

FARM RUNNERS VISION

- For June 2024 -

It's the solstice, Wednesday June 21st, 2024 and we just got done visiting a new farmer in the area that is getting started with an immense heated greenhouse. It was one of our regular farm visits with staff members and we learned a lot about the farmers intention and how they plan to pursue Good Agricultural Practices(GAP) certification. They are able to pursue the project because we brought with us a list of things that we are asking for the season, how we want it packaged and cleaned, and a check with start up funds to get the whole thing up and running. It was inspiring to see how many Farm Runners team members signed up to spend some springtime workdays helping the operation get up and going. The work days will be great opportunities to get team members' hands in the soil, interact with the new farmer, and intermix with community volunteers that join in too.

Leaving the farm, we arrive at the Farm Runners Station and carefully pull the car into the parking lot and plug the electric car into the charging station. The new facade and entry is fresh and green with a vibrant shaded patio out front and the solstice sun is shining bright. I squint to make sure to not be blinded by the reflection of the massive solar array you can see on the roof. Approaching the station, we see the assembly happening of a couple pop-up tents for one of the weekly community events that keep surprising us with their creativity and turn out- this week is "how to build a worm farm" taught using the Farm Runners worm farm next to the greenhouse as an example.

We make it into the new storefront and hop to the cafe cashier to order a quick double espresso, then put in our order for a lunch special plate fresh made out of the Farm Runners newly expanded kitchen. This week is highlighting the seasonally preserved tomatoes from last year that were processed in the old kitchen the station grew up with. While we wait for our meal to be prepared, we wander the store to get some staples like local carrots and cucumber, and also some of the organic exotic staples we need like a perfectly ripe avocado and a dozen bananas to take. Even though the store seems bustling, we only have to wait a second to check out at the produce cashier right as our fresh-made lunch special gets delivered to our table. Two other friends saw our car out front and now are joining us at our table. They can't help but say that they made the very lunch special we were having, last week from the CSA box they got *last* week on their Saturday delivery(the Wednesday delivery had a recipe for a 'vegan surprise for two'). They comment on how great it is to have twice weekly food deliveries and that they hardly ever go to the grocery store anymore. We end up spending a couple hours chatting with people as they walk in and out of the bustling hub, but eventually have to wrap up to head to the warehouse for some afternoon work.

After a comfortable morning, we walk around the building and enter the warehouse from the back door at the loading dock. A team member flurries by with a pallet jack of tomatoes saying 'good day!' as they walk into the new cooler while a new young farmer steadies the stack. With the new Station store front, the wholesale warehouse has reclaimed the entire old

Gofer gas station. The old Station area is now a piece milled office space, employee lounge, and the kitchen has been revamped to focus solely on preserving the seasonal bounty, catering events and having a few select open hours to act as a commissary kitchen for rent. Up front, where the station cashier once was, is a roller table that the CSA team uses twice a week to pack over 200 boxes.

We wind our way into Emma's corner office passing the lounge, bookkeeper's office, station office, and sales office to have a serious chat and an interview with a new driver for the wholesale deliveries. It's a serious career offering a retirement plan, sick leave, paid time-off, an employee CSA, access to at-cost groceries, and inclusion in our all-staff annual spring break retreat. The wholesale delivery team is in need of the new driver due to making twice-weekly deliveries year round and it's expanded geographic region- now going to the Vail valley and Moab. The frequency of deliveries was made possible with the security of landing a contract with Clarks Market(due to our now Good Handling Practices certification) where Farm Runners' collective produce brand is a staple that is recognized in towns across the western slope. The new driver has to be vetted rigorously because we aren't just looking for someone for the season, but someone who can join our team as a career, and will need to be up to snuff to be disciplined to stick to our ever refined systems to create ultimate efficiency, accuracy, and safety. We outline that our team members are rooted in qualities of being healthy, enterprising, ethical, excellent, exceptional, positive, and sincerely loving.

Answering some basic questions that the new driver applicant has, we inform her about how dedicated we are to our fellow team members and how we have a culture of our own that strives to hold each other up both in the workplace and out. Of course, getting started first has the hurdle of a rigorous training schedule to prepare for and explain the way we make decisions based on umbrella company values, the clear expectation of their position, and a regimen to gain a full understanding of all the Farm Runners systems as a whole and our supplying farmers. Even though the intense work environment, we are careful to not overwhelm the applicant: we explain some of our personal values and goals that we want to honor like having financial security and manageable work hours that allow us to take vacation time guilt-free. We want to have housing security, and the confidence to be able to start a family and even pursue other business ventures or gigs.

We are excited about the potential new team member and we walk them out though the station and the front door. We tell her to get back to us in a couple weeks when she has a good time to think about what we are asking for and promising to uphold and to bring back to us what her 3 year vision is and how Farm Runners can be part of it. As we walk through the complex there are familiar faces all around, and we can just feel in the air the warmth of our community in the store shopping and the team behind the counters. We can't wait for our team to continue to grow and blossom, and to continue helping our community blossom into its full potential as we strive to support family farms across the Western Slope of Colorado connect with eaters all around.

Vision Overview

OVERALL

- Expanded building for bigger station and old gofer is now all warehouse and office
- Committed team members and growing company culture
- Clear team position mapping and regular communication meetings for teams & members
- Values based decision making & excellence in service
- Expanded staff and annual staff trips and education programs
- Regular community events and involvement

Farmers

- Help existing farmers expand and help get new farmers started.
- Contract growing/ bigger commitments/ financial support
- Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and food safety
- Enhanced connection with clientele and Farm Runners staff

Station & Kitchen

- Expanded space for Station, dining, and kitchen
- Kitchen now has made-to-order options & revamped catering program
- New Kitchen staff includes sous chef & food preservationist
- The Station is 'the' lunch destination in the valley and a community 3rd place
- Station has an espresso machine, and expanded retail product offerings
- Management teams are defined and there are adequate staffing for all aspects
- The Kitchen grosses, +400k

CSA

- 200+ member, most of who are return subscribers
- Expanded pack area and refined system
- 2x/week deliveries and added drop locations
- Expanded teams solely for CSA project

Wholesale

- Expanded warehouse and storage
- 2x/week deliveries and expanded delivery locations
- Defined position for warehouse manager and sales team
- Good Handling Practices certified
- Refined and streamlined systems for efficiency
- Expanded staff to 4 drivers, and more in the mix on pack team

Personal

- Manageable hours of work
- Guilt free vacation time
- Financial security
- Family growth
- Secure housing
- Ability to pursue other business/ownership opportunities