growers sit down to eat their lunches alongside *friends*. Then, at the end of the day, they may bring home vegetables *they grew* to eat with *their family*.

As you can see, AFLO provides much more than locally organically grown vegetables. They provide opportunities for meaningful work in a supportive environment to an often overlooked group. You can sign up to volunteer, donate, or join AFLO’s Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) vegetable subscription program by visiting www.afarmlessordinary.org. Additionally, you will find them at the Cascade Farmers Market on Sundays in Sterling beginning in June!



If you volunteer for a great cause or know of someone whose volunteer efforts are making a difference in the local or global community, please share your story by emailing onthebanksleesburg@gmail.com.

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