

Our young children were on hands and knees investigating ants that were scurrying purposefully in and out of their anthill. It was an early day in September of 2022 and we were in the meadow of our newly created school at Holcomb Farm, established in the 1700's, and now a sustainable community-based vegetable farm with some 300 additional acres of meadows and forests.

Ants work together for the common good, ensuring sustainable living and survival for both the colony and the individual members. The colony itself is referred to as a "superorganism", in that all members work toward this common purpose.

The ants were not the only ones with purpose that day. Our children were learning about community and the roles of ants - as workers, guards, nurses and queen. They were making important connections with the roles they have in their own communities of family, school and town.

Ours is an outdoor program and we are immersed in the magical wonders of the Holcomb Farm property through all the seasons and in all the sensory pleasures of the changing weather. Our experiences extend

endlessly and are broadened to include not just the natural resources but also through the special people of our town. Our children are learning important lessons of love of land, stewardship and service modeled by the professionals and volunteers in town who have embraced our program.

Farmers have taken time out of their busy lives to show us what they do and how it relates the land and to us. Our farm excursions have included visits both in the fall and spring to Lost Acres Farm, an apple orchard, to learn about, pick and taste apples, and to visit the bee hives and learn how they and apple trees support each other; and to Emery Farm to feed the chickens and collect their eggs, and to see how maple syrup is made. At Sweet Pea Farm our children have fed pumpkins to the chickens, brought their holiday trees to feed the goats, and bottle fed the newborn kids. Farmer Kate from Maple View Farm worked with our children to show us farming and planting techniques. And we have visited farms of the families of our students to climb tractors, see the inner workings of a barn, and meet and feed

animals. Our program has been enriched, too, by excursions to McLean Game Refuge.

I feel fortunate to have been able to connect with the very busy volunteers of organizations already in support of Granby's greatest assets who willingly support our young learners. The Granby Education Fund has provided us with tools for planting, including microscopes; catch, observe and release boxes; shovels; pots and watering cans. The Granby Drummer has already featured us in one of its publications. Others generously take time from their primary mission in order to support us. Trustees of the Friends of Holcomb Farm have introduced us to the history of the land and the wonders of our immense, magical property. Volunteers from the Granby Land Trust have arranged hikes into the pristine woods of Dismal Brook Wildlife Preserve to view a porcupine nest, investigate its quills, see beaver-gnawed trees, and a beaver lodge. After one such trip it was gratifying to see the children transform their understanding when they returned to our own forest to gather sticks and make their own beaver lodge. They were reenacting community living on many levels as they worked together for a common purpose. Our excursions lead to further exploration and deeper

learning, and to see important connections to communities such as those of ants and beavers to their own. Like the beavers, the children had to work purposefully and cooperatively. For me they gave new, joyful meaning to “busy as a beaver”!

I came to Granby knowing that communities everywhere become involved in the education of their young children. What I have learned about my own small Connecticut town are the ways Granby goes beyond supporting academic fundamentals. The many people who value the farms, land, flora and fauna, and sense of community and stewardship want to actively participate in these aspects of education of our young children, as well. Like a fine-tuned ant colony where ants efficiently fill their roles for the greater good, Granby uses its greatest assets – its people and the land – to inspire its young children to learn, grow and become thoughtful, informed and healthy citizens and stewards so that they can continue this important work. An ant colony is a “superorganism”. I like to think that Granby is one, too.

by Amanda Hochschartner,
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Granby Nature Preschool, Granby CT *Where the Land,
Flora and Fauna,
Farms, Community and Service Intersect with its
Youngest Children*

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[Little Dog on the Prairie: Rosie's Journey through Laura's Lane](#) by **Amanda Kane (Hochartner)**

and Judy Kane. Through the eyes of a small bichon, we read about the places **Laura** lived, the people she loved and the joys, sorrows and adventures of life **on the prairie**. August 9, 2011 5/5