

The Land Stewardship



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

Keeping the Land & People Together

Letter

Vol. 28, No. 2

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Spring 2010



How one community connects school lunch, family farms and local food (see page 22).

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 - Family Farm Breakfast*—
 - Immigrant Myths & Realities*—
 - Priming the Pump for Good Public Policy*—
 - LSP Summer Celebrations*—
 - Meth Madness, Memory of Trees*—



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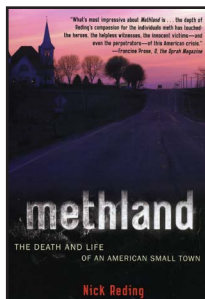
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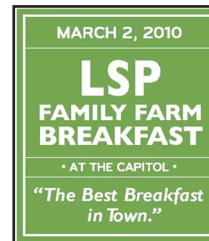
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How FB brought together 3 generations of women

A birthday present turns into a spark for continuing a farm's family legacy

By Gayla Marty

Our family—my husband Patrick Mavity, myself and our daughter Susanna “Claire” Mavity—attended the Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings course in New Prague, Minn., in 2004-05. I paid for the registration as a birthday present to Pat and myself, and then Claire, who had just returned from a year at college in Seattle, joined us. We explained it to our families and friends as “putting Gayla’s farm ghost to rest.”

At the time, I was not considering ever returning to east-central Minnesota where I grew up. After the Marty farm was sold despite my strong appeal to be given a chance at it, I felt that Patrick and I weren’t needed or wanted there. We also thought the area was pretty built up—a new, huge, private prison built 1.5 miles south of my mom’s home place and a casino in Hinckley about 20 miles north tend to light up the night sky. Compared to southeastern and southwestern Minnesota or western Wisconsin, we didn’t know of much happening involving sustainable agriculture in the area.

Through Farm Beginnings, several things happened:

◆ It became very clear to Patrick that he was not going to be a driver for a farming or rural enterprise. Our kids were nearly grown, he’s a busy fiddle player in the metro area and he wanted to focus on music. But he didn’t want to stand in our way. He’s committed to sustainable agriculture and is an urban food activist.

◆ It became clear to me that my mom’s family farm was in a good location. After considering my “ideal” locations in the driftless region along the Mississippi and in the dark-night-sky region of western Minnesota, and after getting a better understanding of the barriers people face in securing land from the stories of our classmates, I looked with fresh eyes at the land that had passed through my mother’s side of the family, where my parents had built a house and retired.

I began to see the Highway 61/I-35 and Highway 70 corridors as good market access. I became interested in the village of Rock Creek, essentially a rural township facing big development pressures. I began to meet people and to learn more about the area, which had changed a lot in the nearly 30 years since I’d moved away, getting a better sense of what I could contribute. And three of my four grandparents were born in that very township, so my roots are there. I started getting creative ideas, talked about my historic passion for barn preservation, and got great feedback from our classmates.

◆ Claire saw what her generation is doing in rural Minnesota. It wasn’t enough for her to strike out on her own, but she got excited when we visited farms. She has been a cheese connoisseur since before she could talk so the visits sparked her interest in artisan cheese production and goats.

◆ My mother, living back on her own home place, got interested. In 2004-05, my father entered what would be the final year of his life, so Farm Beginnings gave my mom hope about the future. The impressive curriculum and materials provided a great basis for conversation and gave us all a common vocabulary to talk about our interests and dreams. Mom and Claire found out they had the same vision for the pastures along the creek. My dad also got a lot of peace and inspiration. He saw my sadness about the Marty farm validated, but my hope for the future renewed.

Our process is slow, but to sum things up, our Farm Beginnings cohort now consists of three generations of women—a grandmother, mom and daughter. In 2008, I took a less-than-fulltime job in order to spend time at mom’s place and finish a book about the Marty farm that I started long ago. Claire got a job at a local startup company producing organic flax crackers and began to learn all the phases of building a sustainable, marketable enterprise. In 2009, we had a grazing assessment on mom’s land through Farm Beginnings to move us to the next step. Patrick is happily playing music and asking good questions to move us along. □

Gayla Marty is the author of Memory of Trees: A Daughter’s Story of a Family Farm. See page 26 for a review of the book. For more on LSP’s Farm Beginnings program see page 16.

Springing out from the ‘belly of the beast’

Envisioning a local food system based on diversity & appropriate size

By Daniel Miller

Denise O’Brien stepped up to the podium at the massive Des Moines Convention Hall looking like a decorative squash in the middle of a parking garage. Her big smile and bright multi-colored blouse fought valiantly against the gray walls and fluorescent lights.

As an Iowa farmer and local food activist, O’Brien was the first to speak before

the crowd of over 600 gathered at the 2009 Community Food Conference last fall.

“Welcome to Iowa,” she began. “Or as we like to call it around here, the belly of the beast.”

This last October, I drove into “the belly” from the north on Interstate 35. I was met by a sea of gold and burnt orange. As far as the eye could see in every direction were ripe, razor-straight rows of corn and soybeans.

The ugliness of “the beast” is its bigness and lack of diversity. For bigness, think of

200-foot windmills, giant steel power poles, and unending fields of corn and beans. For diversity imagine that in 120 miles along Iowa I-35, I didn’t see a single head of livestock until the Ames USDA Veterinary Lab, which looks like a nuclear facility with a few cows and sheep grazing around it.

Forty years ago, E.F. Schumacher, the author of *Small is Beautiful*, wrote that, “Large-scale mechanization and heavy

Belly, see page 4...

...Belly, from page 3

chemicalization makes it impossible to keep man in real touch with living nature; in fact, it supports all the most dangerous modern tendencies of violence, alienation, and environmental destruction."

"Reconciliation of man with the natural world," he added, "is no longer merely desirable, it has become a necessity."

This necessity showed signs of springing to action at the Community Food Conference. Hundreds of local food organizers from all over the world came together to discuss their work on building better local food systems. The head of the USDA, Tom Vilsack, told the assembly they have a friend in the White House and highlighted the government's local food campaign called "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food."

Indeed, a movement toward a more sustainable model of farming is well underway.

But, of course, we have a long way to go. Much more needs to be done to show people the health benefits of eating locally. We need to show them it doesn't just put better food in our stomachs and less chemicals on the land — it is a powerful agent of rebuilding community. We have to remember that our goal in sustainable agriculture should ultimately be a spiritual one to reinvigorate our rural and urban communities — reconciling ourselves to the land and to each other. This only happens if we put many more farmers on the land.

We hear often of the need for more farmers and more farm workers in the local food movement. It's true that in today's food system without our migrant and stationary farm workers, most of us wouldn't get fed. However, as we continue to build a new system within the shell of the old, we need to promote small-scale family farmers and not the model of farm managers and farm workers. The "agribusiness" model (even if it's certified organic) will always threaten to turn "Know Your Farmer" into "Know Your Farm Manager."

In my realm of organic vegetable farming, we've seen the growth of a few large organic vegetable farms going in the direction of the California mega-production model.

In my mind, there are three glaring examples of this in our part of the North Country. Gardens of Eagan in the Twin Cities area, now owned by the Wedge Community Co-op, was acquired by utilizing a loophole in a law meant to preserve family

ownership of farms. Harmony Valley Farm in southwest Wisconsin and Featherstone Farm in southeast Minnesota have 1,500 and 600 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) members, respectively.

These farms are no doubt committed to better soil and food. But operating on an ever-expanding scale of production and distribution, they become specialized organic businesses with managers and workers and no farmers.

There's a different model.

In southeastern Minnesota, there is a small, vibrant group of organic (mostly non-certified) family farmers. I work closely with two families that make their living from the farm. Vegetables are the main source of income on one, and a major source on the other.

• • •

The "agribusiness" model (even if it's certified organic) will always threaten to turn "Know Your Farmer" into "Know Your Farm Manager."

• • •

Basically, they operate in our traditional model of the small, diverse farm. They produce a large variety of crops and products from the farm, drawing from the ancient wisdom that when one thing is down, another is up. This means raising a diverse range of crops and animals. Instead of relying totally on commodity markets, they sell their produce through farmers' markets, CSA subscriptions and some wholesaling.

They are limited in how much they can grow by what their family labor can support. They may hire a few people from the area for the busiest parts of the season and sometimes take in a couple interns for parts of the

summer. Figuring out their ideal sustainable size is a priority. They have looked to find a balance of what they can handle and what will keep them in harmony both with the land and their neighbors.

In this model, you can easily support a family with seven acres of vegetables in production each year. You probably won't be considered a financial "success," but you make a decent living by living simply and frugally. The incalculable benefits are the joy of doing real tangible work, being intimately connected to the land and your community, and raising a family that will experience these things.

This model works and I believe it's the best way to get more farmers on the land.

It's always alluring to grow and expand your markets with vertical integration, cheap labor, more machinery and more technology. But this is the slavery of perpetual growth.

I've heard the arguments: "We need farms of all sizes" and "We need big farms to realistically fill demand." But a few farms should not dominate the majority of the local wholesale market. A system of farmer-owned co-ops selling produce together can support a huge local food movement.

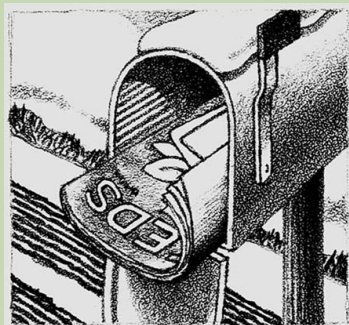
Meanwhile, Washington may or may not make dramatic policy changes to support local food. The health insurance industry may or may not have a colossal battle with agribusiness over the unhealthy nature of our industrialized nutrition system, resulting in a massive push for local food. The Mayo Clinic may or may not buy local potatoes for its cafeterias.

What I know is that there are a lot of young people who want to farm. By mixing traditional wisdom with some creativity and hard work, they can make it happen.

They can also use a little help. Let's do all we can to support small-scale, diversified family farming. □

Daniel Miller, of Millville, Minn., has recently started his own CSA and market garden.

What's on your mind?



Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms? We like to print letters, commentaries, essays, poems, photos and illustrations related to issues we cover. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Commentaries and letters published in the *Land Stewardship Letter* do not necessarily represent the views of the Land Stewardship Project.

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Plowing Through the Numbers

Every five years, the USDA releases its *U.S. Census of Agriculture*, a statistical compilation that provides a snapshot of trends in this country's food and farming system. The 2007 Census was released to the public in 2009, and Land Stewardship Project member Chris Vanecek has combed through the numbers for us. The *Land Stewardship Letter* is periodically featuring summaries of some of that combing. The 2007 Census is available at your local library, or by visiting www.agcensus.usda.gov.

Older, more women & a touch of color

◆ It's a bit of a hackneyed phrase, but there's more than a little truth behind it: the face of agriculture is changing. As the 2007 Census shows, it's not only aging, but becoming a little less dominated by white men.

◆ The average age of U.S. farmers increased from 55.3 in 2002 to just over 57 in 2007. The number who were 75 and older has grown 20 percent since 2002, while the number under 25 decreased 30 percent.

◆ One of the most significant demographic shifts documented by the 2007 Census is in the number of women operating farms. There were 306,209 female principal operators in 2007, up from 237,819 in 2002. That's a 30 percent increase.

◆ Of the 2.2 million farms in the U.S., 1.83 million have a white male principal operator. But the 2007 Census shows that principal farm operators of all races and ethnic backgrounds have increased 4 percent since 2002.

◆ Principal farm operators of Hispanic origin appear to be the fastest growing group, with their numbers increasing by 10 percent since 2002. □

Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

→ **Myth:** Local and regional food systems don't help the economy.

→ **Fact:**

The local and regional food movement has enjoyed a lot of positive publicity in recent years. One of the reasons is that there is an assumption that applying the "buy local" philosophy to food and farming automatically keeps more wealth in the community, creating the kind of jobs and other economic activity that are sustainable in the long term.

The fact is, until relatively recently there has not been a whole lot of solid research to back such feel-good claims. This has left the local/regional food movement vulnerable to criticism from supporters of a more trade-oriented agricultural system. That's no surprise. After all, our mainstream globalized food and farming system can point to billions of dollars of economic activity as a result of trade. "It's been trade that makes economies wealthy," Arthur Rolnick, director of research for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, was quoted as saying in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* recently.

No doubt trade produces a lot of economic activity, but as analyses by Ken Meter and others show, little actually stays in local communities. For example, Meter has shown that in west-central Minnesota, which raises 23 percent of the state's corn and 22 percent of its soybeans, \$1 billion is being sucked out of the region annually because farmers are exporting raw commodi-

ties raised with imported inputs and consumers are eating food that's mostly brought in from outside the area.

But is production and consumption of local fruits, vegetables and livestock products any better for the local economy? As local and regional foods edge towards mainstream acceptance, it's attracted some hard-eyed analyses from economists who have crunched the numbers to determine if indeed local food is good for Main Street businesses. It turns out it stands up pretty well.

For example, a recent analysis by economists at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture found local food systems could provide a significant economic boost for six Midwestern states, especially compared to the economic benefits provided by corn and soybean production.

The Center set up a scenario where in the six states—Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin—production of 28 fruits and vegetable crops would be increased enough to meet demand, based on population, during a typical growing season (about four months of the year) and longer for crops that could be stored, such as onions and garlic.

The result? There would be about \$882 million in sales at the farm level, more than 9,000 farm level jobs created, 1,168 retail level jobs produced, and about \$395 million in farm-level labor income generated. If 50 percent of that production were sold via producer-owned markets, the region would need a total of 1,405

establishments staffed by 9,652 jobs earning \$287.64 million in labor incomes.

For the six states in total, more than 270,000 cropland acres would be needed to provide those extra fruits and vegetables. That's roughly equivalent to the amount of cropland planted in one of Iowa's counties.

That means corn and soybean acres would be displaced, which would be a net economic plus for the region, according to the study. Corn and soybean production on those displaced acres currently supports 2,578 jobs and \$59.12 million in labor income—that's impressive, but pales in comparison to the economic activity generated by local food systems.

→ **More information:**

• To read Ken Meters' analyses of local food economies, see www.crcworks.org.

• The Leopold Center's report, "Selected Measures of the Economic Values of Increased Fruit and Vegetable Production Consumption in the Upper Midwest" is available at www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/marketing_files/midwest.html.

Myth Busters on the Internet

You can download pdf versions of Myth Busters at www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-myth.htm.



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LSP News

Breakfast video

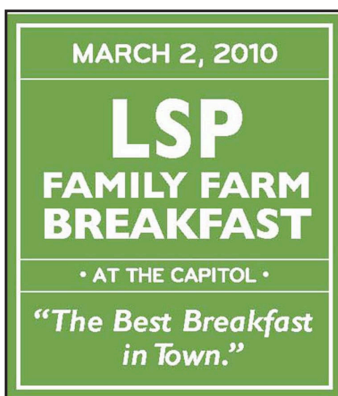
To watch a short video of the breakfast, see LSP's new video site at www.youtube.com/user/LSPNOW. □

2010 Family Farm Breakfast & Lobby Day at the Capitol

The Land Stewardship Project held its fifth annual Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol March 2 at Christ Lutheran Church on Capitol Hill in Saint Paul, Minn.

Nineteen farmers and others supplied food for the event, which served over 200 lawmakers, LSP members and friends of LSP. Chef

Brad Beal prepared the breakfast, and more than a dozen volunteers helped serve the food and clean up. Numerous local businesses and organizations also supported the breakfast by purchas-



ing advertisements in the official program.

Over the years, this event has evolved into a great opportunity for citizens and legislators to come together over locally produced food to discuss policies that promote sustainable rural communities and vibrant family farms. Several citizens invited their legislators to meet them at the breakfast.

After the breakfast, LSP held a lobbying training, and several members later met with their Senators and Representatives to discuss the importance of supporting legislation that promotes family farms and local food systems, as well as opposing proposals that would weaken the regulation of factory farms.

For information on LSP's policy work at the 2010 Minnesota Legislature, see pages 12-14. □



Sen. Patricia Torres Ray (DFL-Minneapolis), who is the Majority Whip in the Minnesota Senate, talked at the breakfast about her plans to help develop a local foods caucus at the Legislature. (LSP photo)



Over 200 lawmakers and Land Stewardship Project members were served locally produced food during the fifth annual Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol. (LSP photo)



After the Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol March 2 (see page 6), LSP members and staff met with lawmakers such as Speaker of the House Margaret Anderson Kelliher to discuss the importance of legislation that supports family farms and opposes the weakening of factory farm regulations. (LSP photo)

SE MN Local Foods Forum & Expo

The Land Stewardship Project helped put on the fifth annual Southeast Minnesota Local Foods Forum and Expo March 13 at Winona State University. As in the past, the focus was on growing, cooking, eating, buying and selling food grown close to home.

Besides locally produced food served by chefs (right photo) Tim Flatten (left) and Randy Shadle of Chartwells Dining Services at WSU, this year's event featured the awarding of a "Local Food Hero" recognition to Dave and Karen Ledebuhr of Ledebuhr Meat Processing in Winona. For the past several years, the Ledebuhrs have processed locally produced meat products for numerous farmers in the region. Dave (left) is pictured accepting the award from Jim Riddle, the University of Minnesota's Organic Outreach Coordinator.

The Southeast Minnesota Local Foods Forum and Expo is hosted by the Local Foods Committee of the Winona County Economic Development Authority, of which LSP is an active member. For information on LSP's community based foods work, see pages 20-25. (photos by Caroline van Schaik)





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LSP News

LSP state policy meetings

During February and March, the Land Stewardship Project held a series of special meetings for over 100 members in central and southeast Minnesota to discuss issues that the organization was focusing on during the 2010 session of the Minnesota Legislature. Issues covered included local control, rural health care, corporate control of agriculture and local/regional food systems.

Meetings were held in Freeport, New Ulm and St. Charles. At the meeting in St. Charles (right), LSP members (l to r) such as Inga Haugen, Judy Hoffman and Leslea Hodgson shared stories about the challenges of finding and keeping affordable health care.

"I have come to feel very controlled by my health insurance," said Hodgson, a Farm Beginnings graduate who farms with her husband Brad in southeast Minnesota. "I am not comfortable being under-insured and paying a \$539 month premium."

For more information on LSP's state policy priorities, see pages 12-14. (LSP photos) □



Rivers & farming

Land Stewardship Project member Richie Swanson pointed out wildlife habitat during a “How Clean Farms and Rivers Save Endangered Wildlife” nature walk in southeast Minnesota April 17. Swanson, an expert birder and naturalist, led wildlife tours of Aghaming Park and Preserve, which is in the marshy backwaters of the Mississippi River near Winona. During the tour he and LSP staff members discussed how farms can reduce run-off, improve water quality and help wildlife in the floodplain and uplands by utilizing such methods as managed rotational grazing and diverse crop rotations. There was also a discussion about how eaters can support river-friendly farming systems via their food buying choices.

To download the LSP fact sheet, “How Farms Can Improve Water Quality,” see www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-factsheets.html.

For more information, contact LSP’s Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org. (photo by Caroline van Schaik) □



Roberts named top chef by Beard Foundation

Land Stewardship Project member **Alex Roberts** has been named the best regional chef in the Midwest by the James Beard Foundation.

Roberts owns Restaurant Alma and Brasa Premium Rotisserie, Twin Cities restaurants that are committed to organic, sustainably-produced local food. He works with various local farmers to source his food, and has been a featured chef during the annual Food Alliance Midwest Minnesota Cooks event at the Minnesota State Fair.

Restaurant Alma has won numerous



Alex Roberts

awards and 2010 marks the fourth time Roberts has been nominated for the Beard Foundation’s best chef in the Midwest honor. Also nominated in 2010 for the award was LSP member Lenny Russo of Heartland Restaurant in Saint Paul.

Deemed the “Oscars of the food world” by *Time* magazine, the James Beard Foundation Awards (www.jamesbeard.org) are the country’s most coveted honor for chefs, food writers, restaurant designers and others involved in the food and beverage industry. □

Fisher-Merritts MOSES Farmers of the Year

Land Stewardship Project members John and Jane Fisher-Merritt, along with their son Janaki, are the recipients of the 2010 MOSES Organic Farmer of the Year Award.

For over three decades the Fisher-Merritts have been leaders in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), as well as in efforts to educate consumers about the importance of local foods. They own and operate Food Farm, a certified organic CSA vegetable operation that also produces poultry and eggs near the northeast Minnesota community of Wrenshall. Food Farm also markets to restaurants and the Whole Foods Co-op in Duluth, Minn.

John and Jane started their vegetable-farming career on rented land in Oregon in 1973. They moved to northern Minnesota in 1975 and have been at their present location since 1988. Over the years, the farm has become a model for producing vegetables in the harsh climate of northern Minnesota, and the Fisher-Merritts have hosted numerous field days that showcase their innovative production and vegetable storage systems.

The Fisher-Merritts have also mentored graduates of LSP’s Farm Beginnings Program (see page 16) and participated in the MOSES Farmer-to-Farmer mentoring program. John and Jane are in the process of selling the land

to Janaki and his wife Annie Dugan. Janaki is a former LSP intern.

The Organic Farmer of the Year Award is presented annually by MOSES (Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service) to organic farmers who have demonstrated innovations in organic farming and livestock management; excellence in enhancing and managing farm resources like soil, water, wildlife and biodiversity; and who serve to educate and inspire farmers, consumers and others in their communities.

For more information on nominating someone for the 2011 award, see www.mosesorganic.org or call 715-778-5775.

Immigrants & immigrant myths

LSP members stand up & speak out about one of the most contentious issues of our time

By Doug Nopar

During the past year, a growing number of Land Stewardship Project members in southeast Minnesota have begun to examine more deeply the issue of immigration, particularly as it pertains to agriculture and rural communities. Some members have been in direct dialogue with Latino immigrant workers, many of whom work on farms or in food processing. Other members have attended immigrant rights workshops. Their objective has been three-fold: build friendship; gain an understanding of how Latino workers and longtime LSP members have both been hurt by U.S. farm, trade and immigration policy; and lastly, begin to seek solutions together that can benefit both immigrant workers and native-born farmers and workers.

On March 21, more than 200,000 immigrant rights supporters and their allies, including a bus load from southern Minnesota organized by Centro Campesino (the Farmworker Center), rallied in Washington, D.C. Their aim was to push the federal government to enact comprehensive immigration reform. This marked the beginning of what promises to be a vibrant debate in the coming months. In light of this, LSP members have submitted letters that have been run in newspapers throughout the region. In particular, members are concerned that misinformation and exaggeration will drive the discussion about immigration reform. Following are excerpts of what these LSP members have written on this subject lately.

• • •

I have been prejudiced

"I have to admit that, for many years, I have had some real myths in my mind about immigrants — myths that I never really challenged. I probably have been a bit prejudiced, too. But I remember being at a legislative hearing awhile back and the issue of immigration came up. I saw emerge in that room the side of America that is totally prejudiced, and it made me very uncomfortable. All of these negative myths about Mexican immigrants, for example, have become part of our national psyche, and it's a real shame. As a farmer, it's been interesting to realize that many of the immigrant work-

ers here in southern Minnesota are farmers too. They come from the farms and farming villages of Mexico."

— **Dwight Ault, Austin, Minn.**

Ault farms with his wife Becky and son Grant. He has participated in several community dialogues on immigration.

Paying their share

"When I hear these myths about immigrants, I get upset. These comments are unfair and unjust. Some people just want to believe everything they hear about immigrants taking our jobs, getting welfare, etc. But these myths are just not true. When it comes to crime, it's not the case that most immigrant workers are causing trouble.

of visas don't equal the # of jobs

The U.S. only issues 5,000 visas for unskilled workers each year. This represents only 1 percent of the 500,000 undocumented workers finding work in the U.S. annually, according to "The Economic Impact of Immigrants in Minnesota, 2009," a September 2009 report produced by the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. No wonder undocumented immigrants can't just get in line for a visa.

Percentage-wise, they're not responsible for crime any more than anyone else. Some complain that immigrants don't pay taxes. That is not true either, even for undocumented workers. If they've got a job and they get a paycheck, they pay taxes. Just look at their pay stub. Social Security, Medicare, federal and state taxes are all taken out of their paycheck."

— **Darline Freeman, St. Charles, Minn.**

Freeman is on LSP's Winona County organizing committee. Through LSP and other community groups, she has had extensive contact with the Latino community.

Allowing legalization

"I know immigrants who work in miserable conditions processing meat and poultry, enduring constant wet and cold. These immigrants are not threatening our economy,

they are keeping it going... With their hard work ethic, devotion to family and sense of initiative, our country needs immigrants more than ever. Those without documents deserve the chance to legalize their status by paying substantial fines, learning English and going through a background check."

— **Barbara Allaire, Winona, Minn.**

Allaire is a specialist in teaching English as a second language.

A nation of immigrants

"Under much hardship, my own ancestors emigrated from Germany in the mid-nineteenth century. I have greatly benefited from their courage, their hard labor, their community building and their citizenship. Now I also benefit from the spirit, culture, labor and services that many immigrants provide the community of Mankato, our state, our country and myself. One aspect of sustainability is just treatment of laborers. If we as employers and communities rely on these immigrants to provide products and services we need, I believe we certainly are called to help them live in dignity. Even more, because we are one in the great web of life, I want to be among those who encourage our national leaders and ourselves to create immigration reform that allows others to seek the dreams our ancestors had and that have benefited us."

— **Sister Kathleen Mary Kiemen, Mankato, Minn.**

Kiemen is a member of LSP's Board of Directors and heads the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry for the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Legislative reform needed

"I have recently reviewed some of the main points included in the Immigration Reform Bill (sponsored by Illinois U.S. Representative Luis Gutierrez) and ask that we as U.S. citizens study this bill and consider asking our Congressional Representative to support it. The bill outlines reforms that address the concerns of U.S. citizens and migrant workers. It proposes a new visa that would improve and expand the present process. It would also address the treatment and conditions of those people who are U.S. born citizens and may be working in unde-

Immigrants, see page 11...

sirable or marginal employment.

“The changes would offer broader opportunity in a shorter time to migrant applicants who are willing to comply with the necessary criteria. That includes background and security checks, compliance with taxes, and a payment of a fee to help cover the application and training process. The visa would be conditional and the persons would have to show good character and compliance with all conditions.”

— **Bonnie Austin, Wykoff, Minn.**

Austin farms with her husband Joe. Last year, she participated in immigrant rights workshops led by Centro Campesino and Advocates for Human Rights.

Politicizing the word ‘immigrant’

“As we have politicized the very word ‘immigration’ we have lost touch with our own histories. Despite our common histories, we continue to deny rights to people on whom we rely heavily for valued commodities and services, merely because they were not born within our borders. My involvement with the Land Stewardship Project and its efforts to build bridges between farmers, rural residents and immigrant workers has made it even more obvious how much we all share in common. As I write this letter, thousands are gathering to march on Washington to seek immigration policy reform. May their efforts help us to realize the richness

immigrants add to our communities and may we have the ability to look more closely at our own immigrant roots.”

— **Diane Leutgeb Munson, Rushford, Minn.**

Leutgeb Munson is on LSP’s southeast Minnesota steering committee. In recent years she has worked side-by-side with Mexican workers on area produce farms.

• • •

What do you think?

LSP as an organization is working on creating a system that treats *all* people involved with our food and farm system fairly. Here are some major questions to consider:

→ If immigrant workers were legalized, would that help prevent their exploitation by factory farms and industrial food processors? Would factory farms then have less of a competitive advantage over family-sized farms?

→ Could LSP’s own farmer-members benefit from being able to legally hire experienced immigrant farmworkers?

→ As we look ahead to the need for more local produce growers, what if immigrants with farming experience could feel confident of their legal status and raise food for local markets?

→ Can we achieve the kind of agricul-

ture we want without the participation of immigrants and people of color similarly interested in a more fair and healthy food system?

→ Is it possible to tune-out the extreme anti-immigrant sentiment and pay more attention to the studies documenting the economic benefits of immigrants?

→ In light of research showing the monetary benefits immigrants bring to our communities, should we really be blaming them for our ailing economy?

LSP feels we need to tackle these and other questions related to immigrant workers head-on because it is the right thing to do. Creating a fair and just food system for all is an important part of our mission. But the reality is that if real change is to occur, self-interest—both as an organization and as individuals— is an important motivator. There’s nothing wrong with asking, “What’s in it for us?” if the answers to that question still lead us to positive change. In future issues of the *Land Stewardship Letter*, we will be addressing that very question. □

Doug Nopar is a Policy Program organizer in LSP’s southeast Minnesota office. He has a long history of working with Latino worker groups like Centro Campesino. Nopar can be contacted at dnopar@landstewardshipproject.org or 507-523-3366.



Members of LSP and Centro Campesino teamed up during the “Journey of Hope Minnesota March for Immigration Reform” in Albert Lea, Minn., last September. (photo by Doug Nopar)

*Legislative Update:***Pro-factory farm bills defeated***By Bobby King*

By the time the 2010 session of the Minnesota Legislature convened May 17, proposals that would have weakened environmental standards for factory farms and undermined environmental review on the local level were dead. As a result of work on the part of members of the Land Stewardship Project and other organizations, lawmakers got the message that factory farms already cost Minnesota's communities too much in terms of pollution, displacement of family farms and lost property values, and environmental standards should be strengthened, not weakened.

NPDES permits for factory farms

Bills proposed by Rep. Al Juhnke (DFL-Willmar) and Sen. Steve Dille (R-Dassel) would have lowered state environmental standards for Minnesota's largest factory farms (those over 1,000 animal units) by removing the state requirement that they apply for a Clean Water Act National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. In addition, Rep. Juhnke's version of the bill would have created additional work for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) through necessitating a new and confusing factory farm permitting process. The cost was estimated at \$367,000 in 2011, \$211,000 in 2011 and \$120,00 in 2013.

There are more than 30,000 registered feedlots in Minnesota, but only 4 percent—about 1,100—are over 1,000 animal units. One thousand animal units is the equivalent of 2,500 sows, 3,333 market weight hogs and 700 dairy cows. Because of the millions of gallons of raw liquid manure they can concentrate in one place, these facilities present a disproportionately large pollution risk to our air and water. Standards for these largest of factory farms need to be strengthened, not weakened.

In his attempt to justify weakening standards for large factory farms, Rep. Juhnke at one point made a statement that smaller family farms are the real problem when it comes to pollution in the state.

"Some of our main culprits in feedlots quite frankly are the smaller ones..." Juhnke said in a March 11 committee hearing.

Later in that same hearing he said, "These larger ones [1,000 animal units or more] are very good stewards..."

Juhnke's statements are particularly troubling considering his influential position as the powerful chair of the House's Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division Committee. They are also troubling considering an ongoing situation taking place in northwest Minnesota that provides a prime example of the dangers posed by large factory farms. Near Thief River Falls, Excel Dairy violated air quality standards hundreds of times, driving neighbors from their homes. The operation was eventually declared a public health hazard by the Minnesota Department of Health and forced to shut down. The manure still sits in multi-million gallon manure lagoons and may have to be cleaned up at taxpayer expense.

Several LSP members responded to Juhnke's statements by writing letters to their local newspapers and contacting the lawmaker himself.

As LSP member Brad Trom pointed out in a letter to *Agri-News*: "This federal Clean Water Act permit is an important enforcement tool for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency... In fact, it was the NPDES permit that finally shut down the Excel Dairy... It sounds to me like we need to strengthen standards for these so-called 'good stewards,' not weaken them... Favoring our state's largest farms while blaming smaller livestock operations are not the values that I share."

Ultimately the NPDES proposal died in committee due to strong opposition.

Environmental review

Key elements of bills proposed by Rep. Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park) and

Sen. Linda Scheid (DFL-Brooklyn Park) would have undermined strong environmental review of major developments such as factory farms. Among other things, this legislation would have set a blanket goal of 150 days for issuing all environmental permits from the time a completed permit is submitted. In many cases, such a timeline is unrealistic when it comes to complicated environmental review of major developments, and it could result in severely shortchanging citizen input and thus giving full consideration to the potential environmental harm of a proposal.

Also under these proposals, when challenging an environmental review decision in court, citizens would not deal with the District Court in their area (as they do currently), but the Minnesota Court of Appeals in the Twin Cities. This not only increases the expense of filing a challenge, but limits citizens' participation by forcing them to travel to the Twin Cities to have their day in court.

Again, LSP members responded to bad legislation by contacting lawmakers during the legislative session. In addition, LSP spearheaded a letter signed by 23 Minnesota organizations and sent to the Senate Majority Leader and Speaker of the House. The letter outlined why these bills would do harm to rural communities and our environment. In the end, the bill was never heard in the Senate but moved through several committees in the House.

Ultimately, opposition kept the bad elements of the bill from being included in the Environment Omnibus Finance bill. LSP met several times with Speaker of the House Margaret Anderson Kelliher (DFL-Minneapolis) on the issue. Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Minneapolis), Chair of the Environment Finance Committee, was key in making sure the harmful elements of the bill did not pass, as was Rep. David Bly (DFL-Northfield). □

Bobby King is an LSP organizer who works on state and local policy issues. He can be reached at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org.

Green Acres update: Deadline extended to Aug. 16

On April 1, Gov. Tim Pawlenty signed into law a bill that extends the grace period from May 1 to Aug. 16 for withdrawing land (without payment of back taxes) from the old Green Acres program that does not qualify for the new Green Acres program. The Land Stewardship Project worked extensively during the 2009 legislative session to address problems created in Green Acres by the 2008 Legislature (*see the Summer 2009 LSL, page 9*).

For more on changes to the program, see LSP's newly revised Green Acres fact sheet at www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/green_acres_2009_factsheet.pdf, or contact Bobby King at 612-722-6377; bking@landstewardshipproject.org.

Predicting the future by creating it

Building the food & farming system we really want

By Mark Schultz

One key component of the Land Stewardship Project's state policy work this year has been to bring forward specific proposals that provide examples of what a progressive state policy — policy that would actually support the development of a sustainable food and agriculture system for our state — would look like.

As we look forward to 2011 and 2012, we need legislative leaders, the Governor and Minnesota's Commissioner of Agriculture to prioritize policy initiatives that support family farms, help new farmers get started successfully, provide resources for expanded and long-term development of local and regional food systems, and result in improved stewardship of the land for future generations. We believe such an approach that understands the opportunities that are before us will lead to improved environmental stewardship and public health, a strengthened economy in rural and urban communities, and address income and racial disparities in our food and agriculture system.

This approach is not new to LSP. Our leadership in winning conservation policy reforms and precedent-setting beginning farmer initiatives at the federal level attests to that, as does the work we've led on the state level for sustainable livestock and crop research and demonstration. However, the situation has changed and requires a more robust response from state leaders who are genuinely interested in what is good for the land and people of Minnesota.

On the one hand, the continued growth of local and regional markets, of new farmer start-ups, and of the use of sustainable and organic farming practices show where a positive future lies for agriculture, our communities and the land.

Simultaneously, people's understanding of how industrial cropping and livestock systems and excessive corporate concentration in food and agriculture have damaged our land, water and communities has increased, as has the realization that such a path provides us with only a dismal future.

We need more farmers getting a good start with sustainable farming practices and community support. And we need to start

building the infrastructure for a food system that is more local and regional in its orientation than what we have now. Realizing neither of these efforts were likely to pass in 2010, we nevertheless undertook them in order to start moving the public discussion to a different level about the state policies required for the kind of food and agriculture system Minnesotans want and need.

What follows is an article that lifts up two policy initiatives that LSP helped lead on in the 2010 legislative session: a beginning farmer initiative and bonding for a permanent space for the Midtown Farmers' Market in South Minneapolis.

We are interested in your comments about these efforts, and about other important policy initiatives that could be part of a progressive farm policy for Minnesota's future.

Mark Schultz is LSP's Associate Director, Director of Programs and Director of Policy and Organizing. He can be contacted at 612-722-6377.

Priming the pump for good public policy

By Bobby King

Minnesota state Senator Patricia Torres Ray represents South Minneapolis, an area that hasn't seen a working farm in over a century. But her eyes were opened to the connections between her community and our agricultural economy while visiting Featherstone Farm in southeast Minnesota some time back. The owner, Land Stewardship Project member Jack Hedin, showed her a map of where the majority of the organic fruits and vegetables he produces are sold, both through a Community Supported Agriculture enterprise and via food co-ops.

"I was shocked to learn that most of those customers were in my district," Sen. Torres Ray said at the Land Stewardship Project's Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol March 2 (*see page 6*).

That's why Torres Ray has been a leader at the Capitol on an LSP-backed effort to get the Midtown Farmers' Market a permanent home. Its current location in the heart of South Minneapolis (Lake Street and 22nd Av-

enue; near the Midtown YWCA), has been a key part of its success. It is on a main stop of the Hiawatha Light Rail system and near the Midtown Greenway bike trail, making it one of the most accessible farmers' markets in the Upper Midwest. Midtown was recently voted one of the top four farmers' markets in the country. The market has made great strides in making fresh, local food available to people at all income levels by, among other things, accepting Food Stamps as payment. It serves 40,000 customers annually and supports over 70 farmers and vendors.

"You go down there on market day and you'll see a mix of good food being made available to a diverse mix of residential communities," says Eric Gustafson, assistant director of the Corcoran Neighborhood Organization, which established and manages the market. "We see it not only as a place where community members come and access locally grown food, but as a place of civic engagement."

As far as LSP is concerned, the Midtown Farmers' Market is a perfect venue to connect urbanites with food raised on sustainable family farms. Not only is it a source of

income for farmers who market direct, but by introducing local, sustainably raised food to new communities, it is helping spawn demand for good food in general. It is also part of establishing a food system that allows for access to fresh, locally-grown, nutritious foods by people of all income levels. That benefits everyone involved in this burgeoning movement, including many graduates of LSP's Farm Beginnings program.

But the market, which has been at its current location for seven years, recently faced the prospect of losing its home. Minneapolis Public Schools owns the market site, and plans to sell it for redevelopment.

During the 2010 legislative session, LSP worked with other groups in an effort to get \$1 million in bonding money to provide a permanent home for the market at its current location. Torres Ray, who is the Senate's Majority Whip, was a strong and effective advocate for the market, ensuring that the Senate bonding bill included \$500,000 in funding for the project. The House proposal, however, did not include funding for the

Positive Policy, *see page 14...*

...Positive Policy, from page 13

Midtown Market, and the final bonding bill failed to support this important initiative.

But discussing the Midtown Farmers' Market's future at the Legislature helped raise its public profile, and that paid off, according to Gustafson. In April it was announced that when Minneapolis Public Schools sells the land for redevelopment, the market will remain a key part of the site for the foreseeable future. LSP will continue to organize to work for other public investments in local and regional food systems. The Midtown Farmers' Market is an important reminder that remaking our rural communities into sustainable sources of good food begins in places like South Minneapolis.

Beginning farmers

For more than a dozen years LSP has been training the next generation of farmers through our nationally recognized Farm Beginnings program. Farm Beginnings has helped hundreds of wannabe farmers overcome a major barrier to getting established on the land: lack of access to practical information on goal setting, business planning and innovative marketing. However, even the most well-prepared beginning farmers face a daunting challenge: lack of capital to obtain land, livestock, equipment and all of the other items needed to launch a viable enterprise.

That's why during the past few years LSP has been working with lawmakers to help beginning farmers gain access to capital. Congress recently recognized the potential of beginning farmers to revitalize rural communities when it funded the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program in the last Farm Bill. LSP was a major player in making this program a reality. In addition, LSP is helping move an initiative forward in Congress that would fund a Beginning Farmer Individual Development Account (IDA) Program (see page 15).

Now it's time for Minnesota to help beginning farmers.

This session we worked with Rep. Paul Thissen (DFL-Minneapolis) and Sen. Gary Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls) to create legislation to help beginning farmers. Part of this beginning farmer assistance would come through Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM), a matched savings program that assists people in building assets.

Participants save earned income each month that is matched at a 3:1 ratio by the public and private sector. FAIM funds can be used to purchase a home, pursue a post-



LSP organizer Paul Sobocinski (center) helps LSP members Sharon Ormsby and Dwight Ault make calls to their legislators during a southeast Minnesota meeting in March (see page 8). The meeting addressed, among other things, ways citizens can promote positive policy at the state Capitol. (LSP photo)

secondary education, or begin or enhance a small business, according to Kate Ouverson, who coordinates FAIM. She says a key aspect of the program is that it provides participants an educational component on managing finances.

"The acquisition of the asset is important, but teaching people to change patterns of investment and saving is really critical to this program's success," says Ouverson.

LSP's proposal would add a beginning farmer component to FAIM by providing matching funds for farmers who want to set up an IDA. It would be open to beginning farmers with a net worth of no more than \$200,000. Qualifying participants would receive a one-to-one match on their savings of up to \$3,500 over a two-year period. The matching funds could be used to purchase land, equipment, animals or supplies.

Ouverson says small business owners representing a wide variety of enterprises and approaches have used FAIM to build assets. She sees great potential for a version of the program targeted at beginning farmers.

"This could be an exciting way to help small farmers," she says. "It's a start."

Another part of this beginning farmer package that LSP has created is an initiative that gives tax credits to landowners who rent or sell land to beginning farmers.

"You hear a lot of rhetoric around the Capitol about the number of farmers Minnesota loses annually. No one ever seems to mention the number of people who start farming every year nor do you hear a word about these organizations that are promoting policy initiatives that help people get started farming," says Sen. Kubly. "LSP is one of those groups that takes a positive approach and has crafted a pragmatic way to bring people into a meaningful occupation of their choice."

Good ideas never die

Providing a home for a major farmers' market and helping beginning farmers launch their businesses are prime examples of good progressive policy. Even modest investments in our food and farming future can produce substantial positive returns for the common good, for years down the line. Unfortunately, even good ideas aren't guaranteed passage the first time they are brought before lawmakers.

But by bringing these proposals forward, LSP, our allies, and legislative leaders have taken a step forward. And our experience is that good ideas never go away—they just build more momentum as people who care about their communities join together to take action towards a just and sustainable future. During the next 24 months, LSP looks forward to engaging more people, building the momentum, and putting in place the public policies that will support the food and farming system we want and need. □

Bobby King is an LSP Policy Program organizer who works on state and local issues. He can be contacted at 612-722-6377.

CSP application deadline June 11

Farmers have until June 11 to apply for enrollment in the current round of the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). CSP offers payments to producers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and who agree to adopt additional levels of stewardship. Eligible working lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland and non-industrial forestland.

Around 13 million acres is expected to

be enrolled in CSP during the 2010 sign-up. Farmers can apply now, but can withhold making a final decision on participating until the ultimate rule is issued later this year.

"Farmers should check it out—CSP worked for our farm," says Land Stewardship Project member Tom Nuessmeier, a crop and livestock farmer from Saint Peter, Minn., who received a CSP contract in 2009. "There are still some issues to be ironed out,

but it's real dollars for conservation and the direction farm policy needs to go."

To begin the application procedure, contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office. For more information, including a checklist to determine if CSP is suitable for your operation, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp.html.

More information is also available by contacting LSP's Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org. □

LSP works on beginning farmer policy

In March, Land Stewardship Project staff and members traveled to Washington, D.C., to advance beginning farmer initiatives and policy. While there, LSP Farm Beginnings Director Amy Bacigalupo presented at a national beginning farmer forum on the "Road Ahead" to helping new farmers.

Also during the fly-in, LSP members and staff conducted six Congressional and two USDA meetings to advance beginning farmer measures passed in the 2008 Farm Bill. In particular, LSP and allies worked with Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) to secure \$5 million in the ongoing 2011 appropriations process for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Individual Development Account Program. The program is designed to help beginning farmers and ranchers of limited means finance their ag endeavors through business and financial education and matched savings accounts.

Sen. Klobuchar has circulated a "Dear Colleague" letter asking other Senators to support funding of the program. To view the "Dear Colleague" letter or for more on the Individual Development Account Program, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_federal_policy.html, and scroll down to "Testimony & Statements." More information is also available by contacting LSP's Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org. □



Pictured with Sen. Amy Klobuchar (center) at a recent meeting on beginning farmer issues in D.C. are (l to r): Susan Stokes, Aimee Vue, Xe Susane Moua, Jody Lenz, Amy Bacigalupo and Matt Friauf. Stokes is the executive director of Farmers' Legal Action Group; Vue and Moua are Minnesota farmers who work with FLAG; Lenz is a graduate of LSP's Farm Beginnings program who farms in western Wisconsin; Bacigalupo is the Farm Beginnings Director; Friauf is an intern researching land access issues for LSP. (photo courtesy of FLAG)

Bach joins LSP federal ag policy committee

Darwyn Bach has joined the Land Stewardship Project's Federal Farm Policy Committee. Bach raises hogs and crops near Boyd, in southwest Minnesota. He has participated in several LSP activities in recent years, including a fly-in to Washington, D.C., last winter to meet with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack regarding reining in corporate concentration and consolidation in the hog industry.

Stepping down from the Federal Farm Policy Committee are **Jeff Klinge** and **Greg Koether**, who each have farms in northeast Iowa. Klinge and Koether joined the committee in 1999. On their initial three-day fly-in to Washington, D.C., with LSP that year,

they were two of 13 farmers who conducted a total of 45 meetings with members of Congress and their staff to expose the "tilt against stewardship" in American farm policy, and to propose policy options to better meet the needs of both the land and the people.

"Greg and Jeff have been important leaders for LSP and our region in advancing public policy that is good for the land, for farmers,

for rural communities, for all of us," says Mark Schultz, who leads LSP's Policy and Organizing Program. "They were key, along with fellow Federal Policy Committee members Dan Specht, Dan French, Dwight Ault, Kathleen Storms, Paul Sobocinski, and the late Paul Homme and Dave Serfling, in developing the initial framework for what eventually became the Conservation Stewardship Program. We

look forward to Darwyn's participation as we move ahead on the 2013 Farm Bill."

For more information on LSP's federal farm policy work, contact Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org.



Darwyn Bach



Jeff Klinge



Greg Koether

Farm Beginnings

2010-2011 Farm Beginnings deadline Sept. 1

Classes to be held in southeast & south-central MN

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course is now accepting applications for its 2010-2011 session. The deadline for registration is Sept. 1.

Classes will begin this fall and be held in the southeast Minnesota community of Winona and in Saint Joseph, which is in the south-central part of the state.

In 2010, LSP's Farm Beginnings program is marking its 13th year of providing firsthand training in low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. The course is tailor-made for people of all ages just getting started in farming, as well as established farmers looking to make changes in their operations. Farm Beginnings participants learn goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative production techniques.

Classes are led by farmers and other agricultural professionals from the area. The classes, which meet approximately twice a month, run until March 2011, followed by an on-farm education component that includes farm tours and skills sessions.

The fee is \$1,500 per farming partnership

(flexible payment plan and partial scholarships available), and early-bird registrants are eligible to attend on-farm education events this summer and fall (*see box below*). Interest-free livestock loans are also available.

During the past dozen years, over 400 people have graduated from the Minnesota-region Farm Beginnings program, and 60 percent of them are actively farming, according to class data. Farm Beginnings graduates are involved in a wide-range of agricultural enterprises,



Atina Diffley of Gardens of Eagan describes transplanting techniques during a Farm Beginnings greenhouse management workshop held in April. The workshop was sponsored by Farm Beginnings in collaboration with the Organic Field School at Gardens of Eagan. (photo courtesy of Gardens of Eagan)

including grass-based livestock, organic vegetables, Community Supported Agriculture and specialty products.

Besides Minnesota and Wisconsin, Farm Beginnings classes have been held over the years in Illinois, Nebraska, North Dakota and the Duluth-Superior area. New Farm Beginnings courses have recently been launched in South Dakota and the Hudson Valley of New York.

Check www.farmbeginnings.org for more information and application materials. More information is also available by contacting LSP's Karen Benson at 507-523-3366 or lpse@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Farm Beginnings on-farm events this summer

The 2010 on-farm educational component of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program has begun. During the next few months, LSP will be hosting two kinds of on-farm events: **field days** and **farm tours**. **Field days** cover specific topics on a farm and are targeted at Farm Beginnings graduates, but for a \$35 fee are open to members of the public (limited to 20 people) who are interested in farming. Farm Beginnings participants and LSP members can participate in field days at no charge. **Farm tours** are targeted at the general public and offer a more broad view of the host farm. LSP members and Farm Beginnings participants can attend farm tours at no charge; others will be charged \$20 to cover expenses.

Here are the on-farm events:

◆ June 13: **Raising Mangalitsa Pigs** —

from feed to butchering to marketing field day, Provenance Farm, Taylors Falls, Minn. (1 p.m. to 4 p.m.); contact: Richard Ness, 320-269-2105, rness@landstewardshipproject.org.

◆ July 13: **Low-cost vegetable start-up and scaling up field day co-sponsored by MOSES**, Loon Organics, Hutchinson, Minn. (6 p.m. to 9 p.m.); contact: Nick Olson, 320-269-2105, nicko@landstewardshipproject.org.

◆ July 25: **CSA farming—harvest-style marketing & field equipment field day**, Open Hands Farm, Northfield, Minn. (1 p.m. to 4 p.m.); contact: Parker Forsell, 507-523-3366, parker@landstewardshipproject.org.

◆ Aug. 7: **Farm Tour of Cedar Summit Farm**, New Prague, Minn. (9 a.m. to noon); contact: Nick Olson, 320-269-2105, nicko@landstewardshipproject.org.

landstewardshipproject.org.

◆ Aug. 8: **Post-harvest handling of vegetables field day**, Hogsback Farm, Arkansaw, Wis.; contact: Parker Forsell, 507-523-3366, parker@landstewardshipproject.org.

◆ Aug. 24: **Exploring late season cover crops and rotations field day**, Riverbend Farm, Delano, Minn. (6 p.m. to 9 p.m.); contact: Nick Olson, 320-269-2105, nicko@landstewardshipproject.org.

◆ July or August: **Farm Tour in the Chippewa River watershed of western Minnesota** (details to be announced); contact: Amy Bacigalupo, 320-269-2105, amyb@landstewardshipproject.org.

Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse

Are you a beginning farmer looking to rent or purchase farmland? Or are you an established farmer/landowner who is seeking a beginning farmer to purchase or rent your land, or to work with in a partnership/employee situation? The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program has simple application forms available for people seeking farmland or farmers. Once the form is filled out, the information can be circulated by LSP via the *Land Stewardship Letter*, the *LIVE-WIRE* and online at www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/land_clearinghouse.html. This service is free of charge for LSP members. To obtain a form and for more information, e-mail LSP's Parker Forsell at parker@landstewardshipproject.org, or call 507-523-3366. You can also download the forms from our *Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse* section on the LSP website at www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/resources.html#land. Here are the latest *Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse* listings:

Seeking Job or Internship: Western WI Area

Kathryn (Ryn) Keatley is seeking a job or internship on a vegetable or dairy operation in the western Wisconsin region. She is a third-year economics/French major at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, and works on an organic dairy farm, as well as a u-pick strawberry operation. For the past two years Keatley has also operated her own gardening/landscaping business in River Falls, Wis. She is involved in numerous student organizations. She is particularly interested in learning more about Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and market gardening, as well as dairy farming. Keatley wants experience in marketing, business planning and educating the public about the benefits of sustainable and organic agricultural practices. Contact: Ryn Keatley, 715-425-6788 (home); 715-497-6466 (cell); or keatlekj@uwec.edu.

Farmland Needed: Southern MN

Britt Wegner is seeking 40 to 400 acres of tillable farmland to rent or purchase in southern Minnesota's Faribault or Freeborn counties. No house is required. Contact: Britt Wegner, 507-456-2291 or brittwegner@hotmail.com.

Farmland Needed: MN/WI

Laura Klein is seeking 10 to 100 acres of farmland to purchase in Minnesota or Wisconsin (preferably within one hour of the Twin Cities). She is seeking land with tillable and forested acres, and would like a barn to be on the property, although it's not required. Contact: Laura Klein, 612-229-2378 or lvestklein@gmail.com.

Farmland Available: East-Central MN

Shirley Larson has for rent 30-40 acres of tillable pasture land in east-central Minnesota's Pine County (near Hinckley). The land has not been sprayed in over 20 years. Price per acre negotiable. Contact: Shirley Larson, 612-669-0975.

Farmland Available: North-Central MN

Eric Crabtree has 38 acres of land for rent in north-central Minnesota's Crow Wing County, near the community of Ironton. Thirty-five acres is tillable and three is forested; the land has not been sprayed in eight years. Fencing (including electric) is available, and the land has good access to a paved road. No house is available but barn and garage space on adjacent property could be made available through negotiation. The rental price range is \$30 to \$80 per acre, depending on use; outbuilding rental is extra. Contact: Eric Crabtree, ecrabtree@yahoo.com (preferred) or 850-217-1543.

Seeking Farm Job or Partnership: Minnesota

Mike is seeking a full-time job or partnership situation on a dairy grazing or tie stall operation of around 100 cows or less. He is especially interested in a situation where a farmer is looking to retire and begin the transition process with a partner. Mike is currently working part-time on a 100-cow tie stall operation. He has worked as a retail manager for 13 years, where he has supervised groups of employees, and has taken college business classes. Contact: Mike, 612-386-0737 or mikepaz@earthlink.net.

Farmland Needed: Western WI/Twin Cities Area

Garry Fay is seeking to rent two acres of tillable land in the western Wisconsin/Twin Cities region. No house is required. Contact: Garry Fay, 715-549-6451 or freedomfarm09@yahoo.com.

Farmland Needed: Central WI

John Schurk is seeking to rent or buy 100 or more acres of tillable land in the central Wisconsin counties of Portage, Wood or Waushara. No house is required. Contact: John Schurk, 920-540-0617 or jschurk@amfam.com.

Seeking Job or Internship: Twin Cities Area

Zack Ellsworth is seeking a full time job or paid internship on an organic farm in the Twin Cities region. He has a bachelor's degree in urban studies from Minnesota State University-Mankato, and has worked as an AmeriCorps volunteer rehabilitating a community garden. Ellsworth also led a student group that established a campus flower garden, and interned with Gardening Matters in Minneapolis. He currently runs a landscaping business that focuses on edible and wild plants. Ellsworth is interested in learning about Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), market gardening, greenhouse production, composting, biodynamics and business planning, among other things. Contact: Zack Ellsworth, 612-250-2630 or zack.ellsworth@yahoo.com.

Land Link-Up

MOSES (Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service) offers an online service to connect those looking for farm-

land with those looking to rent or sell farmland. Land Link-Up is a free service where postings can be submitted by landowners who are selling/renting farmland, as well as beginning farmers who are seeking land.

Land Link-Up is available at www.mosesorganic.org/landlinkup.html. More information is also available by calling 715-778-5775 or e-mailing info@mosesorganic.org. □

Farm Beginnings

Rachel Henderson & Anton Ptak Launching a farm from afar

On a chilly weekday morning in late March, sitting in a century-old plus Northeast Minneapolis house sipping coffee and getting ready for work, a farm in western Wisconsin seems far away, perhaps even a figment of one's imagination.

"For me, being in the city there's a little bit of out-of-sight, out-of-mind that goes on," says Rachel Henderson, who lives in that Minneapolis house with her partner, Anton Ptak. "I get wrapped up in my week."

Flash forward two weeks to a warm Saturday in April. On this day in Wisconsin's Dunn County, some 80 miles from Ptak and Henderson's home, that farm is very much on their mind. They are planting, building and doing all the tasks required to create a farming operation from the ground up.

Legs churning furiously, Ptak pushes a wheelbarrow full of cold-hardy peach trees to a fenced-off section while Henderson excavates holes to plant them in. After pruning the roots, setting the trees, packing soil around them and setting up homemade guards to ward off rabbits and deer, they head to a recently erected tool shed to sit for a moment and discuss what else needs to be done before heading back to the city Sunday night.

There's a lot.

This 20-acre former hayfield, with its lack of a well or electrical utilities, combined with two rough-hewn sheds, has the look of a wide open pioneer homestead. But the young couple—Henderson is 28 and Ptak 34—seem to be up to the task. In fact, the intense burst of work they've already completed this particular morning has ener-

gized them for more.

"One thing I've become aware of is just how much I love being here and how much energy I get from being here," says Henderson. "There were definitely weeks



Rachel Henderson and Anton Ptak are taking a go-slow approach to establishing their Wisconsin farm while they work full time jobs in the Twin Cities. (LSP photo)

last summer where I would be working Monday through Friday in the city and I'd be thinking my god we have so much to do and not feeling that energy, and then getting out here on a Friday afternoon or Saturday morning and just really feeling this overwhelming sense of wellbeing. The pleasant surprise is how easy it is to work hard and get all of this stuff done when we just feel good about being here."

Henderson and Ptak are into the second year of an approximately five-year plan to create a farming enterprise from scratch. All of this started in 2008 when they bought the land and enrolled in the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program. Twice a month during the fall and winter of 2008-2009 the couple attended classes in the



Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming

southeast Minnesota community of Goodhue. The course emphasizes goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative production techniques. The classes are taught by established farmers and other ag professionals representing a range of enterprises:

from grass-based livestock production and organic cropping to vegetables and specialty products. Farm Beginnings participants also have the opportunity to attend on-farm events where they see firsthand the use of innovative management techniques.

Ptak and Henderson say the course helped them develop a long-term plan for how they wanted to make a living on their land and gave them good grounding in the basics of financial management and business planning.

"Both of us have a natural tendency toward thriftiness and not spending, and Farm Beginnings helped reinforce that," says Ptak. "That's

opposite of the agricultural model of large-scale investment up-front just to get started."

Picking fruit

Farm Beginnings also gave them a better sense of what type of farming enterprise would fit best with their interests/situation. Before they took Farm Beginnings, Ptak and Henderson were already leaning toward fruit production as a result of the experience they had in 2007 working at an organic orchard in Argentina through the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) organization.

"Up until that time I hadn't really done

Fresh Faces, see page 19...

anything where I could say, gosh, I want to do this the rest of my life," recalls Henderson of that experience in Argentina.

Establishing an orchard and other perennials such as berries also dovetailed nicely with the couple's plan of keeping their debt load as low as possible as they do the preliminary work of setting up a farm. Such plantings don't require day-to-day management while they're getting established. That means Ptak and Henderson can keep their city jobs—she works at a community center and he's a self-employed site developer for wind energy projects—long enough to pay off the loan they took to buy the land. By the time their fruit trees and other plants are producing consistent product for the market, they can use income from sales to support themselves and the farm, rather than sinking it into the mortgage, says Ptak.

"It just seemed to be the thing we could start with that made sense in our transition plan," he says. "And since then we've met a lot of fruit growers and they're all fairly happy people and they're all pretty friendly and helpful."

So they've spent the past two years attending fruit growing workshops, tapping into a network of other producers and paying off the mortgage on their land. And, of course, they've been planting: so far Ptak and Henderson have established 250 trees and 300 to 400 bushes/vines of various berries such as currants, raspberries and grapes. They've also planted asparagus and rhubarb. Eventually, they hope to have 500 to as many as 1,000 trees make up their orchard, which will include apples, pears, cherries, apricots and cold-hardy peaches.

They've also built two outbuildings to house their equipment, and not incidentally to provide tin roofs for directing rainwater into barrels. The couple currently camps out in a tent during their work weekends, and plans call for building a house, drilling a well and harnessing solar energy for the farm.

All of this preparation has involved a lot of miles on the road between Northeast Minneapolis and Dunn County, and Ptak concedes it's starting to get old.

"Organizationally it's really tough living in one place and doing all your work in an-

More FB profiles

To read more Farm Beginnings profiles, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/graduates.html.

other one," he says. "There's always something you forget and you can't just jump on your bike and run to the store."

But, Ptak adds, maybe the hassle of setting up a farm remotely has given Henderson and him more of an incentive to move ahead with their multi-year plan, and perhaps even speed it up.

"Maybe we'll accelerate our schedule a bit," he says wistfully.



Ptak and Henderson have planted a wide variety of fruit trees and other perennials on their land. "We're trying to be diversified and spread out the risk over a whole bunch of different things," says Ptak. (LSP photo)

Marketing mysteries

But before they complete their transition, Henderson and Ptak have one big unknown to grapple with: the marketing of their products years down the road when those trees, bushes and vines are bearing fruit. They say one downside to Farm Beginnings was that the marketing part of the curriculum seemed to be geared more toward farmers who are going to have product ready their first growing season.

The orchard business is not the same as having Community Supported Agriculture shares or a half-cow sold before the season, or even having a verbal commitment from a restaurant that it will purchase a certain quantity come summer. Henderson and Ptak aren't making seed orders based on what they can sell in a few months; they're establishing rootstock that measures marketing schedules in years.

"There's so much that's in the Farm Beginnings curriculum that's really universal

and then there's some things where the instructors kept saying, 'Don't plant anything until you've sold it,'" Henderson says with a laugh. "That was hard for us because we haven't found anyone who's buying apples seven years in the future."

Despite all these unknowns, they've still been able to develop somewhat of a long-range marketing plan by talking to various people who are involved in the local food system (besides being within 80 miles of the Twin Cities, their farm is close to the Wisconsin communities of Menomonie and Eau Claire).

There are restaurants in the area that buy directly from farmers as well as farmers' markets. A popular bike trail near the farm could offer an opportunity to sell products via a farm stand. There are also several Community Supported Agriculture operations in the area and the couple is looking into supplementing the shares these farms provide members.

Because plants like apple trees tend to ramp up their productivity over time, that will give them an opportunity to gradually test the waters when it comes to the markets.

"It may take awhile but I think it will pay off," says Ptak. "And we're invested in things that could live for 50 years."

One key marketing tool they have is an unforgettable name for their farm: Mary Dirty Face. It's based on an old story within the community of a Native American girl who had a mind of her own.

"Mary Dirty Face sounds like was a pretty independent-minded woman and we feel she's probably worth honoring," says Henderson. "It also has a good ring to it."

And besides, who can resist leaving the city on a regular basis to work a piece of land with such a gritty, colorful moniker? □

Audio & visual of Mary Dirty Face

To listen to an *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring Anton Ptak and Rachel Henderson (episode 78) see www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=2. On that web page you will find other interviews featuring Farm Beginnings graduates.

To view a short video of Mary Dirty Face Farm, see LSP's new video site at www.youtube.com/user/LSPNOW.

‘Homegrown Economy’ hits its stride in 2010

By Ken Meter

In February, U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson’s “Homegrown Economy” forum hit a strong stride in its third year, attracting great attention for the promise that community-based foods businesses can help promote economic recovery.

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack was the principal keynote speaker at the forum, which was held in Marshall, Minn., and telecast live to gatherings in the Minnesota communities of Bemidji, Crookston and Morris. Each local site also held its own workshop featuring community foods initiatives.

Two hundred attended the Marshall meeting, with another 85 participating via the telecast hook-ups.

As chair of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee, Peterson has used this forum to create awareness of community foods initiatives in his western Minnesota district. His senior economic development staffer, Toni Merdan, has played a key role in creating the forum, as well as in encouraging economic development professionals from the region to attend.

Terry VanDerPol, Director of the Land Stewardship Project’s Community Based Food and Economic Development Program, has also been instrumental in planning the event, as have the University of Minnesota’s Rural Sustainable Development Partnerships.

“It was great to hear Secretary Vilsack and Chairman Peterson talk about the important relationship between good nutrition and fresh, local food,” VanDerPol says. “Now let’s push USDA Rural Development to help build the infrastructure for a local food system that provides good food for people, care for the land and profit for family farmers.”

In her forum presentation, VanDerPol added that food was an effective “bridge for reducing the urban-rural divide.”

Not a threat

“Our business is to support all of agriculture — small, medium and big — any kind of farm that makes economic sense,” Peterson said in his opening remarks for the

forum. “The fact we are going to expand the market [for locally produced food] is not a threat to commercial agriculture,” he added. Secretary Vilsack agreed, adding that unfortunately “89 percent of farm family income comes from off-farm sources.”

As one of the keynote speakers, I presented findings from my “Mapping the Minnesota Food Industry” report (www.crcworks.org/mnfood.pdf), released in October. That report documented that state farmers have



LSP’s Terry VanDerPol (left) discusses local food issues with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Colleen Landkamer, Minnesota Director of Rural Development for the USDA. (photo by Jeremy Bratt)

spent \$7 billion more in producing crops and livestock than they have received from selling these commodities over the past 15 years. The study also found that Minnesota farmers earned \$1 billion less by farming in 2007 than they had earned in 1969, despite doubling productivity over that time span.

My research has also shown that several multi-million dollar businesses in the state that are leading the transition to community-based foods say that building close relationships of trust with both suppliers and customers was the most important factor in determining success of their businesses. Three key elements to building food systems were highlighted in “Mapping the Minnesota Food Industry”: relationships,

resilience and recycling.

Following these keynote presentations, regional experts highlighted successes they’ve had in strengthening local foods activity. Bob Olson of Food Alliance Midwest showed that group’s progress in selling food through institutional channels under a “local and sustainable” label. But he also presented some sobering research: it turns out consumer preferences for standard-sized products may limit the ability of smaller growers to meet demand in an institutional setting.

Melvin Houser, member of the board of supervisors of Pottawattamie County, Iowa, described his county government’s investment of \$30,000 per year for five years to hire a local foods coordinator. He added that he was excited about food work because the issue “bridged partisan divides.”

Rhys Williams of Co-op Partners Warehouse in Minneapolis, a unit of the Wedge Co-op, pointed out how their distribution service is intertwined with the fortunes of farmers.

“When small farmers succeed, we succeed,” Williams said. As one sign of this awareness, he also described the difficult decision the Co-op made to “cross-dock” produce — that is, to convey produce from partner farms on Co-op Partners trucks to local retail stores and restaurants, at relatively low fees, rather than insisting the farmers sell through the warehouse. “This was mixed for us,” Williams continued. “We had to think about it a great deal. On the one hand, it reduces our sales peak. It also tends to reduce competition, since we are shipping produce we used to source from farms in the region.” When all of those factors were considered, the Co-op decided to go ahead with cross-docking

because doing so would deepen its relationships to the farmers.

Following the plenary presentations, each site hosted panels in which representatives of local foods initiatives could outline their successes. At the Marshall gathering, Julie Christensen, the coordinator of “Daily Bread,” a local foods effort at the

Marshall Area Christian School, showed how community volunteers have fed local organic lunches to students for nearly two years. German sausage maker Marty Ziegler described his efforts to reenergize a small meat processing plant in Sanborn, Minn., using old family recipes. Farm Beginnings

• • •
“Now let’s push USDA Rural Development to help build the infrastructure for a local food system that provides good food for people, care for the land and profit for family farmers.”

— LSP’s Terry VanDerPol

• • •

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graduate Carol Ford of Garden Goddess Greenhouse in Milan, Minn., outlined a winter Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation, which sells fresh greens during the cold months to neighbors within 30 miles.

"Home on the Range," a new Latino/Anglo producer co-operative near Northfield, also conveyed its hopes to produce enough free-range chickens intensively on one-quarter-acre lots that a Latino-owned processing plant could open someday. The co-op

County, funded by Blue Cross and Blue Shield's "Healthy Eating Minnesota" campaign. Vilsack also pledged funds so that all farmers' markets in the U.S. will have access to electronic benefits transfer (EBT) technology so that low-income recipients of Food Stamps and Women Infants and Children (WIC) benefits can more easily spend these benefits buying food directly from farmers.

Peterson and Vilsack also offered glimpses of how they collaborate in Washington, D.C., to help frame federal policies. Peterson said that the two eat lunch together every week or two to consider

ings of the House Agriculture Committee to consider new approaches for the next Farm Bill, even though this legislation is not scheduled to be adopted until 2014.

Concluding the day, Colleen Landkamer, Minnesota Rural Development Director for USDA, spoke of her agency's efforts to funnel federal funds to rural communities pursuing local food as a community economic development activity.

After the conference, Peterson told the *Land Stewardship Letter*, "We've had a lot of positive feedback from the attendees and I think it was a very worthwhile confer-



LSP sponsored a meeting in western Minnesota's Big Stone County on "Local Foods and Economic Recovery" last fall. This is part of an effort to eliminate "food deserts"—areas where residents have difficulty accessing fresh foods. The problem of food deserts was discussed at the 2010 Homegrown Economy Conference. (photo by Tom Taylor)

produced about 6,000 chickens in 2009.

In his keynote, Vilsack focused on the USDA's new "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" campaign, which has raised awareness of the potential for more direct connections between farmers and consumers, and has promoted a regional vision for U.S. agriculture. Vilsack acknowledged that the program was limited in scope because there have been no new appropriations since the 2008 Farm Bill was passed. Yet he also argued that the government needed to play a strong role to "create the supply chain that would meet institutional food needs. It is up to us to create the capacity to get the product to the market."

Vilsack also elaborated on the multiple benefits that community-based foods can achieve. "When I buy food at the farmers' market, I am not just purchasing locally grown food. This is also a celebration of community," Vilsack said. "We need to make sure people get reconnected to those who work the land."

Yet Vilsack spoke to the needs of low-income consumers, pledging \$400 million of funds to address what have been called "food deserts"—areas where residents have difficulty accessing fresh foods. LSP is already active in such a project in Big Stone

County. "We don't always agree on everything," he added, but the two stay in regular contact.

Vilsack reported that his staff had recently completed an assessment of how USDA spends its rural development money, and has recommended a big shift in priorities. "We were spending hundreds of millions in hotels and convenience stores. Where [in that] is the investment in rural life?"

Vilsack also talked about the importance of agriculture to the U.S. "Not only is this our supply of food—over 80 percent of our drinking water is impacted by our farms and forests. We have an enormous opportunity to take control of energy. Food is also critical to national security and health care."

Over the years, Peterson has also used the forum to send signals to his constituents that federal commodity programs may be vulnerable. At the first meeting in 2007, Peterson told the *West Central Tribune* that he did not expect to see subsidies last "more than five or 10 more years." At this year's forum, he was more explicit: "America can't make it with a one- or two-trillion dollar deficit. We're going to have to look at all entitlements. We're going to have to put everything on the table—even farm programs."

Indeed, Peterson is already holding hear-

ings. With continued effort and by working together I think we can promote agriculture-centered public policies that generate economic development in rural areas." □

Ken Meter, president of Crossroads Resource Center (www.crcworks.org), has done extensive analyses of the food system throughout the U.S. He frequently collaborates with LSP and has participated in planning the Homegrown Economy forum since its launch in 2007. To listen to a recent LSP podcast (episode 77) on Meter's "Mapping the Minnesota Food Industry" report, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=9.

LSP & homegrown foods in western MN

For more information on the Land Stewardship's work on local food systems in western Minnesota, contact Terry VanDerPol or Tom Taylor at 320-269-2105. VanDerPol can be reached via e-mail at tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org; Taylor at ttaylor@landstewardshipproject.org.

The lunchroom & the community

One school gets a taste of the farm to school experience

By Brian DeVore

It's 7:40 on an April morning and students at Ridgeway Community School gather in the auditorium as the morning light streams in through high windows. Maureen Johnson, the lead teacher at the southeast Minnesota charter school, welcomes the kids and makes a few announcements. She then launches into an impromptu pop quiz about an item that will be featured at lunch today. Johnson dangles a series of hints:

- If you were living in the time of the ancient Romans, they would give you this as a fever reducer.
- Native Americans mashed it into corn meal.
- If you find a double one you might fall in love.

The students shout out guesses: chocolate, Indian corn, corn bread. *Nope.* "Okay, last hint," Johnson says, creating the kind of dramatic tension that the K-5 crowd thrives on. "The seeds are on the outside."

"Strawberries," answers a student named Nick. *Right.*

It turns out these aren't just any old strawberries: they were raised organically in the area last summer and flash frozen by Sno Pac, a firm down the road in Caledonia, Minn. Then Johnson pitches a softball: "Raise your hands if you like strawberries." Ninety percent of those present, including teachers and staff, send their arms aloft.

Making hometown strawberries the star of the morning assembly illustrates two truisms about getting local food into our school

cafeterias: 1) you can't go wrong when the local item on the menu is a mouthful of succulent sweetness; 2) a successful farm to school effort must creep beyond the lunchroom and saturate every aspect of an institution, from classroom curriculum to after school activities to, yes, all-school meetings.

During the 2009-2010 school year, Ridgeway Community School joined the growing ranks of schools nationally that are

staple initiatives to get locally-produced ingredients into cafeterias now exist in at least 45 states. Farm to school is a relatively recent newcomer in the Midwest, with programs taking off in states like Minnesota only within the past two years or so. But it's been a fast and furious 24 months. Sixty-nine of Minnesota's 97 public school districts reported buying food produced in Minnesota in 2009. That's more than double the

number of districts that reported buying local in 2008, according to the survey, which was conducted by the Minnesota School Nutrition Association and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP).

Getting local foods into institutions such as schools has long been promoted by sustainable agriculture advocates as a good marketing option for farmers.

"Every reasonably-sized town has a school," says organic vegetable producer Greg Reynolds, who last fall started selling products to the Hopkins School District, which is in the Twin Cities suburbs. "For example, Hopkins

serves 10,000 meals a week. For a local farm, that's a huge market. And that's just one school district."

Farm to school has gained a sense of urgency in recent years as a result of concerns over what a steady diet of highly-processed, nutritionally-impoverished foods is doing to our nation's children.

"One in three kids that were born in the year 2000 will become diabetic. That is just



Teacher Maureen Johnson helps serve lunch at Ridgeway Community School one day this spring. During the morning all-school meetings, Johnson often highlights what local food will be served at lunch. (LSP photo)

trying to get local foods into cafeterias on a consistent basis. In some ways its situation is unique. But the small—82 students, kindergarten through 5th grade—rural school's experiment in institutionalizing local food provides a glimpse at what works, as well as the challenges faced by any school hoping to pursue such a venture.

Farm to school frenzy

The farm to school movement got started in California a decade or so ago, and sub-

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staggering, and a lot of that has to do with nutrition,” says JoAnne Berkenkamp, who directs IATP’s local foods program.

Kitchen clatter

For Ridgeway School, which sits amongst farm fields in southeast Minnesota’s Winona County, improving student nutrition was the priority when it built a new kitchen. In 2009 the school received a federal grant of around \$363,000 through the Minnesota Department of Education. The money is part of an initiative for charter school renovations that “contribute to academic achievement.” Most of the money was used to establish a modern kitchen at the school so that food could actually be prepared on-site. Before that, Ridgeway’s food was prepared in the kitchens of the Winona School District, some 15 miles away, and delivered to the cafeteria to be heated up. Typically the food was prepared at 6 a.m., and arrived in Ridgeway at 9 a.m. or so. The food was delivered Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, so the servings on Tuesdays and Thursdays sat for a full 30 hours before they were served.

“I just knew anything going to be made up here fresh was going to be an improvement,” says Ridgeway cook Mary Carrie while taking a break from making peanut butter sandwiches in the school’s gleaming, stainless steel kitchen.

By establishing its own certified kitchen, the school overcame one of the biggest barriers to serving local foods in school cafeterias: lack of facilities to prepare the food in. So while the parents and staff that made up the kitchen remodeling committee were meeting last year, the idea came up to experiment with ingredients from the neighborhood. School director Jodi Dansingburg says that sourcing local food is a natural part of the school’s efforts to serve the farming community it’s in.

“This school has a long and strong history of community ties and involvement,” she says after the morning assembly where the strawberries are highlighted. “It’s a way of giving back to the community to the degree that we can support the local farm economy and farm processing economy with some local purchases.”

The school has also been emphasizing health and wellness in recent years, and staff wanted good food to be a part of that.

So Ridgeway applied for and received a grant for approximately \$11,000 from the University of Minnesota to launch a farm to school effort. The money has been used during the 2009-2010 school year to pay for

Farm to school audio

To listen to *Ear to the Ground* podcasts featuring farm to school discussions, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=9.

- **Episode 75** features JoAnne Berkenkamp providing a checklist for farmers who are interesting in selling to local schools.

- In **episode 76** farmer Greg Reynolds talks about his experience selling produce to a local school during the fall of 2009.

- Jodi Dansingburg of Ridgeway Community School talks in **episode 79** about the challenges of getting more local food into the cafeteria.

food, educational materials and the time of Caroline van Schaik, a Land Stewardship Project Community Based Food Systems organizer whose daughter attends Ridgeway. Van Schaik spent the fall, winter and spring “foraging” for food from some 10 farmers in the area who utilize sustainable methods such as certified organic, integrated pest management and pasture production.

The school began in September with carrots from Whitewater Gardens. As the academic year unfolded, more local items arrived: potatoes, squash, cabbage, peas, corn, apples, green beans, tomatoes, spinach, cucumbers, blueberries, zucchinis, bison and pork sausage. Some items, like the carrots, were just a few hours out of the soil. Others, like the strawberries, had been picked months earlier and frozen.

Carrie, who has a child at the school, took the job as cook in the new kitchen partly because she wanted to make sure the kids were getting good meals.

Predictably, strawberries, carrots and apples have been a big hit. Somewhat surprisingly, so has been the rough-cut coleslaw. Items like bison burgers and pork sausages have gotten mixed reviews.

“I think it’s always a gamble every day what the kids want to eat,” says Carrie. “But take little steps and the kids will gradually be accepting. At least we’re providing them a chance to learn what a vegetable looks like.”

A steady diet

Locally sourced, sustainably-produced foods stirred up a lot of excitement at Ridgeway, but didn’t come to dominate the menu by any means. Van Schaik recently penciled out that over the course of the school year each kid eating lunch got about four pounds per month of locally sourced food. That food was delivered in federally regulated portion sizes as the vegetable, fruit, meat and/or grain of the day.

Becky Klankowski, who is in charge of ordering and paying for the food served at the school, estimates that during the 2009-2010 school year Ridgeway spent around \$2,000 on local foods out of an approximately \$8,500 budget.

There’s no doubt that on a per-item basis, local ingredients were pricier—in some cases double the cost of their conventional counterparts. (While doing a market basket survey, van Schaik was surprised that food cost differences didn’t always follow conventional wisdom of what foods are more “valuable”: those organic Sno Pac strawberries, for example, cost only 25 percent more, while frozen green beans were 90 percent higher.) However, when considered in light of the whole package—healthy food, supporting the local farming community, introducing kids and staff to new lunchroom experiences—the full value of these intangibles goes beyond a monetary price tag.

“We’re committed to trying to make this work because it fits into our school’s value system of serving the community,” says Dansingburg.

Of course, the bottom line is that Ridgeway has to keep within a budget, no matter what its values. In the past, the school’s food program lost between \$4,000 and \$8,000 a year, according to Dansingburg. That money came directly out of the school’s education budget. But things have turned around.

“We’re in the black,” says Klankowski. That’s mostly because more kids are eating the cafeteria food, rather than bringing lunch from home. During the 2008-2009 school year, on average 39 of the kids ate the cafeteria food; this school year the average was 51. The staff ate more of the school food as well—a four-fold increase. That’s no small factor—seeing adults eating in the cafeteria has a big influence on kids.

So for a relatively modest investment, the school has proven one can make local, sustainably-raised food a consistent part of lunch, not just a sampling here and there. A glance at the school menu shows that two to four times a week the phrase “Foods Grown Sustainably by Farmers we KNOW!” appears as a special footnote next to certain items. Items like Sno Pac’s flash-frozen green beans helped the menu retain its local flavor during the long winter.

Such consistency is critical if kids are to become comfortable with seeing fresh items like spinach or cucumbers as “everyday food,” rather than “special occasion food,” says van Schaik.

And starting out small is important. Farm to school experts say one of the biggest mistakes school officials make is to plunge into

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Community Based Food Systems

...Farm to School, from page 23

sourcing local foods all at once, biting off more than they—or food service staff and kids—can chew, so to speak. For Ridgeway, taking the go-slow approach was particularly critical, given that it was test driving a new kitchen and cook at the same time.

In the classroom

Another key to successful farm to school efforts is taking the local, healthy food message beyond the lunchroom. The morning assembly is one way Ridgeway does that. Another is to plug it into the classrooms.

ers Harry and Jackie Hoch.

“It started out as a simple project and it just kind of developed,” says Searles. He and Meyer say that the flexibility of writing assignments makes them a natural way to integrate food education into the classroom.

The often manic energy of preschoolers can also be put to use in the bigger farm to school scheme. Down the hall from Searles and Meyer, Joann Groth works with preschoolers who spend a few mornings a week at Ridgeway. An avid cook and experienced 4-H leader, Groth has a food-centric “letter of the week” exercise: P is for pancakes, K for kohlrabi, N for noodles, L for lefse, etc. The kids learn not only how to spell food

the school’s new garden. After preparing the trays, half-a-dozen kids dashed to the lawn behind the school to inspect a spot that had been carved out for the garden. A pile of composted manure recently delivered by a neighboring dairy farmer towered over the site. The school garden, which is coordinated by van Schaik and two parents/neighbors who are master gardeners, is a chance to integrate a little science, stewardship gardening and outdoor activity. On this day van Schaik led an off-the-cuff lesson on photosynthesis and the role earthworms play in soil quality. Eventually the pile of natural fertility became too enticing, and the kids scrambled to it for a game of king of the compost—perhaps getting a little more intimate with the roots of sustainable food production than their parents would have preferred.

Scraping & assessing

There are several ways to measure the success of a farm to school program. The brass ring is a situation showing that kids are smarter, happier, healthier—and all of this is being done without breaking the bank. Indeed, studies around the country have shown connections between academic achievement and better quality food that’s affordable, but it’s too early in the game for Ridgeway to give their farm to school effort a final grade. And the reality is, measurements of such things as academic achievement march on, no matter where a school is with its efforts to serve better food.

As Searles and Meyer discuss how to integrate food into their classroom, more than once the elephant in the room emerges: the statewide standardized tests begin soon, and the sustainability of eating local tomatoes isn’t on the exam.

“So a real focus now is getting them ready for the tests,” says Searles. “Yeah, go exercise and be healthy, but we need you to know your math and reading.”

School director Dansingburg agrees that academic performance remains a main priority at the school. “But when it comes to connecting food and learning, the reality is right now we’re relying for the most part on the anecdotal stories of our teachers and staff about what they’ve seen as far as changes in the students,” she says.

The word in the halls, classrooms and back home is that the kids like the food, whether it makes them perform better in the classroom or not. Carrie says she even gets compliments in the lunch line. But the ultimate test comes when the trays are scraped at the end of the meal, and Linda Fort is the



Ridgeway students prepare a garden behind the school as part of an effort to connect good food with healthy soil. (photo by Caroline van Schaik)

Galen Searles, along with Sarah Meyer, teaches 2nd and 3rd grade. Last fall, Searles adopted some farm to school ideas from sample lessons van Schaik had left on his desk. As a result, students ended up spending a week on a writing assignment that focused on the apples Hoch Orchard in nearby La Crescent, Minn., had been providing as morning snacks.

They discussed properties that apples have and their health benefits; one of the students even suggested that they develop an official “thank you” poster for orchard own-

items, but have a chance to do some simple cooking and maybe run a hand-cranked noodle maker. Eventually, the kids are able to tell their parents that, “We’ve eaten our way through the alphabet,” jokes Groth.

Gardening matters

The school is also attempting to take the children even deeper into the roots of eating—all the way back to the soil itself. With that in mind, Ridgeway’s Environmental/Forestry Club met after classes on a recent spring afternoon to plant seeds in trays for

Farm to School, see page 25...

judge and jury. She's a classroom para-professional educator and a lunchroom server. Fort adds another key perspective: she was responsible for the heat and serve meals before. "We wouldn't get any compliments on the food when I was serving it," she quips. One of Fort's jobs now is to take the trays from kids and toss the leftovers. During a recent lunch, she assesses the damage: a few handfuls of uneaten food in the wastebasket. Not bad. "Absolutely less waste" compared to previous years, she says, estimating that for the 2009-2010 school year overall waste is down over 50 percent.

"I'd love to claim local foods for that, but in fact it's Mary's cooking," says van Schaik. But it serves as a good foundation for building on improving the food's quality even more by sourcing local product. Now that the program is not losing money, it can begin to mix conventional food with the more expensive, locally sourced products, says Dansingburg. And now that the kids have been introduced to good food, they'll retain a desire for it—in school and at home.

While farmer Greg Reynolds was selling produce to the Hopkins schools last fall, the students' intake of fresh fruits and vegetables went up. Once winter rolled around, their desire for good food didn't wane. "The kids continued to eat more fruits and vegetables even after I wasn't delivering anymore," he says.

Size: strengths & weaknesses

As Ridgeway staff and parents look back on their first foray into farm to school, it's become clear that their small size and location are a blessing and a curse.

First the advantages: a small charter school such as Ridgeway has the flexibility to experiment with something like local food procurement. Because many of the teachers and other staff have kids attending the school, they have an added incentive to see something like this work. Also, huge quantities of food are not involved, making an experimental flop easier to swallow.

A big advantage Ridgeway has is that some of the students' parents are supplying the food. For example, the cabbage for the coleslaw comes from Featherstone Farm, one of the most well known organic vegetable operations in the region. Featherstone's Jack Hedin and Jenni McHugh are school parents, which creates a sense of community that's hard to match.

"You can just see the kids' faces light up when they say, 'That's from my dad's farm,'" says Dansingburg.

But with small size, comes drawbacks.

Federal farm to school legislation

The Land Stewardship Project has been working with various Congressional and organizational allies during the past year to secure passage and resources for a national farm to school program. Congress is expected to make some sort of national farm to school program part of the Child Nutrition Act, which should be reauthorized later this year. The Child Nutrition Act provides for school lunch programs and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program.

LSP supports efforts to provide as much as \$50 million over five years in mandatory funding for farm to school. A central component of such an initiative would be a competitive grants program that would allow schools and partners to establish or expand the relationship and support structure needed to advance local, healthy food options in schools.

In March, when the U.S. Senate advanced its version of the Child Nutrition Act—"Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010"—it included \$40 million for a national farm to school initiative. On the House side, the Child Nutrition Act reauthorization hasn't gone through the appropriate committees yet, but a number of bills have been introduced to build momentum for a national farm to school initiative.

To get engaged in helping establish a national farm to school program, contact LSP's Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org.

Sandy Dietz, who owns and operates White-water Gardens in Altura, Minn., with her husband Lonny, says providing carrots and other vegetables to Ridgeway was a good way to try out a new marketing option, but orders weren't big enough to make the arrangement a good money maker. Whitewater Gardens is a good half-hour's drive from Ridgeway, and van Schaik, like she did with many of the farms, picked up its produce during the school year.

"Coordinating the timing, stuff like that, was difficult. If the orders are large enough and we can piggyback onto someone else, then transportation works," Dietz says.

That brings up perhaps one of the biggest challenges Ridgeway will have to overcome if farm to school is to graduate from being a one-year experiment to a cafeteria constant: the logistics of getting local food through the back door every week. So far, that's been taken care of with the help of the U of M grant that paid for van Schaik's time. That "foraging" service may come to an end this year if the grant is not renewed.

The cook, Mary Carrie, says dealing with several orders and deliveries on her own would be a major headache, especially since she's the only paid kitchen staff.

"It's an issue we will have to resolve sooner or later," says van Schaik while standing in Ridgeway's kitchen one recent morning. She and Carrie discuss the possibility of having a Winona produce distributor haul local farmers' products, making for a full truck coming to Ridgeway; Carrie is open to the idea.

Carbo-loading

Ridgeway also faces hurdles all schools are confronted with, regardless of size or location. One is the cost of food in a time of tightening budgets. The other is the National School Lunch Program. This USDA initia-

tive offers schools a reimbursement on each meal, and that money is critical to making school lunches affordable. But it comes with some pretty major strings attached in the form of nutritional guidelines. Specifically, it's heavily weighted towards commodity foods that are rich in carbohydrates.

This means a heavy reliance on breads and breaded products like chicken fingers, which leaves less room for local produce or even un-breaded meats. "The number one thing the government could do to help farm to school efforts is to change the lunch requirements," Dansingburg says.

Point of no return?

Transportation, budgets, nutritional guidelines—all daunting challenges. But as she prepares yet one more lunch in Ridgeway's kitchen near the end of the school year, Carrie makes it clear that the institution's baby steps into farm to school have already taken it too far to turn back without trying all options.

"When you see the reaction on the kids' faces and their eagerness to try new things, you know it's really all worth the effort." □

LSP & farm to school

The Land Stewardship Project's Community Based Food and Economic Development Program is working to help get more local food in school cafeterias. For information on these efforts, contact Terry VanDerPol at 320-269-2105 or tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org. In southeast Minnesota, contact Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org. In western Minnesota, contact Tom Taylor at 320-269-2105 or ttaylor@landstewardshipproject.org.



Memory of Trees

A Daughter's Story of a Family Farm

By Gayla Marty
2010; 248 pages
University of Minnesota Press
www.gaylamarty.com

Reviewed by Dana Jackson

Gayla Marty begins her memoir, *Memory of Trees*, with a dramatic account of her Uncle Gaylon Marty's farm accident and hospitalization. As the story unfolds, Uncle, as she refers to him, continues to be central to her account of the rise and fall of her family's dairy farm near Rush City, Minn., in the Saint Croix River Valley. I was struck by this book's similarity to John Hildebrand's work, *Mapping the Farm: The Chronicle of a Family*, which begins when his wife and her siblings gather at the family farm near Rochester, Minn., where their father, Ed O'Neill, is hospitalized with blood clots in his lungs. The vexing question in both books: Who will take over the family farm?

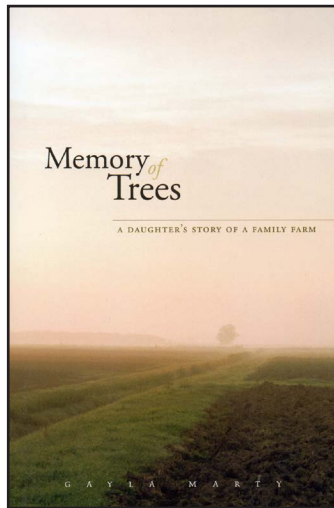
Memory of Trees was written by a woman with an enviable memory. The first section, "Attachment," is chock full of detailed anecdotes about her early childhood, her family history, the powerful influence of the Bible and the Baptist Church in her life, and loving descriptions of the houses and barns on the farm. Each chapter is preceded by a description of a tree species on the farm (except for the fig, which she remembered from Tunisia); thus, the book title. Her family had been extra close because her father and his brother married two sisters, and they lived in side-by-side houses and ran a dairy farm together that they inherited from their father and uncle. And they stayed pretty close in the early years when their children were born: Gayla and three brothers for Gordon and Margaret, and a son and daughter for Gaylon and Lorraine.

The book's subtitle, *A Daughter's Story of a Family Farm*, is particularly poignant because in her family only sons inherit the farm. It was expected that at least one of her three brothers or a male cousin would inherit and operate the farm, and Gayla never imagined a time when the land would not be farmed by a Marty.

This daughter knew that farming was hard. "The farm work was always there, acres of field work from May to November, hours of barn work every day of the year,"

she writes. When the small farm didn't make enough to support two families, they borrowed money to build another barn, increase the cattle herd and get more land to grow more feed. But financial difficulties continued, even though both wives had off-farm jobs. Still, the family loved the farming way of life and the Marty place settled by their Swiss grandparents.

The second section of this memoir is called "Separation." The author describes her teen and young adult years, and how a foreign exchange experience in Switzerland and college fellowship in Tunisia expanded her knowledge of the world beyond the farm. Rush City became less rural as new people moved in to work in the plastics factory or drive to jobs in the Twin Cities. The twin boys in their teens brought new habits and different attitudes home with them from school. As Uncle Gaylon grew more religious and prone to temper tirades, he clashed with Gayla's mother about the boys' snowmobiles and school sports that took so much time. Gayla's father wanted the sons to do more farm work, but Margaret always talked him into allowing the twins to go out



for sports. The brothers and their families begin to lead more separate lives.

The Marty farm was more than 100 years old, but it was in debt because interest was high and milk prices low. It was clear that a "lifetime of twice-a-day milking and field work" had worn out her father and uncle, and none of the sons wanted to follow in their footsteps. The federal government's Dairy Buyout Program in the 1985 Farm Bill gave them a chance to sell the cows and get out of the dairy business without selling the land, and they took it, as did thousands of others.

There's a wrenching scene in the book that describes herding the cows out of the barn and onto trucks to be sold. After Gayla and her daughter watched the confused cows

slipping in manure and jerking around in panic to the harsh sound of the trucker's voice and angry men cursing and hitting them, she concluded:

"I was sure there was a better way to do this, faster and quieter. But maybe they had to do it this way, yell and exert themselves, release some of those years of their own tension and resentment and guilt—guilt for the ones who didn't continue."

Eventually the family decides to sell all but 10 acres and the houses on the Marty land. Gayla sees the combination of pastures, woodland, cropland, orchard and houses and the beloved big old barn as a holy unit and is filled with anger and grief at the sale. But her three brothers and male cousin don't want to farm, nor does her husband, who grew up in the city. And Gayla hasn't prepared herself to farm, even if the family were to consider passing it on to a woman. So this home place she loves is sold to a neighbor, and Uncle Gaylon is doing fieldwork for him when he has the accident described in the first pages of the book. Only Uncle Gaylon cries as much as Gayla over the loss of the farm.

Such an emotional story might justify the author's having an angry or critical perspective of her family in this book, but Marty's tone is amazingly objective and loving. In the book about his wife's family selling the farm, John Hildebrand concludes: "If this farm is lost, it won't be because of crooked bankers or poor markets or even bad luck. It will be a failure from within when, after four generations on the land, the line of descent finally runs out."

Yet that's not fair either. Outside forces of the modern agricultural economy and government policy forced the Marty brothers to expand and go into debt, creating worries and tension that triggered family strife. No wonder Gayla's brothers chose more pleasant and secure jobs with agribusiness companies. If their fathers had transitioned to a grass-based system with an on-farm creamery—like Autumnwood Farm near the Saint Croix Valley town of Forest Lake, Minn., has done in recent years—the life of a dairy farm owner and operator might have been more appealing to the next generation. But that option wasn't considered because few models existed in those days.

Today, investor-owned industrial dairy farms with thousands of cows are replacing family farms like the Marty's, but they are

Memory, see page 27...

not sustainable, even when greenwashed by methane digesters financed with taxpayer funds and promoted by Extension “experts.” They require cheap oil and electricity, lots of water, neighbors immune to odor and sickness from hydrogen sulfide, and the public’s willingness to tolerate the great risk of surface and groundwater contamination, even in the watershed of the Saint Croix National Scenic River.

There are other ways to pursue agricul-

ture. Gayla Marty took the Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings course in 2004, and now she and her 26-year-old daughter Claire are exploring options for farming enterprises on the remaining land (see page 3 for more on these plans). They are part of a growing trend—the 2007 USDA Farm Census counted nearly 30 percent more women as principal farm operators (see page 5). Every year more women are drawn to farming crops that humans can eat, rather than grain for livestock feedlots, and they start Community Supported Agriculture operations or grow specialty

crops for restaurants and farmers’ markets. LSP farmer-members include women who are owners or active partners on grass-based cow and goat dairy farms. Perhaps their daughters will inherit these farms, starting a new tradition that will be associated with community-based food systems.

And maybe all this will provide the material for a sequel to *Memory of Trees*—and the farm it honors. □

Dana Jackson coordinates the Saint Croix River Valley Buy Fresh Buy Local Chapter out of LSP’s Twin Cities office.

Methland The Death and Life of an American Small Town

By Nick Reding
2009; 255 pages
Bloomsbury Publishing
www.methlandbook.com

Reviewed by Parker Bosley

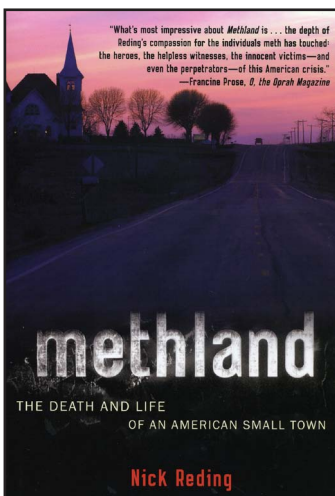
They’re writing books about it. They’re making films. Cities are holding conferences. Who could have imagined a night at the theater to see a film about food and farming? What’s next? Can we anticipate a Broadway musical based on food and farming? Some of the media presentations are short on substance and long on emotion. Some are thought provoking and others are narrow and one sided. Some, however, tell us what we need to hear—the mistakes we’ve made and the need to turn the ship around.

Methland: The Death and Life of an American Small Town by Nick Reding is one of those works that describes those mistakes and what we need to do to correct them. The book describes the ravages of drug abuse in rural American and asks us to realize that agribusinesses, powerful agriculture organizations and the pharmaceutical industries have contributed to the social and economic crisis so prevalent in rural America. In many places, the bucolic countryside is no more. Rural America now has a higher incidence of drug abuse than urban areas. *Methland* illustrates how drug abuse has moved to places where there is the least resistance, much like a virus might do in a plant or animal. Resources to combat drug abuse are limited in rural America.

The author, however, could not be accused of ranting like a constituent questioning his Congressman at a health care debate. His criticism of those responsible for the problems of rural America—industry, the Farm Bureau, the Food and Drug Adminis-

tration and the USDA—is academic.

To make his point, to catch our attention, the author tells us what happened and who made the decisions. He helps us understand the gravity of the social and economic state of rural America by telling us stories: stories of people, stories of the conglomerates that now rule much of rural America. He shares



stories of people who lost a way of life that their small-scale family farms once provided them. He reminds us of the mistakes that all of us have made, including consumers who support agribusinesses through their food purchases.

He asks questions that require our doing some soul searching. How are a CAFO and the conglomerate that owns the CAFO different from a drug cartel? How is the kind and quality of food being produced by agribusinesses in league with food processors creating health problems for Americans?

Reding asks us to consider our role and our responsibility in the food and farming systems that have created the crisis. He asks: If every man’s job, according to Thomas Aquinas, is to help every other man achieve his ends, how can we allow evil to flourish in the actions of the agri-industries? How

can we accept a pharmaceutical company that facilitates the manufacturing of an illegal substance such as methamphetamine? Not everyone will achieve the same, he explains, but through our actions we should be able to help all to achieve what they can without harming others.

His story, researched over four years, is set in Oelwein, a once thriving farming community in northeast Iowa. Unfortunately, Oelwein’s story is typical. Since the early 1980s three out of four farms have gone out of business, a trend we’ve seen replicated nationwide. With their land sold and no jobs, large numbers of people have left the Farm Belt in search of another life.

The author gives us a short chemistry lesson as he describes the “manufacturing” of methamphetamine, known on the street as meth or crank. We learn that several of the ingredients used in the illegal manufacturing of this drug are available in the neighborhood drugstore. Nasal spray is one example. Contac, the cold relief medicine, is another. He also tells us about the power of the pharmaceutical companies. When lawmakers attempted to curtail the sale of these over-the-counter drugs, they met strong opposition from the lobbyists hired by the pharmaceutical companies.

Methland is not a pleasant read. Like it or not, we all carry some guilt for the demise of rural America. Sitting in your car with the motor idling while you wait your turn at the drive-through window is a good time to contemplate. Cheap, convenient food begins in a production system rooted in rural America and that system is making America sick. Perhaps we need to mention this at the next health care shouting match. □

Land Stewardship Project member Parker Bosley is a chef and the owner of Parker’s Restaurant in Cleveland, Ohio.



Buying directly

The Land Stewardship Project has updated its fact sheet on how eaters can begin getting more of their food directly from local farmers. A pdf version of "Buying Directly From a Farmer" is available at www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/factsheets/19_buying_directly_from_farmer_2009.pdf.

For a paper copy, contact LSP's offices in the Minnesota communities of Lewiston (507-523-3366), Montevideo (320-269-2105) or Minneapolis (612-722-6377). □

Food handling guidelines

The Land Stewardship Project has updated a series of three fact sheets that provide guidelines on legally and safely selling food into local Minnesota markets. They're available in pdf format on our website:

- Sale of Shell Eggs to Grocery Stores

in Minnesota (www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/EggGuidelines12-09.pdf).

- Sale of Meat & Poultry to Grocery Stores & Restaurants in Minnesota (www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/MeatPoultryGuidelines12-09.pdf).

- Providing Safe, Locally-Grown Produce to Commercial Food Establishments & The General Public in Minnesota (www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/ProduceGuidelines12-09.pdf).

For paper copies, contact LSP's Tom Taylor at ttaylor@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-269-2105. □

LSP podcast

For the past few years, the Land Stewardship Project's award-winning *Ear to the Ground* podcast has been showcasing the voices of the farmers, consumers, scientists and activists who are working to create a more sustainable food and farming system. We now have 80 episodes online and have organized our podcasts by category.

- The categories are: Ag and Food Policy
- ◆ Beginning Farmers/Farm Beginnings
 - ◆ Culture and Agriculture
 - ◆ Global Ag
 - ◆ Grassroots People Power
 - ◆ Innovative Farming and Farmers
 - ◆ Innovative Marketing
 - ◆ Local Food Systems
 - ◆ Multifunctional Farming
 - ◆ Stewardship Farming/Farming with the Wild.

To listen in, go to www.landstewardshipproject.org, and click on the **Podcast** link under the **LSP on the Web** heading. □

Local food organizer needed

The Land Stewardship Project is seeking an organizer to work full time in Washington County, Minn., with the Saint Croix River Valley *Buy Fresh Buy Local* Chapter and the Washington County Public Health Department staff to increase community access to nutritious foods (fresh fruits and vegetables) under a grant from the Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP). Applications are due June 10 and the start date is July 1.

Contact LSP's Dana Jackson at 612-722-6377 or danaj@landstewardshipproject.org for a full job description and details. □

Breakfast volunteers



Once again the generous help of volunteers made the 2010 edition of the Land Stewardship Project's Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol a success on March 2. Among other things, they welcomed breakfast participants, served food and cleaned up afterwards. LSP would like to extend a special thank you to chef Brad Beal (*far right*), who prepared the food. For more on the breakfast, see page 6. For details on how you can volunteer at LSP, see page 30. (*LSP photo*)



**LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT**

Land Stewardship Project 2008-2009

Financial Update

Operating Revenue & Temporarily Restricted Net Assets Raised for Future Fiscal Years

Fiscal Year 2008-2009

Religious Grants	6%	\$98,500
Foundations & Corporations	44%	\$750,050
Government Grants	11%	\$192,371
Memberships & Contributions	33%	\$552,245
Fees & Sales	4%	\$70,106
Other	2%	\$27,123
Total	100%	\$1,690,395

Statement of Financial Position

As of June 30, 2009

Assets

Cash & Investments.....	\$686,215
Property & Equipment.....	\$423,068
Grants Receivable.....	\$368,809
Other.....	\$30,097

Total Assets.....\$1,508,189

Liabilities & Net Assets

Liabilities.....\$114,295

Net Assets:

Unrestricted.....	\$331,026
Temporarily Restricted Grants.....	\$696,468
Temporarily Restricted Farm.....	\$366,400

Total Liabilities & Net Assets.....\$1,508,189

Expenses by Operational Area

Fiscal Year 2008-2009

Organizing/Policy	23%	\$325,045
Food Systems	19%	\$272,345
Farm Beginnings	20%	\$279,128
Communication	6%	\$77,357
Membership/Outreach	12%	\$163,590
Fundraising	6%	\$85,014
General Administration	11%	\$153,700
Other	3%	\$41,207
Total	100%	\$1,397,386

- From audited statements based on generally accepted accounting principles for nonprofits, which book temporarily restricted net assets raised for future use in the year granted.
- Programs include payments for joint project-based work to other collaborating nonprofit or university organizations.
- Additional program expenses of \$85,533, including events, scholarships and livestock loans, are no longer included in the above expenses because they are now netted against revenue or assets, per audit rules.
- Contributions and unrestricted net assets include a one-time major gift of real estate that will be used to initiate a board-restricted endowment fund.
- Mahoney Ulbrich Christiansen and Russ, P.A. expressed an unqualified opinion on the financial statements of the Land Stewardship Project.



Membership Update

507-523-3366; lspse@landstewardshipproject.org.

◆ Tom Taylor, **LSP Montevideo office**, 320-269-2105; ttaylor@landstewardshipproject.org.

◆ Abby Liesch, **LSP Twin Cities office**, 612-722-6377; aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org.

Help us tell the LSP story

By Abby Liesch

Video is an increasingly powerful communication tool for groups like the Land Stewardship Project—it reaches broad audiences in a new way, giving voice and providing a “picture” of an organization’s work. We are looking for stories from LSP members about stewardship, innovation or what you are doing on your land or in your community that is “keeping the land and people together.” We hope that in making LSP’s stories more accessible, our community of members and our collective voice will be even stronger. You can view two videos we currently have online at www.youtube.com/user/LSPNOW.

We’ll be conducting video interviews to help share the stories of LSP with people who may want to know more through online channels such as Facebook and YouTube. We’ll be coming to meetings, field days and events to try to capture the flavor of each and conduct some quick interviews while we’re there.

If you have ideas of other stories that aren’t necessarily your own but may be fitting to capture on video, we’d like to hear about that too. Contact me at 612-722-6377 or aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org to submit your ideas.

LSP celebrations in July & August

Save the dates: LSP will be having two potluck/cookout/celebrations this summer:

→ **On July 22** our Twin Cities office will host an event in the back yard of our South Minneapolis location (821 E. 35th St.). We’ll provide brats, burgers, vegetarian entrée and beverages. You can bring a dish to share and a chair to relax in. There will also be a silent auction with items donated by members and local business that support LSP. If you have an item you’d like to donate for the silent auction, please contact me.

→ **On Aug. 15** LSP’s southeast Minnesota office will hold its hog roast/potluck/celebration at Crigler Family Farm in the Gilmore Valley near Winona. For more information, call Karen Benson at 507-523-3366 or e-mail lspse@landstewardshipproject.org.

Volunteer for LSP

Volunteers play a big role in LSP’s work, helping out in many ways to advance stewardship and justice. This summer there are a number of events and activities that LSP could use your help with, in addition to the on-going work in our offices. If you’re interested in helping out, please contact one of the people below at our various offices:

◆ Karen Benson, **LSP Lewiston office**,

If you have any interest in volunteering, we’d love to hear from you. ☐

Abby Liesch is LSP’s Membership Associate and manages our video page at www.youtube.com/user/LSPNOW.

Employer matching grants: Ask today

Many employers offer matching donations programs to their employees. These programs will often match donations made by employees to nonprofit organizations like the Land Stewardship Project. Ask your employer if they have such a program and if your LSP donation could be matched.

Support LSP in your workplace

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, which is a coalition of 20 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offer work-place giving as an option in making our communities better places to live. Together member organizations of the Minnesota Environmental Fund work to:

- promote the sustainability of our rural communities and family farms;
- protect Minnesotans from health hazards;
- educate citizens and our youth on conservation efforts;
- preserve wilderness areas, parks, wetlands and wildlife habitat.



MINNESOTA Environmental Fund

You can support LSP in your workplace by giving through the Minnesota Environmental Fund. Options include giving a designated amount through payroll deduction, or a single gift. You may also choose to give to the entire coalition or specify the organization of your choice within the coalition, such as the Land Stewardship Project. If your employer does not provide this opportunity, ask the person in charge of workplace giving to include it. For more information, contact LSP’s Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377, or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org.

Continue your land's legacy by donating it to LSP

The Land Stewardship Project has launched an initiative that allows property owners to continue their family's legacy on the land while supporting the work of the organization as well as beginning farmers. This is a gifting opportunity for people who have a vital connection to a piece of land and want to maintain that legacy while supporting the work of LSP.

"When people have dedicated themselves to a given piece of land, their investment of stewardship transcends any given value," says Dan Guenther, a member of LSP's Land Gifts Committee.

Through *Land & Stewardship Legacies*, LSP can accept gifts of farmland and other real estate. The *Stewardship Legacy* secures financial resources to support the work of LSP now and into the future. The *Land Legacy* is distinguished by accepting gifts of suitable parcels of farmland to serve as incubators for beginning farmers, or

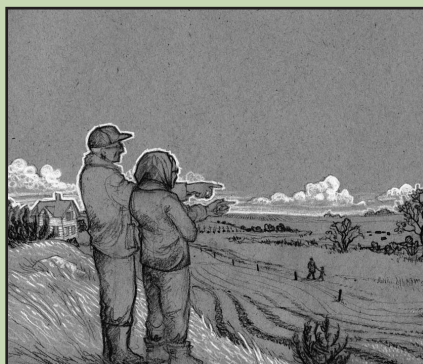
sold outright to promising graduates of LSP's Farm Beginnings program. For details, check the *Land & Stewardship Legacies* web page at www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-joinus-land-legacies.html, or call LSP Executive Director George Boody at 612-722-6377.

LSP is partnering with the Minnesota Real Estate Foundation, which has excellent resources and guidelines for people who are

interested in exploring various avenues for donating real estate to charities. The *Land Stewardship Letter* is featuring a "Did you know..." series from the Real Estate Foundation that highlights ways of making charitable real estate gifting a satisfying, sustainable experience. Below is the latest installment in this series:

Did you know...

Donors can gift their personal residence or vacation home to the Minnesota Real Estate Foundation and retain the right to use the property for the remainder of their lives. The donor receives an immediate tax deduction for a portion of the appraised value of the property. Upon the donor's death, the property is sold and the net proceeds are transferred to the donor's designated charities.



Get current with

LIVE  **WIRE**

Sign up for the *LIVE-WIRE* to get monthly e-mail updates and news from the Land Stewardship Project. To subscribe, call Abigail Liesch at 612-722-6377 or e-mail aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org, and put in the subject line, "Subscribe *LIVE-WIRE*." □

LSP on Facebook

LSP has expanded its presence on the Internet by launching a Facebook page. Go to www.landstewardshipproject.org and click on the **Facebook** link under "LSP on

the Web" for the latest on what we're up to. Become a "Fan" and share the link with your friends and family. □

LSP blog

The Land Stewardship Project writes weekly on food and sustainable agriculture issues for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership's *Loon Commons* blog.

To view the blog, go to www.landstewardshipproject.org and click on the **Blog** link under the **LSP on the Web** heading. You can sign up for an RSS feed at <http://looncommons.org/category/food-and-sustainable-agriculture/feed>. □

Display your LSP membership with pride

If you have a website and want to display your Land Stewardship Project membership, we have two "membership" versions (pictured below: vertical and horizontal) of our logo available.

To request a copy, contact LSP's Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377 or bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org. □



Thank you!

The Land Stewardship Project is grateful to have received gifts made in the name of loved ones over the past few months.

In memory of Richard Chase & Helen Borgen

◆ Michael & Denise Bernatz

In memory of Shirley Molitor

◆ Family & friends of Shirley Molitor

For details on donating to LSP in the name of a loved one, contact Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org. More information on donating special gifts to LSP is also available at www.landstewardshipproject.org.



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STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **JUNE 7—WEI Organic Farm School: Hmong Family Farming & Sustainable Ag in MN**, Minneapolis; Contact: www.w-e-i.org; 651-583-0705

→ **JUNE 8—Organic Dairy & Animal Health workshop, Prime Pastures Organic Dairy**, Lewiston, Minn.; Contact: www.mosesorganic.org; 715-778-5775, angie@mosesorganic.org; or Dale & Carmene Pangrac, 507-523-2048

→ **JUNE 13—LSP Farm Beginnings workshop on Managlitza Pigs—from feeding to butchering to marketing**, Taylors Falls, Minn. (see page 16)

→ **JUNE 13—Slow Food Minnesota summer potluck & lecture**, Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: www.slowfoodmn.org

→ **JUNE 14—WEI Organic School: Effects of Common Pesticides at Environmental Concentrations**, Minneapolis (see June 7)

→ **JUNE 18—Field day on transitioning to organic & water quality issues**, 1:30 p.m., Jeff Klinge & Deb Tidwell farm, Farmersburg, Iowa; Contact: www.mosesorganic.org; 715-778-5775; or 319-231-9576; jekling@netins.net

→ **JUNE 19—Grazefest**, Mill City Farmers' Market, Minneapolis; Contact: www.sfa-mn.org; 320-226-6318

→ **JUNE 21—WEI Organic School: What is Organic?** (see June 7)

→ **JUNE 26—Grassland birds & rotational grazing field day**, Dan Specht farm, McGregor, Iowa; Contact: 563-873-3873; www.practicalfarmers.org

→ **JUNE 28—WEI Organic School: Can Organic Food Feed the World** (see June 7)

→ **JUNE 29—LSP membership meeting:**

“Winona County: LSP’s Vision for Agriculture that Cares for the Land & the People,” Farmers Community Park, Lewiston, Minn.; Contact: Sarah Lesnar, LSP, 612-722-6377; slesnar@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JULY or AUG.—Farm Tour, Chippewa watershed, western Minn.** (see page 16)

→ **JULY 8—U of M Organic Field Day**, SWROC, Lambertson, Minn.; Contact: 507-752-7372; <http://swroc.cfans.umn.edu>

→ **JULY 10—SFA Festival of Farms**, various locations throughout Minnesota; Contact: www.sfa-mn.org; 320-226-6318

→ **JULY 12—WEI Organic School: It All Comes Down to Humus** (see June 7)

LSP summer celebrations July 22 & Aug. 15

The Land Stewardship Project is having its annual summer cookout/potluck/celebration events July 22 in Minneapolis, Minn., and Aug. 15 near Winona, Minn. See page 30 for details.

→ **JULY 13—LSP Farm Beginnings workshop on low-cost vegetable farming start-up & scaling up**, Loon Organics, Hutchinson, Minn. (see page 16)

→ **JULY 16—West Central Research & Outreach Center Anniversary Event, featuring LSP’s George Boody presenting on “Is Agricultural Diversity the Path?”**; Contact: wroc.cfans.umn.edu; 320-589-1711

→ **JULY 19—WEI Organic School: Urban Farming Basics** (see June 7)

→ **JULY 23—WEI Organic School: Growing Power & Dismantling Racism through Food Justice** (see June 7)

→ **JULY 25—LSP Farm Beginnings workshop on CSA**, Northfield, Minn. (see page 16)

→ **AUG. 2—WEI Organic School: Biodiversity in Organic Farming** (see June 7)

→ **AUG. 7—LSP Farm Beginnings Cedar Summit Farm farm tour**, New Prague, Minn. (see page 16)

→ **AUG. 8—LSP Farm Beginnings post-handling of vegetables field day**, Arkansas, Wis. (see page 16)

→ **AUG. 9—WEI Organic School: Road to Health & Wealth in our Communities** (see June 7)

→ **AUG. 14—Minnesota Garlic Festival**, McLeod County Fairgrounds, Hutchinson, Minn.; Contact: www.sfa-mn.org; Jerry Ford, 320-543-3394; jerry@marienne.com

→ **AUG. 20—Managing cover crops workshop**, East Troy, Wis., Contact: www.michaelfieldsagainst.org; 262-642-3303

→ **AUG. 24—LSP Farm Beginnings field day on late season cover crops & rotations**, Delano, Minn. (see page 16)

→ **AUG. 31—LSP fundraiser at Brasa Premium Rotisserie**, Saint Paul, Minn.; Contact: Mike McMahon, LSP, 612-722-6377; mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **SEPT. 1—Registration deadline for 2010-2011 session of LSP’s Farm Beginnings program** (see page 16)

→ **SEPT. 10-12—Growing Power’s National-International Urban & Small Farm Conference**, Milwaukee, Wis.; Contact: 414-527-1546; www.growingpowerfarmconference.org

→ **OCT. 15—Draft Horse Equipment Demo Field Day**, Common Harvest Farm, Osceola, Wis.; Contact: www.mosesorganic.org; 715-778-5775; or Dan Guenther, 715-294-2831

Check www.landstewardshipproject.org for the latest on upcoming events.