

Gabe Trevino

### **RCCLIF Fellowship Final Reflection**

My service project with Land's Sake Farm was going better than I could have hoped before the world turned upside down with the COVID-19 crisis. I was in constant communication with multiple people at Land's Sake who were all very excited about the volunteer day I was planning. I was primarily talking with the Education Manager, Katie Metzger, but also the Farm Stand Manager (Heather Hilton), the Farm and Forestry Manager (Erik Baum), and the Executive Director (Pam Hess). I had reached out to two Brandeis Clubs: Habitat for Humanity and Symbiosis and got them both on board with the project, with an estimate of 35 volunteers. Furthermore, I reached out to Professor Brian Donahue as he was one of the original founders of Land's Sake and he supported me throughout this process.

My project addressed the need of infrastructural upgrades for Land's Sake's educational programs. The programs involve lots of time interacting with animals on the farm as well as teaching kids basic gardening practices, so my volunteer day was centered around building new rabbit hutches and garden beds. Furthermore, a large part of the volunteer day involved connecting Brandeis students with the farm and the idea of sustainable, organic agriculture as it is not far away from campus and yet not many students know about Land's Sake.

Unfortunately, I did not get to assess the impact of my project as the volunteer day never came to fruition. My plan was to give all the volunteer's an exit questionnaire about what they learned and what could've been done differently. Furthermore, I planned to get lots of input from the farm staff about how the volunteer day would have gone.

The biggest surprise while planning my project was how quickly I gathered volunteers. Going into the project, this was the step I was most worried about, and yet it only took a couple of emails to the right clubs to acquire the desired amount of volunteers. One obstacle I ran into was the concern from our education manager that rabbit hutches would be too large of a carpentry job for just volunteers, but this could have been solved by switching the focus solely to garden beds and other farm tasks such as cleaning up our storage barn.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, my project had to be canceled. However, both Habitat for Humanity and Symbiosis expressed interest in re-creating the idea of a volunteer day with Land's Sake next Spring! While I am sad I may not be able to be there in person, it warms my heart that Brandeis students care about education initiatives to teach kids about sustainable agriculture. Overall, over the course of this semester I learned a lot about what I can bring to the table for my community. I've never thought of myself as much of a leader, but this cohort truly boosted my self-confidence and made me realize that I can accomplish any task that I set my mind to so long as I am not afraid to reach out for help and take the time and care I need to plan large projects. I am incredibly thankful for this wonderful opportunity and getting to know my cohort as well as Sam during my last semester at Brandeis.