

Grow Food Northampton reaches \$670,000 goal

**'Elated and exhausted,'
organizers set to buy
120 acres of farmland**

By DAN CROWLEY
Staff Writer

NORTHAMPTON — Grow Food Northampton achieved its \$670,000 fundraising goal on Monday, clearing the way for the sale of 120 acres of protected farmland in Florence and the

creation of a community-supported agriculture farm.

In a final drive to meet a Jan. 31 deadline, the nonprofit Grow Food Northampton received a \$5,000 donation from the Kestrel Trust in Amherst as well as 5 percent of sales proceeds on Monday from Whole Foods in Hadley to reach its goal. "We are elated and exhausted, but above all, enormously proud that our community seized the opportunity to create a lasting agricultural legacy on this fertile land, and came forward with serious finan-

cial support in a very short period," said Lilly Lombard, board president of Grow Food Northampton. "How our grandchildren will thank us."

Grow Food is buying the property from the Trust for Public Land, which partnered with the city to buy the entire 187 acres of the former Bean and Allard farms for \$2.5 million. The closing of land purchase is tentatively scheduled for late February.

The Northampton Community Farm, as it will be called, will host several organic community-supported agri-

culture operations, a 17-acre organic community garden and agricultural education site and small farm incubator program. The farm itself will feature a vegetable community-supported agriculture farm on 37 acres of the former Bean Farm. Grow Food is close to inking a 99-year lease with farmers Jen Smith and Nate Frigard of Crimson & Clover to run Northampton Community Farm. In addition to farming, parts of the entire 187 acres of the Bean and Allard farms are also being used for conservation and recreation purposes,

including a new complex on 24 acres at the northeast corner of Spring and Meadow streets. Grow Food has agreed to lease 17 acres of the Allard Farm south of Meadow Street to the city for a 400-plot community garden.

Kestrel Trust executive director Kristin DeBoer said the group was pleased to provide the grant. In all, Lombard said some 1,300 known donors contributed to the fundraising campaign, which began last year. Grow Food is planning a spring groundbreaking celebration on the farmland after the spring thaw.