

# Brattleboro's Strolling of the Heifers 10th Anniversary

By Claire '12  
Photos by Georgina '12

## Farm Page



<top> **CLAIRE '12 (LEFT) AND LILY '12 WITH THEIR GROOMED HEIFERS ALL DRESSED UP AND READY TO STROLL** <above> **THE BOOMING METROPOLIS OF BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT, GRINDS TO A HALT FOR THE TENTH ANNUAL STROLLING OF THE HEIFERS** <right> **THE AUTHOR AND HER PAL, DISCO, HAVING SOME QUALITY TIME**

**When I heard of Strolling of the Heifers I laughed and thought, “This is a perfect example of why I came to Putney: to experience things that will make my future kids say, ‘Wow, you did WHAT?’”** At Putney, a stroll with a heifer is really not that unusual—it’s one of the options available for Project Week. What could be better than leisurely walks with a cow on spring afternoons, culminating with a starring role in a parade? I signed up immediately, looking forward to my first parade appearance and a final chance to work with the wise and wonderful Margie [*Levine, Elm Lea Farm’s assistant farm manager, who is taking a one-year leave of absence to spend time with a new grandchild*].

My first lesson was that working with a heifer may be a stroll around campus but it is no walk in the park. My heifer, Disco, like all young cows, was reluctant to leave her stall with a stranger. Tugging and cow whispering did not ease her anxiety. I had to resort to a slap on the butt and a “hup” from Margie [*ed. note: Disco’s butt, not Claire’s*]. Finally we were on our way. Disco was ready for a romp in the spring air but was not happy about having me in the lead. She had her own ideas of where to go and how to get there. I am all for playing and having a good time, but I knew we had only six days to be ready to march in an orderly fashion down Main Street in Brattleboro. Disco did not understand we shared a common goal. So I had to focus on her immediate needs and interests which were grass, relief of anxiety, and more grass.

Disco disliked being part of a crowd, a worrisome trait considering we were going to be surrounded by dozens of heifers in Brattleboro. So we started with small steps toward our big goal. We joined the crowd of other Putney strollers for short

periods and then, when Disco began nervously jumping around, I would guide her away from the others to a grassy area where she could munch while I shared soothing thoughts with her. Then we would rejoin the others. Each time we practiced our stroll, Disco increased the length of time she could remain with the crowd. I looked forward to our twice-a-day practices even though I always had to adapt my pace to hers. I thought I was going to be the leader but what I discovered was that Disco and I could only be successful if we became a cooperative team. As long as I respected her needs for grass and a little bit of TLC she accepted my guidance and tolerated my attempts to become “one with my cow.”

I am not sure if heifers have memories but I will always remember Disco and how much fun we had representing the spirit of Putney in Strolling of the Heifers.

