

Sound Bites

In 2005, Valley Free Radio planted new programming seeds when they sent a mass mailing to community members, asking, “What do you think would make a good radio show?” Madeleine Charney responded to the call, suggesting local food and agriculture as fodder for an interesting listen, and today Farm to Fork is perhaps the grassiest, most roots-laden half-hour of the volunteer-run, grassroots station’s schedule.

Charney worked in related territory as a Reference Librarian at UMass and a liaison to the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the college’s Stockbridge School of Agriculture. Although she initially proffered the idea as a civic-minded “civilian,” Charney was soon recruited by the radio corps, and given the technical training to produce the show herself.

Together with Kelly Coleman, Program Coordinator at C.I.S.A., and Leslie Cox, Director of the Hampshire Farm Center, Charney puts together a bi-weekly show organized around seasonal agricultural themes. During every program, the trio interviews exceptional local farmers and smallscale producers. After four years on the air, Farm to Fork has seen its share of unusual guests. Charney especially remembers Pioneer Valley personalities like the Valley’s one-and-only emu farmer (Dee Dee Mares of Songline Farm) and mushroom specialist Andy Hamilton, who grows shitakes, oysters and other flavorful fungi at Mycotopia in Wendell.

The show also has an activist bent, exploring current issues in food politics and agricultural policy. During the upcoming radio season, listeners will hear all about grease cars, forest gardening in urban Holyoke, grass-fed beef and a solar-powered bed and breakfast in Florence where llamas mix with the guests.—Rebecca Touger

Tune in to Farm to Fork every other Tuesday evening from 6:30-7:30 P.M. on Valley Free Radio, 103.3 FM WXOJ-LP Northampton or via live audiostream at www.valleyfreeradio.org