

Suncoast Tropical Fruit and Vegetable Club
Meeting Notice

Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 13, 2014
Where: Main Room Nokomis Community Center
234 Nippino Trail East, Nokomis, FL 34275
Agenda: 6:30 pm Chat and Tasting Table
7:00 pm Introduction and Presentation
8:00 pm Plant Raffle

Speaker: Emily Hall, Aloe Organics Farm

Topic: Aloe Organics: Organic Farming in Memory of Allison Hall Nelson

On the one hand, the story of Aloe Organics Farm is truly a sad story. On the other hand, it is a story that may inspire us all. Aloe Organics Farm is a certified organic farm located in Arcadia. We are fortunate to have Emily Hall, and her mother, Kay Hall, join us for our August meeting and share with us what they do and how they do it for the legacy of Allison Hall Nelson through Aloe Organics Farm.

Allison Hall Nelson, at age 28 and two months away from marrying the love of her life, was diagnosed with stage four metastatic breast cancer and a prognosis of only one year to live. As the news set in, Allison ("Aloe," as she was called by her husband) and her family and friends began to contemplate ways to improve her prognosis, looking into natural means of fighting cancer and boosting her health. Her doctors stressed nutrition and its importance on her quality of life and possibly her prognosis. Allison made changes to her diet, and organic produce was on the menu as an integral key to her health.

Allison felt she was moving against a ticking clock that was much too short, and her biggest fear was she would pass away without leaving her mark on the world. Allison spoke openly to her family of her desire to leave a lasting impression for future generations and help others with cancer.

Then came the idea that healthy food choices can and do make a difference in health, both in preventing diseases like cancer and in improving the outcomes of those already with cancer. Out of those conversations evolved the idea of an organic farm. Without hesitation, her family set aside a portion of the Hall Family ranch in Arcadia to grow organic produce and make Allison's vision a reality. With the help of organic farmers Chris and Eva Worden of Worden Farm in Punta Gorda, they identified a plot on the ranch which was selected with Allison's approval.

Aloe Organics Farm is now thriving with Allison's vision alive.

The Center for Building Hope in Lakewood Ranch works with families of children with cancer. Every week during growing season, the farm donates about 20% of the farm's weekly harvest for the families. Any unclaimed produce is offered to Survivors Rock, a support group for women in their 20s, 30s and 40s. Anything after that trickles out to additional Center programs.

To cover operating costs, the rest of Aloe's weekly harvest is sold locally. If any of you have purchased organic produce at Fruitville Grove or enjoyed dinner at Pomona Bistro and Wine Bar, then you have enjoyed Aloe's produce. Although the farm is still young, the family says they will continue to expand as they aspire to give more. The more Aloe can sell the more it can do for the community and the families with kids who have these diseases.

Kay Hall and her family have suffered the terrible tragedy of losing a child to cancer but the legacy Allison left with her family, Aloe Organics Farm, and for future generations is perhaps the greatest gift that will influence us all.