



Dartmouth Week

Round the Bend Farm celebrates new education center

Angie Hilsman
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A builder places the sprig on the top of the building while farm staff look on. BY ANGIE HILSMAN

Construction company [South County Post & Beam](http://www.scpb.com/home.php) attracted 75 guests while enacting an Amish tradition at their latest job site.

The company is currently building an education center at Round the Bend Farm on Allen Neck Road. The three-building project was the focal point of an impromptu party held on August 10 to celebrate the halfway point of construction. Post & Beam tied a Douglas fir sprig to the bow of the third building, an Amish tradition for signaling gra

"We're doing something kind of weird here, and that's what caretaker Geoff Kinder about the tradition.

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The staff entertained guests with home cooking—including fresh vegetables and hummus, grilled pork and potatoes, devilled eggs, and baba ganoush. Apprentice Nate Sander served local beer and wine, along with the Farmers Fizz mixed drink, from a makeshift bar in the half-finished education center.

"This represents a pause to celebrate. That's something we don't do enough of in our culture," said Round the Bend's Executive Director Desa VanLaarhoven. "So tonight we're going to celebrate and tomorrow, get back to work."

The education center will house a library and office space, two commercial kitchens, and a 150-person classroom, said VanLaarhoven. The space will give community members access to both a working farm and meeting space, while doubling as an area for staff to host barn dances, summer camps, school field trips, and workshops, she said.

"What we always wanted was to have a working farm on top of an educational center," said VanLaarhoven.

"Round the Bend is trying to encourage people to become excited about farming," added Kinder.

The \$1.5 million project first started in December 2015, but the latest two buildings have been erected within the past month. VanLaarhoven said she hopes to run programming out of the buildings by Summer 2017.

For more information on Round the Bend Farm, visit roundthebendfarm.org(<http://roundthebendfarm.org>).

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