Bittersweet farm is a place filled with endless activities. Each day on the farm was different, which really created a unique aspect to working. The chickens play a large roll on the farm. We had to chase them down, pick them up by their feet, and carry them across the street where they would be placed into a different chicken coup. Then, we would collect the eggs, refill the coup with hay, and feed the chickens. Another job was to feed and care for the pigs and piglets. Feeding them was an experience, as one can only assume how much pigs love their food. They’re very heavy, loud animals, which can be intimidating while climbing into their pen, as they have the potential to charge at you. At one point, a few of the younger pigs were sick, so feeding them organic medication was yet another enjoyable experience. Another job with the pigs was loading them to be sent to the local butcher. One of the largest jobs was building a greenhouse on the farm. This required a lot of vigorous work, but was very worth it when the finished product was ready and we were able to plant new crops to grow throughout the cold winter months. Some of the crops that we planted, watered, and harvested were carrots, corn, tomatoes, onions and garlic. One of the more challenging and unique experiences on Bittersweet farm was when we took out the Tractor. While doing so, we picked up a hay bale, drove it across the street, dodged the bull, ram, and cows, and placed it into the field where it would later be dispersed. Another form of transportation on the farm is the lovely Pearl, Bittersweet’s horse. Being the only horse on the farm, Pearl required special attention in order to gain her respect. Doing so, we groomed her, which included brushing her shiny fur and taming her ombré-colored mane. Another way to earn her affection was by feeding her favorite snacks such as oats and apples. Pearl was put to work one day on the farm by attaching a sleigh to her and having her haul freshly-fallen firewood to the cabin located in the Bittersweet woods. Each and every activity offered a unique experience that could rarely be obtained anywhere else, but Bittersweet farm.

Leadership in Farming

Leadership can be found anywhere and everywhere. Throughout my Community Based Learning experience I have had the opportunity to look at the leadership roles on Bittersweet Farm. Brian, one of our community partners and owner of Bittersweet, takes on an authoritative role with his leadership; telling us what tasks need to be done, delegating, and explaining precisely how to do each job. Each week he has greeted us with a cheerful face. Before our group started on our chores, he would pull us aside to listen to some readings. Brian spoke of how we all have the chance to seize this opportunity to immerse ourselves in the farm and in the land. We then would dive into the variety of tasks. Everything from catching chickens, planting garlic, and building a greenhouse.

While we worked Brian went further to explain his practices and views of how everything around us comes from the earth, and then participates in a cycle, that will once again return to the earth. I took more of an active role in followership position during my time at the farm. I would observe the duties I was requested to do, while understanding that it was also my role to speak up if there is an issue. Whether it is a chicken loose or a charging goat, it is my duty as part of this community to say something.

As the weeks passed I began to admire Brian’s leadership on the farm with the way he communicates clearly with us, delegating tasks to our large group. He used mistakes, such as leaving the water on and overflowing the greenhouse, as a way to learn. He showed integrity, speaking honestly about the merits of his practices on the farm and his values at the earth, that will once again return to the earth. I took more of an active role in followership position during my time at the farm. I would observe the duties I was requested to do, while understanding that it was also my role to speak up if there is an issue. Whether it is a chicken loose or a charging goat, it is my duty as part of this community to say something.

Participating in this experience at Bittersweet Farm has allowed us to be exposed to entirely new opportunities, while meeting unfamiliar people who share similar interests. We tried something that pushed us out of my comfort both physically and culturally. The variety of tasks allowed us to understand and reflect on the leadership and lifestyles on the farm. Not only did the people and the animals teach us, but the land itself as it changed throughout the semester. Both of us greatly enjoyed this experience and what it has contributed to both of our First Year Programs.