



## **Mill River Folk School**

### **2025 Annual Report (Workshop Season One)**

#### **Learning. Making. Community**

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#### **A Letter to our Community**

Dear Friends

At the Mill River Folk School, we believe that learning with our hands, minds, and hearts strengthens not only individuals but entire communities.

Over the past year, students, instructors, volunteers, artists, gardeners, makers, musicians, and neighbors came together to share knowledge that is often passed person to person- through demonstrations, conversation, practice, and care. In workshops, studios, kitchens, gardens, and gathering spaces, participants learned traditional skills, explored new creative practices, and discovered the joy of making something meaningful.

What makes the Mill River Folk School unique is not simply the classes we offer. It is the spirit of connection that emerges when people gather to learn from one another. Every workshop becomes an opportunity to preserve cultural traditions, foster creativity, and strengthen relationships across generations.

As we reflect on 2025, we celebrate the instructors who generously shared their expertise, the volunteers who helped bring programs to life, the donors whose support sustains our mission, and the participants who continue to make this school a vibrant center for lifelong learning.

Thank you for being a part of this growing community.

With gratitude,

**The Mill River Folk School Board and Staff**

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#### **Our Mission**

The Mill River Folk School cultivates lifelong learning through hands-on experiences in traditional arts, crafts, agriculture, foodways, music, and practical skills. We create opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to learn from one another, preserve cultural knowledge, and strengthen community connections.

## 2025 By the Numbers

- Our first season consisted of eight workshops offered from May to October 2025
  - Eight regional instructors were hired to share their expertise across multiple disciplines.
  - Each workshop had a capacity of eight participants.
  - We partnered with the Bidwell House Museum in Monterey, MA. They supported our educational programming by hosting the 'Make a Mokok' (Indigenous bark basket) workshop.
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## Program Highlights

### Traditional Arts & Crafts

Throughout the year, students explored a wide range of traditional and contemporary craft practices. Workshops in fiber arts, woodworking, basketry and handcraft traditions provided opportunities to develop practical skills while engaging with generations of accumulated knowledge.

### Foodways & Agriculture

From gardening, cooking and seasonal food traditions, participants connected more deeply with the sources of their food and the rhythms of the natural world. These programs continue to foster resilience, sustainability, and appreciation of local knowledge.

### Cultural Traditions

The 'Make a Mokok' workshop celebrated a cultural tradition that connected us to place, history, and one another.

### Community Workshops

Many participants attended their first class at the Mill River Folk School this year. Whether learning a practical skill, exploring a creative passion, or simply meeting new people, these workshops demonstrated the power of lifelong learning to build community.

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## Stories from Folk School

"I came to learn a new skill and left with new friends"

"The instructors are generous with their knowledge and make everyone feel welcome, regardless of experience level"

"The Folk School reminds me that learning can happen at any age"

"These classes help preserve skills that might otherwise disappear"

## Growing Community Partnerships

The Mill River Folk School thrives on collaboration.

In 2025 we continued to work alongside local farms, artists, educators, libraries, cultural organizations, and community groups to expand access to learning opportunities throughout the region. These partnerships strengthen our programs while helping us reach new audiences and foster deeper community engagement.

## Stewardship and Sustainability

Careful stewardship of resources remains central to our work

Support from class registrations, individual donations, grants, and community partners allow the Mill River Folk School to

- Expand educational programming
  - Support instructors
  - Invest in future growth
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## Revenue Sources

- Workshop Tuitions
- Individual Contributions
- Foundation Grants
- Special Events
- Other Income

Total \$11,282.00

## Expenses

- Programming
- Instructor Stipends
- Material Fees
- Marketing & Outreach
- Administrative Support

Total \$7,602.83

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## Our instructors

The heart of the Mill River Folk School is its instructors.

Their expertise, creativity, patience, and generosity make every class possible. By sharing traditional skills, artistic practices, and practical knowledge, they preserve valuable cultural traditions while inspiring new generations of learners.

We are deeply grateful for their commitment.

## **Volunteers and Supporters**

This work would not be possible without the volunteers, donors, and advocates who contribute their time, resources and enthusiasm.

Your support helps ensure that hands-on learning remains accessible and vibrant in our region.

Every contribution-whether teaching a class, volunteering at an event, offering financial support, or spreading the word-helps strengthen our community.

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## **Looking Ahead**

As we move into 2026, the Mill River Folk School will continue expanding opportunities for hands-on learning, community engagement, and cultural preservation.

We envision a future where traditional skills remain relevant, creativity flourishes, and people of all ages can gather to learn, make, and grow together.

In a rapidly changing world, places that foster connection, curiosity, and shared knowledge matter more than ever.

Together, we are building a stronger, more resilient community-one class, one skill, and one conversation at a time.

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## **Thank You**

Thank you for being a part of the Mill River Folk School community.

Whether you have attended a class, taught a workshop, volunteered your time, or supported our mission through a donation, you have helped sustain a place where learning and community thrive.

We look forward to learning alongside you in the year ahead.

## **Mill River Folk School**

New Marlborough, Massachusetts

[www.millriverfolkschool.org](http://www.millriverfolkschool.org)