

# The Land Stewardship



LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT

*Keeping the Land & People Together*

## Letter

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Autumn 2009



Stewarding a family farm for the next generation (see page 14).

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—*USDA Lauds LSP's Work with Beginning Farmers*—

—*Health Care & Our Moral Obligations*—

— *Dine Fresh Dine Local in St. Croix River Valley*

— *Reviews: Bringing It to the Table; Dark Dreaming, Global Dimming*—



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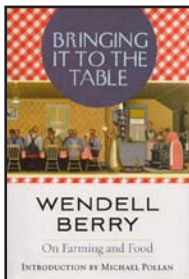


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## Family farming: definitions matter

By Tony Schultz

Walking through the grocery store recently I couldn't help but notice how many food products on their labeling, packaging or branding employed small/family farm pastoral wording, imagery or presentation. Often featured was a valley, pasture, red barn or some other small farm imagery.

Given that most produce, milk, meat and eggs come from giant farms, I wondered why these labels didn't show 30,000 steers in a feedlot standing ankle deep in their own feces eating corn, liquefied fat, urea and antibiotics. I wondered why the living conditions of tomato pickers in Florida whose employers were found guilty of violating laws prohibiting slavery were not pictured or described. This packaging obviously seemed a manipulation of the ideal of the family farm. But the imagery in these claims forced me to ask and answer the question: what is a family farm?

When I asked people for their definitions, a farmer/teacher friend of mine made this comment: "The moment you define something you corrupt it, for no definition can replace the understanding of a genuine human relationship or honest exchange between a farmer and an eater." The powers that be will always attempt to assert definitions.

But to me, to define your reality is essential to knowing your place in it and having control over it. We can't just leave the creation of definitions to the industrialized food system. Defining the family farm is important because we all must ask and answer this question: "What kind of world do we want to live in?" If we do not offer a definition we not only abandon ourselves to, but are complicit in, a world controlled and fed by others for interests other than our own. If we do not define the terms and seek to understand their meaning, the only place that the imagery of the family farm will be found is on a wrapper at the supermarket.

### Family farm defined

The critical attributes of a family farm include family controlled land used for the production of food or fiber with a majority of farm labor provided by the family. Farmer control is an important aspect of the definition in that it allows for independent

decision making which encourages innovation and minimizes the alienation of having your creative work dictated and controlled by another. Whether it is through direct ownership, cooperative ownership or renting, the working decisions must be made by the farm family. The most important aspect of the definition is not based on income, acreage or ownership, but rather that the family provides the vast majority of the labor and management decisions. This part of the definition implies a scale that encourages an economic democracy truer to the pastoral ideal and broadens the ownership of farms, allowing more people farms of their own. This definition allows for a wide variety of farms while not manipulating the scale, imagery and independence it confers.

### Some ambiguities

While I consider what I listed above to be critical attributes of a family farm, it is a concept with gray edges and other considerations. As a matter of livelihood, many would consider income a primary determinant. In fact, my Uncle Bruce who milks 65 cows with my Aunt Eileen and employs one part-time worker doesn't consider his operation a family farm, despite it meeting all aspects of the definition. Why? Because he annually "cash flows" more than the \$250,000 cut-off that the USDA uses as a dividing line between big and small farms for categorization, tax and regulatory purposes. While it may be more easily quantifiable, using income to define any business is an arbitrary, poor yardstick at best. In the case of the small or family farm, it fails to take into

account price fluctuations, production stages or the value of certain goods and diversified income streams which should be encouraged in any small business model. It also ignores that direct marketing systems can capture more of the value of farm production. Also, just because you earn \$250,000 of income doesn't mean it isn't going right back out the door. Another gray area involves labor. For instance, Angelic Organics Community Supported Agriculture farm in northern Illinois has 25 acres in vegetables for 1,000 members and employs 18 people. While the acreage, ecological footprint, and working relationships on this farm are what most would consider small, it doesn't meet the definition's labor component. Is it a large farm? Some people would say that a farm is still a small farm if the family provides direct supervision of all non-family help; which is exactly what the farm owner John Peterson does.

### Why it matters

The concept and existence of small family farms matters for several reasons. For one thing, small farms are still a significant source of where our food comes from. According to the USDA, 40 percent of the value of farm products in the U.S. is still produced by small farms. More critically, defining a family farm is important because of what it is not. The agricultural landscapes it stands in contrast to are monocultural vegetable and grain operations or concentrated animal feeding operations.

While not all small farms are sustainable, innovative or good employers, the scale of a small farm inherently lends itself to these things because of farmers' relationship to the land, eaters, workers and their own families.

The inherent potential for family farms to be more environmentally sustainable was

**Family Farm, see page 4...**

### What's on your mind?



Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms? Of course you do.

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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## ...Family Farm, from page 3

articulated in Marty Strange's *Family Farming*. He wrote that family farms, "conserve resources because the natural, human, and financial resources of the farm are owned by the family — they are conserved for its heirs." The scale of a family farm is such that if the farmers were to employ someone's labor, it would be much more difficult for exploitation to take place, given that they are working side-by-side with another person and more fully aware of their abilities, needs and humanity. As a study by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment concluded, "Communities that are surrounded by farms that are larger than can be operated by a family have a bimodal income distribution with a few wealthy elites, a majority of poor laborers and virtually no middle class."

From purchasing equipment to direct marketing, family farmers play a major role in contributing to rural communities' economic viability. A University of Minnesota study conducted in 1995 used economic statistics, census figures and interviews with residents of the Green Isle, Minn., area to examine the impact of dairy farming on a local community. The study showed that between the 1970s and 1990s, the number of farmers serving the local creamery dropped from 1,400 to 960. The larger dairy farms (more than 300 cows) that started domi-

nating the area bypassed local suppliers, reducing the need for Main Street businesses. "Meanwhile, economic and social activity in Green Isle declined, retail sales dropped by 81 percent between 1979 and 1989, the public dance hall closed, and the grade school adjourned permanently. Today, a collection of main street stores, feed mills, and a manufacturing plant remain idle," reported the author. According to sociologist Dean Macannell, "Everyone who has done careful research on farm size, residency of agricultural landowners, and social conditions in the rural community finds the same relationship: as farm size and absentee ownership increase, social conditions in the local community deteriorate."

The most important reason to support family farming is because of the more democratic system it represents. We can have farms where one factory farmer controls 3,500 cows, exploits 50 immigrant workers and pollutes the watershed because their manure is viewed as a matter of disposal *or* we can have 60 families controlling 60 organic cows each with family labor and which view their manure as precious fertilizer to build the soil. By supporting small family farms we are fostering the broad-based independent decision-making of economic democracy and a more sustainable agriculture. We are helping to break up the concentration of power, making room for values beyond the bottom line and creating beautiful and constructive settings to raise families. We

are supporting an economic system where more people can have meaningful control of their lives and something of their own, an empowering space in an interdependent world.

What attracts us to the pastoral imagery is the social and ecological order it represents. It is a strong part of our historical memory and is central to how we imagine our possibilities for the future. For us it is a setting in which we can imagine raising families, playing and working in ways harmonized with the natural systems around us.

In our own particular experience, having a family farm nestled in a rare part of the country where small farms still dominate the landscape does come with certain forms of symbiotic social and ecological relationships. We barter for milk, borrow and lend machinery, and exchange services with our neighbors who have diverse and valued expertise different from our own. We also depend on and work with our family, which is both challenging and rewarding.

Not all family farms are ecologically sustainable and most are not utopian, but the possibilities that the pastoral small family farm presents are significantly different from those of factory farms and much more closely resemble the agricultural landscape and type of world we want to live in. □

*Land Stewardship Project member Tony Schultz operates, with Kat Becker, Stoney Acres Farm (www.stoneyacresfarm.net), a Community Supported Agriculture operation near the central Wisconsin community of Athens.*

*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](http://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>. Here are a few excerpts of recent blogs:*

### Ethanol, Bugs & Drugs

Agro-environmental shocker of the week: corn-based ethanol production may be contributing to the development of antibiotic-resistant superbugs. Think about that the next time you gas up at the pump so you can drive to the doctor for a dose of penicillin. — **March 27, 2009**

### Food, Frogs & Feces

The good news is that a bevy of "food safety" bills being considered in Congress are probably not part of a grand conspiracy to outlaw organic and sustainable family farm-

## The Blog Barn

ing, as some highly-charged e-mails making the rounds claim. But you don't always need malevolent intentions to do great harm. Regardless of intent, it is the impact that counts. — **April 24, 2009**

### Swine Flu's Flunkies

It's to industrial ag's advantage to lump small and moderate-sized family farms in with mega-sized CAFOs. That makes it harder for scientists, healthcare professionals, environmentalists and consumers to find the right

target and criticize some of the negative results of factory livestock production without besmirching all types of animal farming.

This is not only disingenuous, but denies society the ability to support and promote sustainable livestock systems that don't pose threats to the environment, human health and rural communities. — **May 11, 2009**

### Has CSP's Moment Arrived?

As the late Dave Serfling told a U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee hearing in 2001:

"You have over one million creative farmer minds out there in the country. If you tell them the environmental results that you want and give them financial incentive to achieve them, they will find a way to deliver." — **Aug. 7, 2009**

# 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 earlier this year, and Land Stewardship Project member Chris Vanecek combed through the numbers for us. The *Land Stewardship Letter* will periodically feature summaries of some of that combing. The 2007 *Census* is available at your local library, or by visiting [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov).

## Bye-bye pasture

Pastured land, which protects soil and water quality, sequesters greenhouse gases and provides low-cost forage for livestock, took a huge hit between 2002 and 2007, in terms of acreage planted to grass, as well as the number of farms growing it.

- ◆ In 2002, there were over 60 million acres of pasture grasses growing on over 716,000 U.S. farms.
- ◆ By 2007, the number of pastured acres had nose-dived to some 35 million acres. Approximately 300,000 fewer farms had pasture by that time.
- ◆ One factor in the loss of pasture? You guessed it — the *Ag Census* shows the number of corn acres skyrocketed from 68 million to 86 million between 2002 and 2007.
- ◆ By the way, as corn acres rose, the number of farms growing those acres dropped by 830. □

## Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

### → Myth:

**Undocumented immigrants drain the U.S. economy by not paying taxes and by being a tremendous burden on the health care system.**

### → Fact:

Agriculture is particularly reliant on immigrant labor, mostly from Mexico. Around half of the 1.8 million farm workers in the nation are probably undocumented, according to estimates.

A popular strategy for blocking any immigration reform that is just and fair is to claim that all undocumented workers are a massive burden on public services. Therefore, goes the argument, every effort should be made to deport them, no matter what the impact on families and local communities. It's also used as an argument for restricting all immigration—legal and otherwise.

However, a closer look at the numbers undermines this “drain on the economy” argument.

### They pay taxes

Between half and three-quarters of undocumented immigrants pay federal and state income taxes, Social Security taxes and Medicare taxes, according to the Immigration Policy Center. They also pay sales taxes when they make purchases, as well as property taxes—even if they rent their housing. So these workers are paying into programs like Social Security and Medicare, even though they are not eligible for benefits. That means payments made by the estimated seven million undocumented immigrants into such programs amounts to a bonus to public coffers that can be as high as \$7 billion annually, according to the

*New York Times*.

The Iowa Policy Project concluded in a 2007 report that in that state undocumented immigrants pay an estimated aggregate amount of \$40 million to \$62 million in state taxes annually, and an estimated \$50 million to \$77 million in Social Security and Medicare taxes. “Rather than draining resources, undocumented immigrants are in some cases subsidizing services that only documented residents can access,” concluded the report.

### Less use of health care services

And just a small portion of health care money in this country is used to provide publicly supported care to undocumented immigrants, according to a study published in *Health Affairs*, a journal on health policy. The study, which was based on surveys with 2,400 English- and Spanish-speaking adults living in California's Los Angeles County, was conducted by the Rand Corporation. It found that non-elderly, adult immigrants—legal and undocumented—made fewer visits to doctors and hospitals than their native-born counterparts. The study's authors estimate that in the U.S. overall, about \$1.1 billion in federal, state and local government funds are spent annually on health care for undocumented immigrants aged 18 to 64. That stands in contrast to the \$88 billion in government funds that were spent on health care for all non-elderly adults in the U.S. in 2000.

One reason for the difference is that undocumented immigrants simply don't seek medical care because of fears any contact

with institutions in this country will lead to deportation. But the Rand researchers say another factor is that immigrants in general seem to be healthier than the native born. The Rand study found that while 38 percent of the native-born reported having chronic health problems, only 27 percent of the foreign-born and 19 percent of the undocumented immigrants had such conditions. Immigrating, particularly if it's through backdoor, illegal channels, is an arduous task—one that discourages travelers with chronic health problems.

### → More information:

- The Immigration Policy Center's report, “Undocumented Immigrants as Taxpayers,” is at [www.immigrationpolicy.org/index.php?content=fc071101](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/index.php?content=fc071101).

- “Undocumented Immigrants in Iowa: Estimated Tax Contributions and Fiscal Impact” is available on the Iowa Policy Project website at [www.iowapolicyproject.org/2007docs/071025-undoc.pdf](http://www.iowapolicyproject.org/2007docs/071025-undoc.pdf).

- The *New York Times* article, “Illegal Immigrants Are Bolstering Social Security With Billions,” is at [www.nytimes.com/2005/04/05/business/05immigration.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/05/business/05immigration.html).

### Myth Busters on the Internet

You can download pdf versions of *Myth Busters* at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-myth.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-myth.html).



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# LSP News

## LSP hosts USDA Deputy Secretary in SE MN *Merrigan lauds LSP's Farm Beginnings as a national model*

Citing the Land Stewardship Project as a national leader in getting the next generation of farmers on the land, the USDA's Deputy Secretary of Agriculture visited a southeast Minnesota farm Nov. 3 to announce the awarding of over \$17 million in grants to help organizations and institutions working with new farmers.

"The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program is there to make sure beginning farmers and ranchers have access to the resources they need to succeed," said Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan after touring Hidden Stream Farm near Elgin. "A lot of this is following in the footsteps of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program."

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) is a federal initiative that provides \$75 million in dedicated funding over five years for community-based organizations and others working with new farmers.

BFRDP was first authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill, but did not receive funding until the 2008 Farm Bill was passed. The grants awarded in November mark the first round of funds given out under the fully funded program.

During the 2008 Farm Bill debate, LSP was a leading advocate for passage and mandatory funding of BFRDP. The organization also pushed to make community-based groups the main recipients of grants (*see sidebar on page 7*).

LSP members and staff worked with, among others, Minnesota U.S. Representa-

tives Collin Peterson and Tim Walz. Peterson is Chair of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee, and Walz is a member of that committee. Over a three-year period, numerous LSP members and staff, including graduates of LSP's Farm Beginnings program talked to policy makers in Washington, D.C.,

streamfarm.com) was chosen as the location for the national announcement of the BFRDP grants because the proprietors, Eric and Lisa Klein, were graduates of one of the first Farm Beginnings courses offered by LSP over a decade ago. The Klein farm has deep connections to LSP's Farm Begin-

nings Program—Lisa's father, Everett Koenig, was one of the original "Wabasha County Give A Damns" that approached LSP back in the 1990s about creating a training program for the next generation of farmers.

When Eric and Lisa took an interest in farming the Koenig family land, Everett insisted that they take Farm Beginnings first. The Kleins now operate a thriving pasture-based livestock operation that markets pork, chickens and beef in southeast Minnesota and the Twin Cities. Their 180-acre operation supports Eric and Lisa, who are



**Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Kathleen Merrigan helps hold up the LSP banner during a group photo taken after the announcement of the first Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grants. (LSP photo)**

as well as on Midwestern farms, making it clear beginning farmer training programs could go a long way toward revitalizing rural communities.

"The Land Stewardship Project was absolutely critical in getting this done and helping us think through the legislation as it went through the Farm Bill process," said Matthew Wohlman, Walz's agriculture aide.

LSP's Farm Beginnings Program, which was launched in southeast Minnesota in 1997, utilizes a farmer-to-farmer approach in the training and education of new farmers. Farm Beginnings classes are now offered in six states, including Minnesota.

Hidden Stream Farm ([www.hidden-](http://www.hidden-streamfarm.com)

41 and 42 respectively, as well as their five children—Andy 10, Ben 8, Katy 6, Sarah 3, and Isaac 1.

"We can't keep up with the demand for our products. Farm Beginnings helped us develop the farm and the business that we have today," Lisa Klein told the approximately 65 farmers and beginning farmers who gathered on her farm for the announcement. "We're very excited about BFRDP and how it can help create more successful family farms growing local foods in our communities."

The Kleins have served as Farm Beginnings mentors and presenters; Eric currently

**Merrigan, see page 7...**

serves on the Farm Beginnings steering committee.

Aimee Finley, a Farm Beginnings graduate who raises dairy heifers near St. Charles, Minn., told Merrigan during the BFRDP ceremony a lot of young people like herself are interested in getting involved in farming, particularly when it can be done using low-cost, innovative systems like grass-based livestock production.

"I am definitely not alone in that there are so many opportunities in agriculture, and so many people looking for those opportunities," Finley said.

Farm Beginnings Director Amy Bacigalupo said BFRDP is a significant step for the federal government because it is a recognition that there are opportunities in such areas as local foods that provide beginning farmers a chance to make a good living on the land. That is a message that seems to resonate with members of Congress as well as citizens around the country. "In every rural community there are farms like Hidden Stream," she told Merrigan. "In the 13th year of Farm Beginnings, the demand for this kind of training is unprecedented. We saw a doubling in the number of people taking part in our farm tours this summer."

Bacigalupo said community-based beginning farmer training programs should be a nice complement to the USDA's new "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" initiative, which promotes local production and consumption of food.

Groups in the region receiving initial BFRDP grants include the Land Stewardship

## BFRDP funding bias needs correction

The awarding of \$17 million in Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grants this fall comes with a major downside: fewer than a dozen of the 29 grants awarded went to projects led by community-based organizations. The big recipients of BFRDP grants were large universities, with a smattering of other institutional players also receiving grants. All told, projects led by community-based groups like the Land Stewardship Project received just 30 percent of the dollars awarded.

"There were many excellent projects funded, including some by universities," says Mark Schultz, Land Stewardship Project's Associate Director. "But Congress wrote into the law that the priority should be given to community-based programs. There is a great deal of concern from leaders in beginning farmer education and training around the country that the majority of grants did not go to community-based groups."

Amy Bacigalupo, Director of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program, says the key to that initiative's success is that it takes a community-based approach by relying on local farmers and others to coordinate the program. When she and other LSP organizers traveled across the country to visit beginning farmer training programs and build support for passing the BFRDP in the Farm Bill, it became evident

that the community-based aspect is critical to success of such initiatives.

"LSP is not unique in its community-based approach to beginning farmer training," she says. "In New England and Arkansas and with immigrant farm workers in Washington, what we saw was that the community aspect is at the core of successful beginning farmer programs. It is of the highest importance to the success of BFRDP and to the success of beginning farmers in general that the community-based approach is given clear priority."

LSP will work with allies across the country over the coming months to correct this bias in the implementation of the BFRDP that provided the majority of these new public resources to land grant and other large institutions, says Schultz. "Our goal will be to make implementation of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program match what Congress intended in the original law," he says. "That is what will best assure the wise use of public resources and the best gain for America's beginning farmers and our farm and rural communities."

The next BFRDP request for proposals from the USDA is expected to be sometime in January. For more information on LSP's efforts to improve the program, contact LSP's Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or [adamw@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:adamw@landstewardshipproject.org).

Project, Farmers' Legal Action Group (St. Paul, Minn.) and the Midwest Organic and

Sustainable Education Service (Spring Valley, Wis.). LSP's three-year, \$413,820 grant will be used to assist partner organizations that are offering Farm Beginnings-licensed programs around the country. □

*The 2009-2010 edition of LSP's Farm Beginnings course is now in session, and there is already a waiting list for future classes. For details on applying to the 2010-2011 course, see page 16.*

## Hear & read more

To listen to a recent LSP *Ear to the Ground* podcast (episode 72) on the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=3](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=3).

To read more about the Kleins, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/profiles/klein.htm](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/profiles/klein.htm) or [www.landstewardshipproject.org/itn/09/090210.htm](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/itn/09/090210.htm)



Eric and Lisa Klein, shown here with their son Isaac, gave Merrigan a tour of their farm, which produces and direct-markets pork, chicken and beef. (LSP photo)



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# LSP News

## LSP cookouts/celebrations: summer 2009

The Land Stewardship Project held its eighth annual Twin Cities-area open house, cookout and silent auction July 30 in the back yard of its office in the Powderhorn Park neighborhood of Minneapolis. In October 2008, LSP moved into the office, combining its Policy Program with administrative, communications and local food systems staff.

More than 200 LSP members and friends came to the event, which featured locally produced food, a potluck meal, an extensive silent auction and presentations on LSP's policy and community based foods work. And, of course, there were also fun activities such as juggling lessons (*right photo*) and music by the Brass Messengers (*below*).

On Aug. 16, some 180 Land Stewardship Project members gathered near Rushford, Minn., on the farm of Lori and Jon Peterson for LSP's annual southeast Minnesota summer gathering.



The Petersons (*below*) have a pastured milking herd of 52 Short-horns, along with 120 head of beef cows and a 60-ewe flock of sheep. The dairy cows and 225-acre home farm are certified organic, with milk sold under the Organic Valley label. The Petersons have integrated many conservation measures on their operation over the years.

Along with a hog roast and potluck meal, the event included a Farm Bill presentation by U.S. Rep. Tim Walz, children's activities, an ice cream social and a silent auction. The farm tour incorporated four learning stations to update participants on local LSP work in such areas as the "Affordable Health Care for All" campaign (*see page 12*), the economic impact of a glass of milk, and new work to build bridges between farmers, consumers and migrant and immigrant farm workers (*below left*). (LSP photos) □





# Eberhart leaves after 11 years

Long-time Land Stewardship Project staffer **Cathy Eberhart** has left the organization to devote more time to her family's coffee business.

While serving as LSP's Membership Coordinator from 1998 to 2007, Eberhart modernized the organization's system for recruiting and communicating with members. She also streamlined LSP's membership renewal process and made the Internet a major part of the organization's outreach to members and potential members.

As part of LSP's work to bring farmers and consumers together, Eberhart coordinated a series of local foods dinners, developed guides for putting on such events, and helped create the precursor to the *Stewardship Farm Directory* (see page 21).

After handing off the Membership Coordinator job to Mike McMahon two years ago, Eberhart assisted the Membership Program in further improving its outreach to members and potential members.

She and her husband Guillermo Velasquez are graduates of LSP's Farm Beginnings program, and are currently selling coffee ([www.vfamilycoffee.com](http://www.vfamilycoffee.com)) in the Twin Cities area that's produced on the Velasquez family farm in Honduras. □



**Cathy Eberhart**

# Anna King new member assistant

**Anna King** has joined the Land Stewardship Project's staff as its new membership assistant. King has a degree in fine arts from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

She most recently worked as a compost outreach intern for Eureka! Recycling and as a grounds and garden intern for Potters Farm, a nonprofit retreat center. King also worked with the Minnesota Project's "Fruits of the City" program, which brings fresh local fruit to food



**Anna King**

shelves and neighborhoods in Minneapolis. King has done extensive volunteering for various organizations, including Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOF) and LSP.

King is working with LSP's Membership Program and is based out of the Twin Cities office. She is assisting with database management and recruiting and renewing LSP members, as well as conducting outreach. King can be reached at 612-722-6377 or [anak@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:anak@landstewardshipproject.org). □

# Wells serves LSP work-study

**Mason Wells** has been doing work-study in the Land Stewardship Project's Twin Cities office this fall. A native of Chicago, Wells is a student at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minn. He is working as a document specialist at the college and serves as a volunteer tutor with the Lives of Commitment Program. He has also worked a camp counselor and a treasurer for a Habitat for Humanity group.

While at LSP, Wells is working with the Community Based Food and Economic Development Program, specifically helping with the St. Croix Valley *Buy Fresh Buy Local* (see page 22) initiative. □



**Mason Wells**

# Claassen working with urban food

**Sarah Claassen** has joined the Land Stewardship Project's staff as an organizer in its Community Based Food and Economic Development Program. Claassen had previously served an LSP internship through the Organizing Apprenticeship Program. She



**Sarah Claassen**

has also worked with LSP's Policy and Organizing Program.

In her new position, she is organizing around urban food systems and social justice in the Twin Cities. She can be reached at LSP's Twin Cities office by calling 612-722-

6377 or e-mailing [sarahc@landstewardship-project.org](mailto:sarahc@landstewardship-project.org). □

# Lesnar new LSP organizer

**Sarah Lesnar** has joined the Land Stewardship Project's Policy and Organizing Program as an organizer.

In December 2008, Lesnar received a degree in environmental science from the University of Minnesota. Last winter she volunteered and interned with LSP, and helped organize the 2009 LSP Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol, among other things.

Lesnar's current work is focusing on organizing large numbers of farmers, rural residents and urban supporters to stop the expansion of factory farms in the Upper Midwest and to develop policies that rein in these operations.

She can be contacted at [slesnar@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:slesnar@landstewardshipproject.org) or 612-722-6377. □



**Sarah Lesnar**

# Richard Ness returns to LSP

**Richard Ness** has returned to the Land Stewardship Project to help facilitate Farm Beginnings classes. Ness was an on-farm researcher and educator in LSP's southeast Minnesota office from 1989 to 1994. During that time he was instrumental in promoting grazing and Holistic Management in Minnesota. He left LSP for two years and upon his return worked on various initiatives,



**Richard Ness**

including the Monitoring Project, Farm Beginnings and the coordination of grazing groups. During the past few years, he has worked as an Extension educator with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Ness is based out of LSP's office in Montevideo, Minn.

He can be reached at [rness@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:rness@landstewardshipproject.org) or 320-269-2105. □



LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT

# LSP News

## Hooves, wings & local food

Grass-based farming, bird habitat and local food were the topics discussed at a July field day at Moonstone Farm in western Minnesota. The field day featured walking tours led by Moonstone Farm's Richard Handeen and Audrey Arner, who are Land Stewardship Project members. They discussed how over the past several years they have converted their operation from annual, row-crop agriculture to a system that relies on perennial plants such as grass.

There was also a discussion on the multiple benefits that can result from a diversified, grass-based livestock farm, such as improved wildlife habitat, cleaner water and carbon sequestration. Regional wildlife and prairie experts were on hand to provide a firsthand look at specific ways a farm like Moonstone can benefit wildlife and the environment in general. In addition, there was a presentation on how federal initiatives like the Conservation Stewardship Program (*see page 14*) can reward farmers for practices that improve the environment.

David Trauba, manager of the Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area, which is operated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources near Moonstone Farm, talked about how he and other natural resource managers have begun experimenting with utilizing livestock from neighboring farms as tools for maintaining prairie health on public lands.

Besides LSP, this event was sponsored by Pheasants Forever and



the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

To listen to *Ear to the Ground* podcasts (episodes 66-67) featuring Trauba and Arner, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=11](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=11). To read a recent LSP blog on the field day, see [www.loon-commons.org/2009/07/24/that-certain-feeling](http://www.loon-commons.org/2009/07/24/that-certain-feeling). (LSP photo) □

## Barn-raising, anyone?

As part of the Land Stewardship Project's 25th Anniversary celebration in 2007, members and friends gathered on the southeast Minnesota farm of Farm Beginnings graduates Brad and Leslea Hodgson to raise a barn. (To view a slideshow of that barn-raising see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/gallery/barn\\_raising.htm](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/gallery/barn_raising.htm).)

The event was a great success and since then many have asked when LSP was going to do a follow-up barn-raising. LSP's southeast Minnesota office would like to combine another barn-raising with its annual hog roast in the fall of 2010 or 2011. If you're interested in hosting a barn-raising, contact the office at 507-523-3366 or [caroline@landstewardship-project.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardship-project.org). (photo by Karen Stettler)



## Spirited support

The Wine Company in Saint Paul, Minn., hosted a wine tasting event in July to benefit the Land Stewardship Project. The event featured sustainable wineries from Oregon. LSP Executive Director George Boody spoke briefly at the occasion and noted the importance of "Good Food" that not only tastes good, but is healthy, protects biodiversity and provides a fair price to farmers in our food system.

All of the registration proceeds and 20 percent of wine sales were donated to LSP. Pictured, from left to right: Boody; Robbin Hilgert, President of the Wine Company; and Larry Colbeck, Owner of The Wine Company. (photo by Abigail Liesch) □

## In Memoriam

# Ray, Rowekamp & Ormsby helped build LSP legacy

During the past few months, the Land Stewardship Project lost three men who were integral to the development of the organization.

**Victor Ray**, who in 1982 co-founded LSP with Ron Kroese, died in July of a heart attack at a hospital in Arkansas. He was 90, and had been quite active on community issues up until his death. In fact, Victor's verve for life is on display in the Summer 2009 *Land Stewardship Letter*, which includes a lively letter from him.

Long-time LSP organizer Doug Nopar shared some of his thoughts on Victor's legacy: "Victor had a huge impact on LSP. It was he who pushed us and taught us to do meetings in a way that doesn't just talk at people, expert Extension-style, but instead truly solicits the participants' input and ideas. He was all about bringing to the fore-front the wisdom of grassroots people and taking power away from so-called experts."

LSP is also saddened by the passing of another LSP pioneer, **Leo Rowekamp**, who died this summer at the age of 87 in a southeast Minnesota nursing home. Rowekamp served on LSP's Board of Directors during the organization's early years. He and his wife Mary farmed near Lewiston, Minn., and they were instrumental in LSP's early work in that region. When, in 1987, the National Arbor Day Foundation gave its "Project Award" to LSP's southeast Min-



Victor Ray speaking at an LSP meeting in the early years of the organization. (LSP photo)



A tree was planted by Land Stewardship Project in honor of co-founder Victor Ray during LSP's Twin Cities open house in July. (LSP photo)

nesota office, the Rowekamps traveled to Nebraska City, Neb., to accept the honor.

"Leo's presence will be sorely missed," says Nopar. "He was always coming into our Lewiston office and sharing bits of wisdom. One of my favorites was: 'I always tell the truth. That way I never have to try very hard to remember what I've said.' That's the way he lived his life."

**Vic Ormsby**, who had long been involved in LSP's work in southeast Minnesota, died in his sleep Sept. 10 after a long battle with cancer. He was 68. Over the years Ormsby had worked as a teacher, activist and organic farmer. He was a tireless LSP volunteer and served on the organization's southeast Minnesota steering committee. Ormsby served on several local and state-wide boards and commissions, including the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. He also served as vice president of the Minnesota chapter of the Organic Crop Improvement Association and was chair of the Sustainable Farming Association's southeast Minnesota chapter.

"He has left us a legacy of gritty inspiration, all heart and humor in the process, no mincing of words, not perfec-

tion but effort, and always, always holding the truth," says LSP organizer Caroline van Schaik. "Lucky us for knowing him."

During LSP's annual southeast Minnesota cookout and celebration in August, prairie seeds from Prairie Moon Nursery of Winona, Minn., were handed out in Ormsby's honor. □



Vic Ormsby (with microphone) participated with Leo and Mary Rowekamp (background) at the story-telling tent during LSP's 20th Anniversary celebration in 2002. (LSP photo)

## 25,000 letter-signers call for USDA loan suspension

The Land Stewardship Project joined other members of the Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment Oct. 20 in delivering a letter with 25,323 signatures to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. The letter called for a suspension of Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct and guaranteed loans to new or expanding specialized hog and poultry facilities. LSP and various other groups collected the petition signatures during the summer and early fall. Besides LSP, other Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment groups involved in this petition drive include Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement and the Missouri Rural Crisis Center.

Federal loans for new or expanding hog and poultry facilities are contributing to overproduction and low market prices in these livestock sectors, says Paul Sobocinski, a southwest Minnesota hog farmer and LSP organizer. Based on USDA data, FSA direct and guaranteed loans for new hog and poultry building construction for fiscal years 2008 and 2009 totaled \$264,466,341.

The depressed prices in livestock markets is so alarming that USDA over the past 10 months has employed a strategy of conducting bonus pork and poultry buys in an attempt to stabilize and lift prices. USDA to date has purchased \$55 million in surplus pork and \$42 million in surplus poultry in an effort to provide assistance to stressed livestock markets.

“This cycle of promoting the expansion of corporate livestock production with taxpayer money, then bailing out the industry

because of overproduction with taxpayer money is an irresponsible practice and must come to an end,” says Rhonda Perry, a Howard County, Mo., livestock and grain farmer and Program Director of the Missouri Rural Crisis Center. “You can’t justify loans for new operations and more livestock when the current hog farmers are barely treading water or are going out of business.”

When similar oversupply situations occurred in the past, USDA suspended the

### Call USDA today

Call Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today at 202-720-3631, and tell him public funds should not be used to support the expansion of the biggest hog and poultry operations to the detriment of existing family farms. For more information, contact LSP’s Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or [adamw@landstewardship-project.org](mailto:adamw@landstewardship-project.org). Details are also available on LSP’s **Action Alerts** page at [www.landstewardship-project.org/news-alerts.html](http://www.landstewardship-project.org/news-alerts.html).

use of loan programs for the construction of these specialized facilities. Specifically, USDA issued a directive in 1999 suspending all direct and guaranteed loan financing for the construction of specialized hog facilities, citing concerns that FSA loans could exacerbate the crisis of oversupply and low prices that were affecting the hog industry at the time.

“President Bill Clinton suspended guaranteed loans in ‘99 because hog farmers were devastated by low prices, and it made

absolutely no sense to provide loans that further fueled consolidation in the industry and kept prices down,” says Sobocinski. “Farmers I know and work with believe these loans are risky for both producers and the government, and we should not be doling out dollars for expansion when prices are so low. It doesn’t make sense.”

Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment members say the USDA needs to take immediate action to stop the loans.

“It’s a concrete action USDA can take,” says Perry. “Farmers are struggling, and this would at least stop taxpayer funds from further contributing to corporate overproduction and low prices and free up funds for farm families who will need to rely on USDA loans this year.”

Besides the Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment, other groups contributing to the loan suspension petition effort include: Rural Advancement Foundation International - USA, Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform, National Family Farm Coalition, Farm Aid, Food & Water Watch, Food Democracy Now and Western Organization of Resource Councils.

For more information, contact LSP’s Adam Warthesen at [adamw@landstewardship-project.org](mailto:adamw@landstewardship-project.org) or 612-722-6377. □

To view the petition letter go to [www.iowacci.org/whatcanido/stopUSDAloan.html](http://www.iowacci.org/whatcanido/stopUSDAloan.html). To view the cover letter to Secretary Vilsack, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/Loan\\_Suspension\\_Cover\\_Letter.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/Loan_Suspension_Cover_Letter.pdf).

## Health care reform, faith & doing the right thing

By Paul Sobocinski

At the Land Stewardship Project, so much of what we do is based upon values, beliefs and, for many of us, faith. All of us value the land, its soil and water and the life upon it, and we believe in a future for family farms. We work for policy that supports the farmer, the community and the environment.

For many of us who are engaged in LSP’s work—as farmers, citizen leaders or organizers—we feel a real calling to our work. This has become a huge issue for sustainable agriculture and family farming, which are also a kind of calling. To farm the land sustainably, one has to provide daily attention to detail and management. This is particu-

larly true if livestock are part of the farming enterprise. When health care concerns force farmers off the land for even part of the time so that they can earn enough to provide basic medical services, this kind of close management is next to impossible. There’s something morally wrong when people can’t follow their calling because of lack of health care coverage, especially when it’s a calling that benefits society to the extent that

sustainable food production does.

For me, as a person of faith, making it possible to pursue the calling of farming makes it imperative that LSP take a lead on building a more effective and equitable health care system for everyone. This has become particularly clear as an increasing number of people graduate from our Farm Beginnings program (see pages 14-16). These grads are prepared to produce food in a profitable manner, but often find unaffordable health care to be an almost insurmountable barrier.

Today in our country, over 46 million people are uninsured and millions more who are insured can’t keep up with their bills. As

### Give it a listen

To listen to a recent LSP *Ear to the Ground* podcast (episode 63) featuring LSP members discussing their own struggles with health care coverage, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=3](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=3).

**Health Care**, see page 13...

a Catholic, when I recall the gospel stories of Jesus healing people and restoring them to physical wholeness, it signifies to me a principle of the common good, that health care should be available to all.

Imagine this picture (whatever your religion or philosophy): if a spiritual or moral leader you revere most was standing next to you today (literally), would they say before helping or healing someone, “You don’t have health insurance? Tough. I’m not healing you.” or “You’re an immigrant, but you are here illegally, sorry I’m not healing you.” I don’t think so. Such an attitude is morally repugnant, but in many everyday situations considered an economic necessity.

We are challenged to act morally today because premiums for health care insurance and medical costs are moving beyond the income level of America’s citizens. The fact is, our spending per capita is more than twice the amount spent in countries like Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia, Sweden, Germany, France and Canada.

It is a true social injustice that as producers of food, many farmers are not adequately covered by our nation’s current health care system. Because they are largely self-employed, high health care coverage costs impact them more severely than the general population. A survey by the Access Project ([www.accessproject.org](http://www.accessproject.org)) released in October shows increasing financial pressures on citizens, including farmers, due to increasing health care costs.



**Alan Hoffman** (second from left), a member of LSP’s Health Care Task Force and a physician, discussed health care reform with Minnesota U. S. Representative **Tim Walz** during LSP’s southeast Minnesota cookout in August. (LSP photo)



**Members of LSP’s Health Care Task Force led a discussion on rural health care issues at one of the “discussion tents” featured at LSP’s southeast Minnesota cookout and celebration in August (see page 8). (LSP photo)**

A few highlights of that report:

- People with medical debt were more than twice as likely to report delaying care as compared to those without medical debt.
- People with medical debt were much more likely to report that they had to draw down resources to pay for care (51 percent) and that health care costs contributed to financial problems (52 percent), compared to those without medical debt.
- For the farmers who were surveyed and who had medical debt, the average level of debt ran between \$5,498 and \$7,698.

At LSP, we have started this important work for health care reform in Minnesota by forming a Health Care Task Force. This group of members is moving forward a campaign that challenges our state’s legislative leaders to address this problem (see sidebar).

Our Health Care Task Force work is putting faith in action; I would like to think it is not unlike citizens before us who stood up to the moral challenges of the past by doing such things as establishing the Bill of Rights, passing women’s suffrage or instigating the civil rights movement. During this period of time, those who put values first (acted on faith) have changed our country for the better. They chose hope over fear.

In the health care arena, we have a precedent for this kind of action here in Minnesota. In 1998, key state Democratic leaders

worked with Republican Governor Arne Carlson to pass Minnesota Care, legislation that helped thousands of Minnesotans who didn’t have health care coverage.

We will be challenged as we move forward on this important issue. It will test not only our own faith individually but also the stamina of our members and staff standing up for justice. But guiding us during this difficult fight will be this key question: Are we not as individual citizens better off when we are all better off? ☐

*Paul Sobocinski is an LSP Policy Program organizer who is focusing on health care issues. He can be reached at 507-342-2323 or [sobopaul@redred.com](mailto:sobopaul@redred.com).*

## LSP’s Health Care Task Force

Since being formed earlier this year, LSP’s Health Care Task Force has been taking part in trainings to become more informed on the issue. The Task Force has also started to engage key Minnesota legislators in research meetings as it strategizes on how to drive health care reform forward.

LSP will be holding public meetings this winter on the health care issue. Check [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) and the *LIVE-WIRE* e-mail newsletter for details as they are finalized. More information is also available by contacting Paul Sobocinski at 507-342-2323 or [sobopaul@redred.com](mailto:sobopaul@redred.com).

## CSP — A step forward & an opportunity for farmers

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This commentary was written by farmer-members of the Land Stewardship Project's Federal Farm Policy Committee: Bill Gorman, Goodhue, Minn.; Jeff Klinge, Farmersburg, Iowa; Greg Koether, McGregor, Iowa; Tom Nuessmeier, Saint Peter, Minn.; Paul Sobocinski, Wabasso, Minn.; Dan Specht, McGregor, Iowa; Matt Urch, Viroqua, Wis.; Patty Wright, Prairie Farm, Wis.

Public interest in our nation's food and farming system is at a level we haven't seen in years. To their credit, local citizens have built a movement that reaches coast-to-coast. Authors such as Vandana Shiva, Michael Pollan and Eric Schlosser, along with films such as *Food Inc.* and *Fresh*, have further ignited people's interest in our food and farming system, as well as outlined clear failures in public policy related to agriculture.

Much of that criticism has fallen on public policies heavily shaped by agribusiness corporations of unprecedented size and profitability that prioritize the maximum production of a few favored commodities. This excessive corporate influence in our food and farming system has led us down a path of waste and vulnerability. It has led to wasted tax dollars, environmental degradation and other economic costs like virtual monopolies in the meatpacking industry.

Alternatives to our current food and farm system have been difficult to advance. And while buying local and having an improved understanding of where our food comes from as well as who is producing it is part of the answer, it's not enough. Federal policy

and farm bills continue to dictate what happens on the land and what's on our dinner plates.

Meaningful reform of U.S. farm policy has been an uphill battle. The new Farm Bill passed last year falls short in many respects. Yet one bright spot is the revamped and strengthened Conservation Stewardship Program, a building block to a new approach to farm policy.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that rewards farmers and ranchers for managing their active farmland in a way that produces real and measurable conservation outcomes for society: healthy soil, clean water, and wildlife habitat for example. The program is available to all farmers, and all farmlands.

By providing support for maintaining and increasing soil and water stewardship on working farmland simply by measuring and providing payments based on positive conservation outcomes, CSP represents a major positive shift in farm policy. It has the potential to affect the long-term sustainability and landscape diversity of our rural communities.

This fall USDA held its first ever nation-

wide Conservation Stewardship Program sign-up for farmers. The deadline for that particular sign-up was Sept. 30, but each year USDA plans to enroll nearly 13 million acres of farmland nationwide. For comparison, the largest federal farm conservation program has roughly 32 million acres enrolled. So in just three years the Conservation Stewardship Program will eclipse that program in the number of acres covered.

But just like any new program, passage is one thing and successful implementation and usage is another. If farmers don't sign-up for the program or if it is delivered in a piecemeal fashion, it is doomed.

As farmers ourselves, we want to encourage farmers across the nation to check out the new Conservation Stewardship Program. While the new conservation program may not work for all farmers, it could work for you. It will provide real dollars for doing what most farmers want to do — be good stewards of the land.

As a new way to support farmers, achieve greater conservation and bring greater equity to farm programs, the Conservation Stewardship Program is part of the answer to making our food and farming system fairer, more resilient and more accountable. □

*For more information on CSP, contact LSP's Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or adamw@landstewardshipproject.org. See page 30 for resources on applying to the program.*

## Farm Beginnings

*Erin & Joe Yanish*

### From pixy dust to permanency

Erin Yanish is a self-described "ideas person." But she knows that, especially when taking on an endeavor as challenging as farming, even the best ideas aren't enough.

"I love to come up with great ideas and I sometimes think pixy dust is all you need to accomplish them," Erin, 29, says with a laugh while taking a break recently on the land she and her husband Joe, 26, farm north of the west-central Minnesota community of Litchfield. "Unfortunately, they don't take

that for the mortgage payment."

So in the fall of 2008, the couple enrolled in the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course to learn how to turn those



*Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming*

fantasies into reality. Twice a month from October to March, the Yanishes traveled to Paynesville, Minn., to participate in sessions on low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. They learned goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative production techniques. The classes were 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. The Yanishes and other course participants also attended on-farm events where they saw firsthand the use of innovative management techniques.

Many of the 2008-2009 class participants were young like Joe and Erin, but there were

**Fresh Faces**, see page 15...

also mid-career people looking for a change. Some had extensive farming backgrounds; others had none at all.

“My first reaction was, ‘Why would I need to take Farm Beginnings?’” recalls Erin, who grew up on a farm near Litchfield. “But it helped me focus and take things from the ideas stage to the planning stage.”

Joe says the class linked them to a network of established farmers who provide advice and support on everything from business planning to pasture improvement.

“We can see how their operations are running,” he says. “We can learn from their good fortune and mistakes.”

they planned on the operation being around for multiple generations.

“You can feel the life in this place some days. There’s been three deaths in this house, and I don’t know how many births,” says Erin. “Even though there are only three of us, it feels like 10 people are moving around here. The life and energy are here.”

She is saying this as she and Joe sit around the dining room table of the farmhouse; Gabriele is on the floor playing with a car that belts out “Wild Thing” periodically. A sign above the kitchen door reads, “Change your thoughts and you can change the world.”

And changes are in the works. Joe and Erin are establishing a large garden with the

### Give it a listen

To listen to an *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring Erin and Joe Yanish (episode 68), see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=2](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=2). On that web page you will find other interviews featuring Farm Beginnings graduates.

fore he died that diversity would be brought back to the farm. Erin says Farm Beginnings showed her there are ways to bring life back to a farm while being financially viable.

Joe and Erin are dedicated to bringing life to the land using perennial forages like grass and hay. They have a herd of nine bred Piedmontese cattle that they plan on using as a basis for a grass-fed beef enterprise. This breed, which originated in the Italian Alps, is known for its lean meat. Within a year they hope to have product they can sell to customers interested in grass-fed, lean beef. Developing a consistent market for their products is an important part of the Yanish business plan. Before moving to the farm three years ago, they lived in the Twin Cities. That gave the couple a sense of what many consumers were looking for: a healthy, local product.

On a recent morning Joe and Erin show off a former cornfield that had been planted to oats, the first step toward conversion to a rotationally grazed pasture. Next to the stand of oats is an alfalfa field.

“Right here is where there used to be bad erosion,” Erin says, pointing to a ditchless slope that runs from the oats down through the alfalfa.

As they walk through the alfalfa field, a leopard frog flushes, making a few desperate leaps before Joe snatches it. He holds it up to Gabriele so the boy can get a closer look at its speckled skin, stretched tight over a muscular body. After releasing the frog, the Yanishes walk back to the farmhouse, along the way pointing out some recent plantings of fruit trees—proof the family is in it for the long haul. Also present are black walnut saplings, a species that represents an even bigger long-term investment since they can take a generation to reach maturity.

“We won’t benefit from them,” Joe says. “But Gabe will.” □

See page 16 for details on registering for the 2010-2011 session of LSP’s Farm Beginnings courses.

### More FB profiles

To read more Farm Beginnings profiles, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/graduates.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/graduates.html).



**Farm Beginnings graduates Joe and Erin Yanish, shown here with their son Gabriele, feel a responsibility to steward their family’s land for future generations. (LSP photo)**

Today, the couple’s main source of income is Joe’s farrier business and a horse drawn trolley enterprise hired out for celebrations and events. But Joe says Farm Beginnings gave them the confidence to pursue their goal of converting a 185-acre crop farm formerly owned by Erin’s late grandfather, Wilfred Schultz, into an operation that can produce food for local markets.

The Yanishes live with their 3-year-old son Gabriele in the original farmhouse. Erin’s parents, Wayne and Yvonne Johnson, live on the other side of the property, which was named Silver Leaf Farms ([www.silverleaffarms.net](http://www.silverleaffarms.net)), soon after it was homesteaded by the family in the 1880s, a sign

hopes of someday direct-marketing vegetables to consumers via the Community Supported Agriculture model and farmers’ markets. But perhaps the most significant change coming to the farm are the 150 acres of grazing paddocks the couple has planned. In recent decades the land had been devoted to intensive row-crop production, and it took its toll in the form of erosion and low organic matter.

“In my grandfather’s later years he and my mother witnessed that the soil was starting to lose its life,” Erin says. “They noticed how they could dig a patch of soil and there wouldn’t be the worms.”

Johnson vowed to Erin’s grandfather be-

# Farm Beginnings

## FB field days: veggies, pasture & cover crops

Everything from multi-species grazing to cover crops to wholesale organic vegetable production was covered during a series of on-farm educational events sponsored by the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program this past spring and summer.

During a June field day, Gardens of Eagan's Atina and Martin Diffley demonstrated the tillage equipment (*top photo*) they use to, among other things, manage soil-saving cover crops. Gardens of Eagan, which is located in Farmington, Minn., is one of the oldest certified organic vegetable operations in the region.

Beginning farmers (*middle photo*) learned about raising and marketing certified organic produce through wholesale and Community Supported Agriculture markets during a summer field day at Riverbend Farm. Riverbend is operated by Greg and Mary Reynolds west of Minnesota's Twin Cities. Greg is a frequent presenter at Farm Beginnings classes.

During an August field day, Marty Primus (*bottom photo*) discussed how his Fresh Air Farm operation rotates cattle, chickens and pigs through carefully managed pastures using the "Joel Salatin" model. The farm, which is located near Sauk Centre, Minn., markets eggs, chickens, pork and beef through Whole Farm Co-op in Long Prairie, Minn. (*photos by Nick Olson & Parker Forsell*) □



## Register for 2010-2011 course

The 2009-2010 edition of LSP's Farm Beginnings course is now in session in Saint Joseph, Minn., and River Falls, Wis., but applications are already being taken for the 2010-2011 session. For more information on applying, visit [www.farmbeginnings.org](http://www.farmbeginnings.org) or call LSP's Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105. □

## Beginning farmer workshops this winter

Tractor maintenance, whole farm planning, time management and record keeping are the subjects of a series of public workshops the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program is putting on at various locations around Minnesota this winter:

- **Tractor Maintenance**, Hutchinson, Dec. 12.
- **Planning Your Whole Farm**, Minneapolis, Jan. 9-10.
- **Time Management**, Minneapolis, Jan. 23.
- **Record Keeping**, Saint Cloud, March 18.

For more information on the Hutchinson and Saint Cloud workshops, contact LSP's Nick Olson at 320-269-2105 or [nicko@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:nicko@landstewardshipproject.org). For the Minneapolis workshops, contact LSP's Parker Forsell at [parker@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:parker@landstewardshipproject.org) or 507-523-3366. □





# 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/resources.html#land). Here are the latest *Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse* listings:

## Farmland Needed: MN or WI

Melissa Driscoll is seeking to buy 10 to 50 acres in Minnesota or Wisconsin. She would prefer that it be certified organic and be within an hour's drive of downtown Saint Paul. She requires a house and outbuildings, and would like a mix of tillable, pastured and forested acres on good soil. **Contact:** Melissa Driscoll, 612-721-6735 (evenings); 651-259-5098 (days).

## Farmland Needed: Twin Cities Area

Ken Kham Herr is seeking one to two acres of land to rent or buy within 40 minutes of the Twin Cities. He wants to raise chickens on the land and would prefer that it be certified organic and to not have been sprayed for several years. Herr does not require a house on the land. **Contact:** Ken Kham Herr, 612-462-4360; [gerpevu@yahoo.com](mailto:gerpevu@yahoo.com).

## Farmland Available: Twin Cities Area

Jeff and Pam Riesgraf have 147 acres for sale near the Scott County, Minn., community of Jordan. The farm has 123 tillable acres and has been certified organic for 20 years (it hasn't been sprayed in over 50 years). A house and outbuildings are available, but are not part of the original selling price. **Contact:** Yvonne Perkins, 612-709-1555; [YvonnePerkins@edinarealty.com](mailto:YvonnePerkins@edinarealty.com).

## Farmland Available: Twin Cities Area

Vance Grannis has 25 acres of tillable land for rent in Inver Grove Heights, which is part of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. This land is part of a 150-acre parcel Grannis is seeking to put into permanent conservation protection. He is willing to rent less than 25 acres, and is open to long-term rental arrangements. The land is currently planted to hay and has not been sprayed for several years. There is no house or other outbuildings on the property. There is no

fencing or water. **Contact:** Vance Grannis, 651-456-9000.

## Farmland Available: SE MN

Kim and Jim Czechowicz have 110 acres of farmland for sale near the southeast Minnesota community of La Crescent. It consists of 12.7 acres of land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program that has been planted to prairie. There are also 12 acres of tillable land and 60 acres of woods. The buildings consist of a house, a dairy/horse barn, chicken coop, machine shed, shop, garage and two granaries. The barn was built in 1919 and in 2008 received a "Certificate of Commendation" from the Barn Again! organization. Ideally, they would like to sell the farm as a package, including an array of animals and farming equipment. **Contact:** Kim and Jim Czechowicz, 507-894-2001; [kimlacrescent@acegroup.cc](mailto:kimlacrescent@acegroup.cc).

## Farmland Available: SE MN

Kevin and Tracy Kubat have a five-acre farm for sale near the southeast Minnesota community of Cannon Falls. The farm consists of three acres of rotationally grazed pasture that is currently producing grass-fed lamb, pastured broilers, free-range laying hens and two hives of honeybees. If the new owners are interested, poultry customers would be available for pastured broilers. There is also a large fenced garden, apple trees and berry bushes. Buildings include a 2,000-square-foot house built in 1974, 15x30 three-sided lean-to barn, 24x36 pavilion-style shed, 9x27 garden shed, 9x11 chicken coop and a 4x6 chicken brooding coop. The farm has not been sprayed in over 10 years. **Contact:** Kevin and Tracy Kubat, 507-298-0333; [hishelper@frontiernet.net](mailto:hishelper@frontiernet.net).

## Farmland Needed: Western WI or Eastern MN

Emily Scifers and Ross Peterson are seeking to purchase or rent 10 or more acres (at least five tillable) in western Wisconsin (Polk, St. Croix, Pierce or Dunn counties) or eastern Minnesota (Chisago, Washington, Dakota or

Goodhue counties). They would like forest and pasture on the land, but do not require a house. They are willing to nurture less-than-ideal soil and a creek or pond would be a plus. **Contact:** [laughingstalkfarmstead@gmail.com](mailto:laughingstalkfarmstead@gmail.com) or 612-227-2824.

## Farmer needed: SE MN

Roger Kulack has 106.7 acres of farmland for sale a half-mile east of the southeast Minnesota community of Lewiston. He is willing to sell it in total, or as parcels. Ninety-seven acres is tillable and two acres is forested. It consists of a three-bedroom ranch-style house built in 1955, a 20x30 steel shed and a 26x28 garage. The farm also has a 538-foot well drilled in 1994. **Contact:** Roger Kulack, 507-523-3488; [RAKULACK@gmail.com](mailto:RAKULACK@gmail.com).

## Farmer needed: SE MN

Eugene Hansen of Rushford in southeast Minnesota is seeking a farmer to work with him/join his operation. He milks 60 registered Holsteins on 223 acres and farms conventionally. Applicants should have the skills needed to run a dairy farm; no housing is provided. **Contact:** Eugene Hansen, 507-523-3779.

## Farmer needed: Western WI

Jody Slocum's neighbor has 80 acres for sale in western Wisconsin's Dunn County. There is a house, pole barn and garage. It consists of wooded hills, open, flat ground, and a spring-fed stream. **Contact:** Jody Slocum, 715-643-2919; [jodyslocum@gmail.com](mailto:jodyslocum@gmail.com); N9215 130th St., Downing, WI 54734.

## Farmland needed: Twin Cities, SE MN, SW WI

Greg and Tina Norris are seeking 10 to 15 acres to rent in the Twin Cities area, southeast Minnesota or southwest Wisconsin. They would like for at least five acres

Clearinghouse, see page 18...

# Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse

...Clearinghouse, from page 17

of it to be tillable, and five acres to be pastured. They would prefer that it be certified organic or to have not been sprayed for at least five years. They do not require a house. **Contact:** norrisfamilyhomestead@gmail.com; 763-221-9331.

## Farmland needed: SE MN

Joy Gonnerman is seeking land to rent in Minnesota's Rice or Goodhue counties (near Cannon Falls or Northfield). She would like pastured land, space for a garden and outbuildings that could house various species of livestock. Gonnerman is willing to work for rent, and can fence, milk, weed, do general animal care or train dogs. She also has the ability to knit, weave or spin fibers into yarn. **Contact:** Joy Gonnerman, 507-298-0959; joy@greatcreatures.com.

## Seeking farm job or internship: MN

Andrew and Bonnie Wirtz are seeking a full-time job or internship on a farm in Minnesota. Ideally, they would like to work alongside an experienced farmer on a grazing dairy that also direct-markets its products. They would also like to learn how to work with other livestock species, including poultry, goats and sheep. Other farming interests include market gardening

and value-added products. Andrew is currently working as a herdsman on a conventional dairy, and both he and Bonnie have worked on farms during the past two years. **Contact:** Andrew Wirtz, 11800 80th St. NE, Albertville, MN 55301; 651-788-6009; wirtz.andrew@gmail.com.

## Farmland Needed: Twin Cities Area

Chloe Diegel and Alex McKiernan are seeking to buy approximately 60 acres in Dakota or Washington counties in the Twin Cities region. They are seeking tillable and pastured land, and would like the land to be certified organic and to have not been sprayed for at least five years. They require a house and would also like the farm to have outbuildings, including a barn and machine shed. In addition, they are seeking perimeter fencing for livestock as well as a reliable water supply and electrical hookups for the outbuildings. **Contact:** Chloe Diegel or Alex McKiernan, 720-938-8477; 307-220-1022; cdiegel@gmail.com; alexmckiernan@gmail.com.

## Farmer needed: SE MN

Kit Van de Mark has 18 acres for sale in southeast Minnesota's Goodhue County, halfway between Rochester and the Twin Cities. Ten acres are tillable and four are pastured. The farm also consists of a 30x44 house and several outbuildings, including a 36x100 barn, two machine sheds, drive-through corn crib, cattle

shed, granary and small sheds. The farm is located on a main paved road and has an updated septic system as well as a good well. **Contact:** Kit Van de Mark, 49028 County 18, Mabel, MN 55954; 507-493-5564; 507-429-0364; hyview@hyviewfeeds.com.

## Farmland Needed: E. of Mississippi River

Scott Fitzstephens is seeking to purchase or rent 20 acres of land east of the Mississippi River. He would like a mix of tillable, pastured and forested acres, and would like it to have not been sprayed for at least three years. He does not require a house. **Contact:** Scott Fitzstephens, rucklehaus@gmail.com; 805-280-8270.

## Seeking Farm Job: WI-MN

James Ford is seeking a part-time job on an organic farm in the River Falls, Wis., area. Ideally, he'd like to work with farmers willing to help him learn sound sustainable agriculture techniques. Ford is available all weekend hours and weekday evenings (4 p.m. to 10 p.m.). He has basic vegetable gardening experience, and has recently volunteered on an organic farm. Ford has a degree in conservation biology; he has worked as a biology teacher and outdoor educator. **Contact:** James Ford, 177 A Glenmont Rd., River Falls, WI 54022; 847-345-1799; jimford82@hotmail.com.

## Support LSP with gifts of land

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.

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](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-joinus-land-legacies.html), or call 612-722-6377. More information is also available in the Summer 2008 *Land Stewardship Letter*.



## MOSES Land Link

MOSES (Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service) offers an online service to connect those looking for farmland 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](http://www.mosesorganic.org/landlinkup.html). More information is also available by calling 715-778-5775 or e-mailing [info@mosesorganic.org](mailto:info@mosesorganic.org). □

# Community Based Food Systems

## Help ensure a permanent home for Midtown Farmers' Market

The Midtown Farmers' Market at Lake Street and 22nd Avenue in Minneapolis 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. LSP is working to secure state funding to help ensure that the market can remain permanently at its current location, and staff and volunteers collected petition signatures during several market days this fall.

For more information on helping the Midtown Farmers' Market stay at its current location, contact LSP's Bobby King at 612-

722-6377 or [bking@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bking@landstewardshipproject.org). □

## Cast a 'Local Food Hero' Vote by Dec. 11

The Land Stewardship Project has been nominated for one of *Edible Twin Cities* magazine's "Local Food Heroes" awards in the "Best Nonprofit Organization" category.

*Edible Twin Cities* is a quarterly publication that promotes the abundance of local foods in the Twin Cities, Minn., area and surrounding communities. It celebrates the

family farmers, chefs, food artisans, farmers' market vendors and other food-related businesses for their dedication to using the highest quality, seasonal, locally-grown products. It is available in Twin Cities area coffee shops, restaurants, co-ops and other retail outlets that support local food.

To cast a vote before the Dec. 11 deadline, go to [www.edibletwincities.com](http://www.edibletwincities.com). □



## Local foods in bluff country

The Land Stewardship Project is deeply involved in Winona State University's Sustainable Foods Project, a year-long effort to educate and engage the school's community on the issue of sustainable agriculture. This summer, LSP helped launch the effort by bringing some of the university's professors to southeast Minnesota farms for a primer on the environmental and economic role local, sustainable foods can play.

In June, Mike and Jennifer Rupprecht of Earth-Be-Glad Farm near Lewiston hosted Winona State faculty and families. Participants heard from guest speakers and the host family about the relation of food to wildlife, the soil and the economy. And just prior to the start of the university's fall term, Jack Hedin of Featherstone Fruits and Vegetables near Rushford (*bottom photo*) hosted another Winona State group for a tour of the greenhouses and packing shed.

LSP has taken the lead in designing protocols to help professors set up farm tours and, working with Bluff Country Co-op, has created a list of farmers who are willing to entertain the possibility of class visits. Both documents are up on Winona State's new website for the year-long focus on sustainable foods at <http://es.winona.edu/SFPartnership>.

LSP, Bluff Country Co-op and the Winona Farmers' Market also spearheaded "Local Food Goes to College" Oct. 17, when the market set up shop on Winona State's campus. That evening, a meal sourced from 100 percent local and sustainable food was served in both of the school's dining halls.

LSP member Lucia Watson (*top photo*), owner of Lucia's Restaurant, put on her third annual cooking demonstration before at least 100 enthusiasts at the Winona Farmers' Market Sept. 26. Watson is an award-winning chef. In October, the French Ministry of Agriculture knighted her "Chevalier du Merite Agricole." This "Order of Agricultural Merit" award was given to Watson for her work blending French cuisine with locally-produced food. Past American recipients of the award include Julia Child.

The Winona Farmers' Market event was organized by LSP and other members of the Local Foods Committee of the Winona County



Economic Development Authority, in cooperation with the farmers' market and in honor of the national Eat Local America! challenge.

The Winona event is one of many organized by the Winona Local Foods Committee, which includes Jim Riddle of the University of Minnesota Organic Outreach Program, Tom van der Linden of the University of Minnesota Extension Service, Liz Haywood of Bluff Country Co-op, Whitewater Gardens farmer and market organizer Sandy Dietz, Winona County Economic Development Authority Director Linda Grover, and citizen food enthusiasts.

For more information, contact LSP's Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or [caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org). (*photos by Caroline van Schaik*)



## Community Based Food Systems

### Greenhouse session Dec. 7 in SE MN

As a follow-up to a greenhouse workshop the Land Stewardship Project sponsored in May, another training is slated for Dec. 7 at Whitewater Gardens near Altura in southeast Minnesota. LSP members Sandy and Lonny

Dietz will host this workshop, which will include a tour of their greenhouse and hoop house facilities. There will also be presentations by Chris Blanchard of Rock Spring Farm and Linda Halley of Gardens of Ea-

gan. Soup and bread will be served at 12:30 p.m., with the program beginning at 1 p.m. To reserve a spot, contact LSP's Caroline van Schaik at [caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org) or 507-523-3366.

LSP has put together a fact sheet called, "10 Things to Re-Think as You Build a Greenhouse and Grow," which is available in pdf format at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/10\\_Things\\_To\\_Rethink\\_Greenhouse.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/10_Things_To_Rethink_Greenhouse.pdf). □

### Home Grown Economy Conf. Feb. 15-16 in SW MN

The Land Stewardship Project is helping put on the 2010 edition of the Home Grown Economy Conference, Feb. 15-16, at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall. The conference's theme is "Equipping You to Build Community Based Food Systems." As in the past, the conference is sponsored by Collin Peterson, Chair of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee.

The conference will feature presentations on what is happening at the local level in

various regions when it comes to development of local food systems. Ken Meter of the Crossroads Resource Center will present his insights on how food networks strengthen local economies. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack has been invited to provide the keynote address.

In order to make the conference accessible to more people, interactive video sessions will be held Feb. 16 at the University of Minnesota-Crookston, University of

Minnesota-Morris, Bemidji State University and Minnesota State Community and Technical College in Fergus Falls.

For more information, see <http://collin-peterson.house.gov> or contact Toni Merdan at 218-847-5056; [Toni.Merdan@mail.house.gov](mailto:Toni.Merdan@mail.house.gov). Details are also available by contacting LSP's Terry VanDerPol at 320-269-2105 or [tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org). □

### New greenhouse manual extends the season

The *Northlands Winter Greenhouse Manual* is a new publication developed by Land Stewardship Project Farm Beginnings graduates Carol Ford and Chuck Waibel. Using an innovative, customized design, Ford and Waibel's Garden Goddess operation produces greens throughout the harsh western Minnesota winter with little

artificial heat. The operation delivers the greens to a group of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscribers.

The manual describes how to build and operate a passive solar greenhouse for northern climates, as well as what to grow in such a system. For information on ordering the manual, visit [www.gardengoddessenter-](http://www.gardengoddessenterprises.com)

[prises.com](http://www.gardengoddessenterprises.com) or call 320-734-4669.

To read a Farm Beginnings profile featuring Ford and Waibel, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/graduates.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/graduates.html). An *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring their operation is at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=7](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=7) (episode 29). □

## A tasty test

Students at Sanford Elementary School in the western Minnesota community of Montevideo had a chance to sample local tomatoes in September, thanks to the Land Stewardship Project, University of Minnesota Extension Service and local farmers. The students were given an opportunity to try red and yellow tomato varieties and asked to indicate which they preferred. (The red ones won, but not by much.) Later, LSP's Tom Taylor and Lynn Mader of U of M Extension made up a batch of mild salsa to complement that day's lunch of tacos.

LSP helped put on the tasting to introduce the kids to local produce and to show how healthy food can also taste good. For some of the children, it was the first time they had tasted a locally-produced tomato.

This year, Sanford's food service purchased tomatoes, onions and broccoli from local farmers. LSP and other groups in the area are working to make more local foods available in western Minnesota institutions, restaurants and grocery stores.

For more information, contact Taylor at 320-269-2105 or [ttaylor@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:ttaylor@landstewardshipproject.org). More information on LSP's community-based food efforts is also available by contacting Terry VanDerPol at [tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org).



Montevideo-area farmer Audrey Arner exposed Sanford Elementary students to the great variety of tomatoes grown in their region by local farmers. (photo by Terry VanDerPol)

## LSP's 2009-2010 Stewardship Farm Directory available

The 2009-2010 edition of the Land Stewardship Project's *Stewardship Farm Directory* is now available. It lists over 160 LSP member-farms in the Upper Midwest that are direct-marketing their products straight to consumers. Also listed are LSP member-restaurants, co-ops and other businesses that are playing key roles in advancing a community based food system. This year's directory was produced with the financial support of Tracy Singleton of Birchwood Cafe and Karl Benson of Cooks of Crocus Hill.

A pdf version of the directory can be downloaded from LSP's website at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html#sfd](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html#sfd). You can get a paper version from one of our offices, or by contacting LSP's Abigail Liesch at 612-722-6377; [aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org).

### What is it?

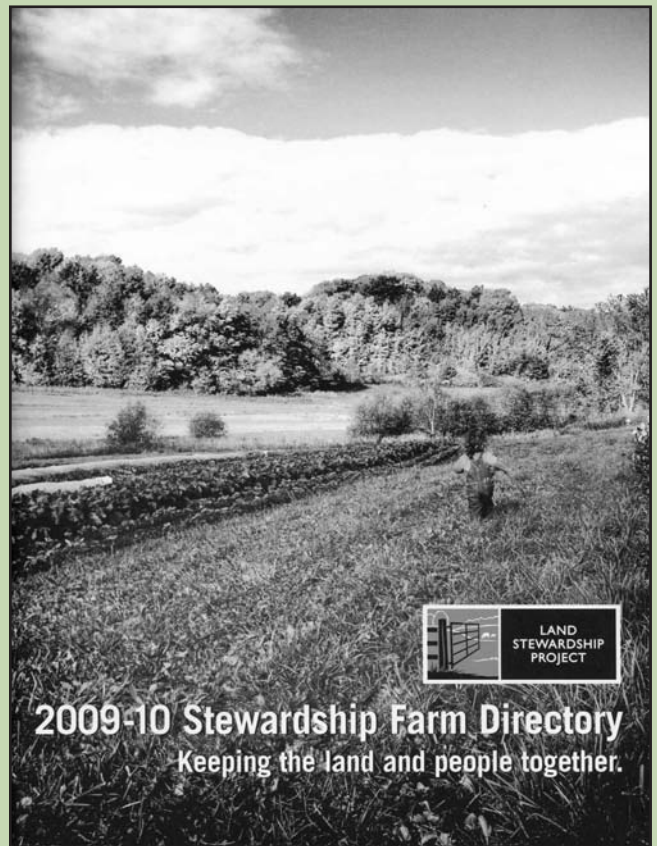
The *Stewardship Farm Directory* is a list of Land Stewardship Project members who produce meat, dairy products, eggs, vegetables, fruit, flowers, Christmas trees, grain and other goods in a sustainable manner. The *Directory* also lists LSP member-businesses selling or processing food produced by other LSP members.

Some of the production methods used by the *Directory* farmers include certified organic, antibiotic- and hormone-free, humanely raised and slaughtered, free of genetically modified organisms, pasture-based, integrated pest management to reduce pesticide use, deep-bedded straw livestock housing and conservation tillage.

The listing provides information about the farmers so consumers can communicate with them directly to learn more about production methods, availability of products and prices.

### Do you want to be listed?

LSP periodically updates and makes corrections to its *Stewardship Farm Directory* list. If you are an LSP member who would like to be listed, contact Abigail Liesch at 612-722-6377 or [aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org).

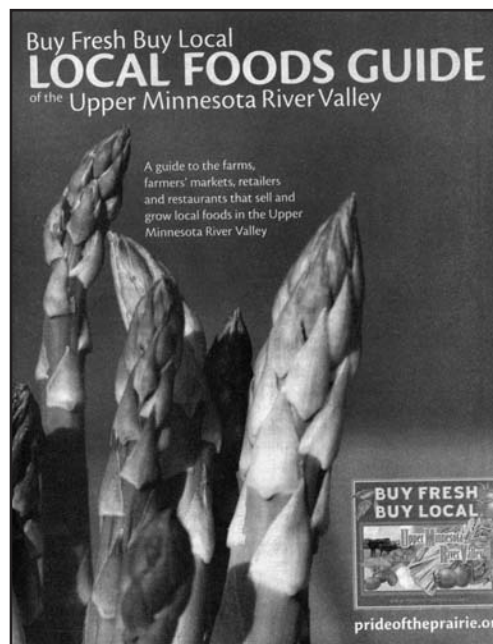


## Upper Minnesota River Local Foods Guide

The Upper Minnesota River Valley chapter of *Buy Fresh Buy Local* has published a guide to the farms, farmers' markets, retailers and restaurants that sell and grow local foods in the region. There are over 100 listings in the *Local Foods Guide of the Upper Minnesota River Valley*.

A pdf version can be downloaded from [www.prideoftheprairie.org](http://www.prideoftheprairie.org). Paper copies are available by contacting the Land Stewardship Project's western Minnesota office at 320-269-2105 or [ttaylor@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:ttaylor@landstewardshipproject.org).

The Upper Minnesota River Valley chapter is one of 74 *Buy Fresh Buy Local* chapters in the U.S. coordinated by the Food Routes Network and its regional chapter affiliates. The three *Buy Fresh Buy Local* chapters in Minnesota — Upper Minnesota, Red River Valley and St. Croix River Valley — are affiliated with the Land Stewardship Project. Numerous local partners help coordinate these chapters. See page 22 for more on the St. Croix River *Buy Fresh Buy Local* initiative. □



## 'Marketing local' guide available

*Marketing Local Food* is a handbook designed to help Minnesota farmers explore the various options for marketing local food. It introduces the basics of different marketing systems, suggests resources and includes profiles of farmers who are selling farm products directly to consumers via farmers' markets, roadside stands, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and on-farm stores. It also includes information and profiles about selling indirectly via retail food establishments or food services, and has sample forms and information on regulations.

A pdf version can be downloaded from the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture website at [www.misa.umn.edu/Marketing\\_Local\\_Food2](http://www.misa.umn.edu/Marketing_Local_Food2). Information on ordering a paper copy is available by calling 1-800-909-6472 or 612-625-8235. □

## Community Based Food Systems

# Dine Fresh Dine Local highlights the St. Croix Valley's local food offerings

On a recent afternoon this fall, Jeff Klemetsrud walked out of the kitchen at Savories Bistro in Stillwater, Minn., holding one of the reasons why he and his wife/business partner Kristin buy as much of their food from local farmers as possible: a plate piled high with green beans, fresh from the refrigerator.

"These were picked two weeks ago," Jeff says half in amazement. "They look like they aren't more than two days old. The commercial stuff spoils in three days."

The beans had come from Big River Farms in nearby Marine on St. Croix, and indeed, they looked like they had just left the fields.

The Klemetsruds say the quality of the product is one reason they consider locally produced food one of the key components of their business.

On Sept. 10-11, Savories joined 21 other St. Croix River Valley restaurants in showcasing local foods during the 2009 edition of "Dine Fresh Dine Local." This is the second year for the St. Croix River Valley Dine Fresh Dine Local event, which is sponsored by the local chapter of *Buy Fresh Buy Local*. During the event, St. Croix Valley residents and visitors dined out at participating restaurants and enjoy locally produced vegetables, fruits, meats, dairy products, honey, bakery goods and more.

This year's event was centered in two areas of the St. Croix Valley: Stillwater/Hudson, and Taylors Falls/St. Croix Falls. Dana Jackson, a Land Stewardship Project staff member who is coordinating the local *Buy Fresh Buy Local* chapter, says 18 restaurants from throughout the Valley participated in the event in 2008. Since then there has been a huge increase in demand for locally

produced foods, Jackson says. The result has been a jump in the number of area farmers interested in supplying those eateries.

"It's exciting to see the growth in the region's local foods movement just within the past year," says Jackson. "I think eaters would be surprised at what's available right



Jeff and Kristin Klemetsrud of Savories Bistro show off some locally raised green beans. "It's about the quality of the ingredients, but it's also about supporting my community," says Kristin. (LSP photo)

here in the area."

One of the sources of that food is Roger Browne of Rising Sun Farm in River Falls. Rising Sun has been providing wholesale produce to a few local grocers since the mid-1970s. But Browne says he also likes selling to local restaurants like Savories because of the way they highlight the hard work farmers put into raising the food.

"Some of these restaurants and chefs have come to really appreciate the difference in flavor local



food provides," he says.

Browne says having local restaurants showcasing locally produced foods helps increase the demand for these products in other businesses, such as food co-ops and supermarkets.

"It's all about people having the opportunity to really see what they're eating and taste the difference," he says.

Browne and an increasing number of producers in the area have been able to expand the variety and quantity of what they can provide local eaters by utilizing innovative techniques such as hoop houses and raised beds to extend the season.

For the Klemetsruds, the growing availability of food produced in the Valley means they've been able to expand their locally-sourced options considerably in recent years. Jeff says when Savories was launched back in the early 1990s, "You had to know somebody who knew somebody to get a phone number" to find local food.

"But in recent years we've been able to expand our products that are local," says

**Dine Fresh Dine Local, see page 23...**



May Lee of Big River Farms near Marine on St. Croix is one of the sources for Savories' locally-based menu. (LSP photo)

Kristin. "And the variety and quality is better."

These days, as much as half of Savories' menu is made up of local food during the peak of the growing season. In the winter, local products can be available in the form of storage crops like potatoes and onions, as well as meats and cheeses.

But sourcing from local farmers is not without its challenges.

"The biggest disadvantage is making the connection with the farmers at the right time," says Kristin.

Given the vagaries of the weather and delivery schedules, it can be tricky to match the availability of local produce with the demands of a restaurant kitchen. The Klemetsruds try to make up for this through regular contact with farmers via phone and e-mail, as well as by keeping their menu flexible and in-tune with seasonality.

"We can kind of come up with the menu and then tweak it depending on what the farmer has," says Jeff.

Ideally, the Klemetsruds would like to have a more formal ordering and delivery arrangement for getting local products on a consistent basis. Jackson says that's one of the issues that was addressed Nov. 12 at a special *Buy Fresh Buy Local* farmer-buyer workshop in Stillwater.

But for now, the owners of Savories say any inconvenience of sourcing locally is outweighed by the benefits, some of which are more intangible than others.

"One of the farmers will bring his kids in with him when he makes deliveries some-



Tina Virgillo Suglia and chef Nate Wopat of Luna Rossa Trattoria & Wine Bar in Stillwater serve up a locally sourced minestrone soup and eggplant parmesan during Dine Fresh Dine Local 2009. (LSP photos)

times," says Jeff. "I love that."

Adds Kristin: "It's about the quality of the ingredients, but it's also about supporting my community." □

For a listing of eateries that participated in the 2009 St. Croix River Valley Dine Fresh Dine Local event, see [www.dinefreshdinelocal.com](http://www.dinefreshdinelocal.com).

## Give it a listen

To listen to an *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring Roger Browne of Rising Sun Farm talking about his vegetable operation and selling to local markets (episode 71), see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html).



Roger Browne (above) feels when restaurants showcase local foods it helps promote demand for those foods at other venues, including farmers' markets and co-ops. Paul Thao (right), whose Mai Thai restaurant in Stillwater participated in the 2009 Dine Fresh Dine Local event, says he buys local to support area Asian family farmers. (LSP photos)



# The evolution of an environmentalist

*The land ethic brought Jan Libbey & Tim Landgraf to their farm; they hope producing food will allow them to spread that ethic to others*

By Brian DeVore

On a blustery late summer day, Jan Libbey and Tim Landgraf hike through waist-high prairie to the top of a dramatic knob on their farm in north-central Iowa. As they stand amongst big bluestem, Indian grass and switchgrass, corn and soybean fields flow in every direction, the monocultural landscape broken up only by a string of wind generators to the east and a complex of five confinement hog barns to the northwest.

The hill Libbey and Landgraf are standing on rises above a shorter bump in the land. The two hills together form a rounded ridge that runs for a few hundred yards back toward the house and outbuildings that make up the core of the farm. Such an elongated rise is a phenomenon called a lateral moraine, something that's associated with the Des Moines Lobe, a tongue of immensely rich soil that is the leftover of the last glacier to enter the region 15,000 years ago.

By the time the ice sheet receded 3,000 years later, it left behind a poorly drained landscape of pebbly deposits, as well as clay and peat from glacial lakes. It made for some of the best farmland in the world, but here and there left a series of small lakes, potholes and bumps on the land, making it possible for the state capitol building in Des Moines to sit on high ground in the south central part of the state.

"These hills are part of the reason we moved here," says Landgraf.

That's because when Libbey and Landgraf bought this land in the heart of Iowa's row crop country two decades ago, they viewed it through the "lens of the traditional environmentalist," recalls Libbey. In a part of north-central Iowa famous for its flatness, the couple had somehow found hilly land. And that was just fine with them. These hills would be a nightmare for the giant cropping equipment that rules this region, as would be the 45 acres of wetlands, wooded shelterbelts and prairie plantings the couple has established on the land during the past 20 years.

"They were just tickled pink to sell it to us, because we took all the rough ground," recalls Landgraf. "We weren't going to

farm—we just wanted a big acreage."

But a lot's changed in 20 years. That original 55 acres of land they bought has now expanded to 130, and it is now the source of their livelihood, not just a respite from the industrialized world. In 1996 Libbey and Landgraf launched One Step at a Time Gardens, a Community Supported Agriculture produce operation. They started out with six members and over the years steadily grew it to the point where in 2002

## Wildly Successful Farming



*An occasional series on farms & their role in the natural environment*

Tim could quit his town job as an engineer. Today, they have 150 shareholders in nearby towns as well as Des Moines, 100 miles to the south. They produce vegetables on six acres of gardens.

Despite these changes, Landgraf and Libbey have remained committed to retaining the land's natural habitat. It's a balancing act, one they think is made easier thanks to the model they use to market their food. They got into farming to have a more legitimate voice in the debate over the future of rural land in the area. Now can they bring eaters in on that discussion?

### Fighting for the land

Jan Libbey grew up in Des Moines and has a fish and wildlife degree from Iowa State University, where she met Tim, who

has a degree in metallurgical engineering. They both have a love of the outdoors: Landgraf grew up on a diversified farm and Libbey worked as a county naturalist in north-central Iowa for five years. Libbey has a passion for connecting people to the land, and being a county naturalist helped her use environmental education to do so.

So it seemed like a natural for the couple to move out of town and get onto the land. In 1989 they bought 55 acres of hilly land right across the road from the 490-acre East Twin Lake Wildlife Management Area, a public gem consisting of a glacial lake, wetlands and forested land. They rented out the farm's crop acres and began raising a family (they have two children: Jess, who is a senior in high school, and Andrew, who is attending the University of Nebraska) while Landgraf continued his career as an engineer.

But soon after moving to the farm, a neighbor proposed building a large industrialized hog operation. This drew Libbey and Landgraf kicking-and-screaming into the heart of the factory farm hog wars that had begun in the Midwest a few years before. This battle deepened the couple's belief that a healthy environment and farming were not compatible.

"During my early work in environmental education, it was more common to talk about agriculture in terms of its environmental detriments. It put farmers and environmentalists at loggerheads," says Libbey, bumping her fists together to illustrate the contentious nature of the relationship.

They and their neighbors lost that particular battle, as was evident on this particular summer day — in contrast to the beautiful surroundings, the smell of the five-barn hog facility a half-a-mile-away wafted over the farmstead. When the Iowa Supreme Court ruled that local governments such as counties could not control the siting of factory livestock operations, Libbey and Landgraf moved to expand their original 55-acre purchase to 130 acres in order to provide more of a buffer between them and the hog barns.

"We found out we weren't warriors," says Libbey of their foray into the factory farm wars. "This phase of our experience seemed to be more about putting up stop signs and less about offering new directions."

They also discovered that in their immediate community, there simply was no farming model that offered a viable alternative to large-scale livestock confinement operations. And Libbey was aware of research that came out in the early 1990s showing that even when environmental educators get people

**Wildly Successful**, see page 25...



out on the land for hikes and other activities, it doesn't necessarily change behavior.

Maybe Libbey and Landgraf weren't frontline eco-warriors, but that didn't mean they couldn't participate in the battle in other ways. So they started looking at how they could model a more sustainable kind of agriculture in their community. As part of their research, one year the couple attended the MOSES Organic Farming Conference in Wisconsin. There they met farmers that were proving food production and environmental health weren't mutually exclusive.

The Community Supported Agriculture model, also called CSA, appealed to them, partly because they already knew how to raise a big garden. But the way CSA farming connects producers and consumers was also attractive to the couple. It consists of people buying a share in a farm before the growing season. In return, the operation provides weekly deliveries of naturally grown produce from spring into fall. CSA farming is considered by conscientious eaters one of the ultimate methods for putting a face on food and thus having a say in how and by whom it's produced.

"I think it was the depth of the model that appealed to me," says Libbey. "It provides for an extension of that naturalist education."

### Integrating agriculture & a natural habitat

Over time, the environmentalist and farmer worlds have melded on the farm, something that is possible when you're producing food in a manner that does not rely on thousands of acres of monocrops.

A tour of One Step at a Time Gardens is a living example of *The Farm as Natural Habitat*, the 2002 book edited by the Land Stewardship Project's Dana Jackson and her daughter, University of Northern Iowa ecologist Laura Jackson. *The Farm as Natural Habitat* lays out how food production and the ecosystem have become alienated from each other, and how farmers utilizing sustainable production systems can reconnect the two. Libbey is a big fan of the book, and it is her goal to make the farm into one that reconnects food systems and ecosystems.

For example, she and Landgraf show off a part of their gardens that is planted between two sets of shelterbelts — something they call "alley gardening." It builds on some soil conservation tree plantings of poplar and honeysuckle that were already part of the farm back in 1989.

Landgraf and Libbey have since added oak, walnut and ninebark shrubs to the



When Tim Landgraf and Jan Libbey bought their farm in 1989, they just wanted a "large acreage" and looked at it through the "lens of the traditional environmentalist," recalls Libbey. (LSP photo)

shelterbelt. Besides the soil conservation benefits, the thicker plantings provide a micro-climate that alleviates the kind of climatological extremes that can make vegetable farming tricky in the Upper Midwest.

At one end of these alley gardens are the farm's main source of fertility: pastured chickens. They are part of an intricate rotation system where the farmers take two of the fields out of production every year and seed down red clover. They then run the chickens over the red clover, moving the pens daily. The next year the chickened land, rich in fertility and tilth, goes back into food production. The chickens aren't just a source of fertility: the family sells around 900 a year to eaters wanting pasture-raised poultry.

After checking on the chickens, Libbey and Landgraf leave the shelter of the alley gardens and visit more gardens that are planted on the exposed ridge of the lower part of the lateral moraine. The lack of tree cover is noticeable, as stiff winds sweep the ridge.

The farmers have recently planted oak, American cranberry and spruce along the sides of the ridge-top gardens, a future source of protection from the wind.

"We wished we had planted these earlier," Libbey laments. But then, they didn't know when they first moved here they were going to have six acres of garden to protect.

North of the ridge-top gardens is a 14-acre wetland restoration that was established

in 2001. Native grasses are planted in the upland of the excavation, and cattails are poking up in the open water. On the other side of the ridge is a 15-acre wetland that was established in 2008. After checking out the wetlands, Landgraf and Libbey waded through the eight acres of prairie that was restored on the moraine soon after they moved to the farm.

### Pastoral pleasure

All of this has made for a farm that has a nice mix of cultivated and wild land—the prairies, tree plantings and wetlands seem to wrap around the gardens and the row crop acres they rent out to a neighbor. Spend any time on the farm and it will become clear that although they are now making a living on this land, these natural pockets are still key to Libbey and Landgraf's quality of life.

"It's a lot of hard work," says Libbey of producing food on a weekly basis for 150 CSA shareholders. "So within this hard work you always need this respite that's kind of close to our core in the first place. This is what drew us here."

Posted on the wall of a garage that's been converted into a vegetable packing shed is a listing of 40 birds they've spotted on the farm. Geese, ducks, herons and swans, as well as deer in the wintertime, utilize the

restored wetlands.

Landgraf describes a recent day in the fields that was a wealth of wildness: “So first thing there was a big flock of probably 30-40 pelicans. When they’re flying that’s when we’ll see them – this big salt and pepper circling. And then we had 50-60 Canada geese.”

The farmers also talk with delight (and a little pride) about the migrating monarch butterflies that congregate by the hundreds in the alley garden area, and the upland chorus frogs that hang around the places where the chickens graze.

### Public help

But unlike the East Twin Lake Wildlife Management Area across the road, One Step at a Time’s role is not to serve as a nature preserve— it has to pay its own way. In the early years of their land tenure, Landgraf and Libbey’s management decisions were driven primarily by aesthetics; these days taking acres out of production for prairie or wetlands is something the farmers think twice about.

“I think the key is trying to have that planting diversity and trying to figure out how you can intersperse what you want to produce with wild areas,” says Landgraf. “Because at the end of the day we have to produce product to make some money so we can stay here. You know, we’re not just doing this for kicks.”

Government programs have helped. For example, the wetlands and their adjoining uplands are a result of the Wetland Reserve Program, a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) program that provides cost share money for establishment, as well as a cash, per-acre payment that is comparable to what Libbey and Landgraf would receive if they were renting the land out to a crop farmer. Some of their natural areas are set-aside in the Conservation Reserve Program, which also provides annual “rental” payments.

The NRCS provided cost share to help pay for the trees. In addition, the Wright County Conservation Board has provided a tree planter, seed drill and prairie burning assistance to help establish and maintain Libbey and Landgraf’s restorations.

The latest program the farmers have considered working with is the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). This initiative, which was revamped in the most recent Farm Bill (*see page 14*), provides payments for farms that are producing environmental benefits such as clean water and wildlife habitat. Libbey and Landgraf passed on participating in this fall’s sign-up for CSP, partly because they felt information on the initiative was vague, but they’re still study-



One Step at a Time Gardens overlooks the 490-acre East Twin Lake Wildlife Management Area, shown here in the foreground. (LSP photo)

ing it as a future option.

### Stuck in the muck

The farmers are the first to admit that even when they’ve used government conservation programs on the farm, it’s not as well planned out as it might appear. For example, the two wetlands they’ve established were mostly out of desperation—the farmer they are renting some of their land out to was tired of getting stuck in former prairie potholes.

“We figured out the main problem was that tree roots were plugging the tile line. We cleaned it out, put in a new line and within a few years that low spot was holding water again. We did that twice,” Landgraf says of the first wetland restoration.

“We finally said forget it—it wants to be a wetland,” Libbey quips.

The couple is getting to that point in their lives (he just turned 50; she’s 48) where they are thinking more about the future of the farm—not only as a business, but as a natural habitat. How can they make sure en-

vironmentally friendly management pays off in the long term? Some of this thinking has to do with deadlines imposed by taxpayer-funded programs.

For example, the 15-year Wetland Reserve Program contracts that cover their wetlands restorations have bought them time in terms of determining what to do with the land, but the clock is ticking. They are about half-way through the contract on their oldest wetland, and it’s not clear whether such contracts will be renewed in the future.

“The payment is pretty comparable to what you’re getting for cash rent, so economically that solves that issue for 15 years,” says Landgraf. “But then at the end of the 15 years you’ve got to say okay, now what? Because we can’t afford to keep it permanently out. We’re going to have to do something.”

### Benefiting from bugs

Landgraf and Libbey are using the time these government programs have bought them to take a close look at what other services their farm could be providing, and figuring out how to make such services pay.

For example, last winter while attending the MOSES Organic Conference,

they ran into Eric Mader, who works for the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. Entomologists, farmers and beekeepers are becoming increasingly alarmed at the decline in domesticated pollinators such as honeybees, as well as their wild cousins. It’s a big deal—every third bite of food is directly or indirectly the result of the work of pollinators (*see the Summer 2009 Land Stewardship Letter*, page 22).

Mader talked to the farmers about the role diverse operations like theirs could play in providing habitat for wild pollinators such as bumblebees. The conversation struck a chord with Libbey and Landgraf, who rely heavily on pollinators for their gardens. They recently lost access to some honeybee hives, and are wondering where they will get consistent pollination services from. Mader made it clear that all of the native prairie plants they have interspersed around their gardens provide prime habitat for pollinators. And those pollinators can benefit not

Wildly Successful, *see page 27...*

just their farm, but agricultural and natural plantings in general—providing an ecological service to the community at large.

“You know, maybe the benefit I get from that piece of ground is that it is an incubator for pollinators that make food production possible in my gardens,” says Landgraf.

“What other benefits are we getting in terms of pollinators, in terms of beneficial insects, reduced insect pressure, that we really don’t know about? Perhaps it’s enough to get you rethinking how you view a piece of ground that you think you need to be farming.”

Libbey, for her part, loves how issues like the need for pollinator habitat can bridge the divide between the environmentalist and farmer worlds that exist within the community, as well as within herself.

“Gosh, that environmentalist bent is integrating itself into the ag bent,” she says.

### It takes a community

The hundreds of thousand of acres of monocropped fields that surround One Step at a Time are a constant reminder that no matter what changes the farmers make on their own land, a whole lot of status quo is out there. Libbey and Landgraf feel members of the community at large—farmers and non-farmers alike—must show they are willing to support farms as natural habitats if operations like theirs are to be more than the exception.

For the general public, that means consuming food produced on sustainable farms that are benefiting the local environment.

Libbey worked for a couple of years on a project in Wright County to get local food to low-income people, and in recent years she’s shifted her work to focus on a more regional level. She’s helped build up the North Iowa Farmers’ Market in Mason City, and this fall helped coordinate a Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture-funded project that focused on local food as economic development.

“If we can take that regional approach, then we can start putting in place some initiatives that begin to trickle down and have a more local impact,” says Jan. “Because the farm and food connections are still happening on a very local basis.”

The food and farm connections don’t get more local than One Step at a Time CSA—about 60 percent of its members live in Des Moines, the rest are in north-central Iowa. “Hopefully our farm members are making the connection that agriculture is not just something that’s done out there,” says Landgraf, waving to his surroundings.

They make that connection through the



Landgraf and Libbey, along with their daughter Jess, hike through a restored prairie on a lateral moraine that runs through the middle of their farm. (LSP photo)

food, of course, but also via a weekly newsletter that comes with the shares during the growing season. Besides recipes, a listing of what’s in the share and an update on the farm, the *Weekly Note* also includes ways—book suggestions, meeting notices, brief notes—of connecting people to the larger issues affecting agriculture, the land and communities.

But there’s still some work to do before One Step at a Time becomes a “social change agent,” as Libbey puts it. She says members tell them the main reasons they belong to the farm is healthy food and support for local farms. They also say they belong for what they term “environmental reasons.”

But Libbey says that when pushed further on the matter, it becomes clear these members are mostly concerned about specific practices that keep chemicals out of their food, rather than the “big picture sustainability” of family farms and rural landscapes.

Changing minds in the agricultural community may be even tougher. But Tim is active with Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI), which, among other things, conducts on-farm research and field days related to sustainable agriculture. He is currently president of the group’s board of directors, and he sees a growing interest in sustainable production systems on the part of even conventional farmers. He’s also excited that the environmental community is starting to see that food production and ecological health can go hand-in-hand. When he and Libbey hosted a PFI field day this summer, the Iowa

Natural Heritage Foundation, an environmental group, was a co-sponsor. Landgraf points out that the field day covered more than what was growing on the tillable acres.

“At most PFI field days you focus on what’s in the fields,” he says. “At ours we focused mostly on what was *around* the fields.”

Change on many levels—farm, community, regional and even national—won’t occur overnight. In fact, when the discussion turns to length of time it takes to change mindsets around food, farming and the land, Libbey and Landgraf’s daughter Jess blurts out the word “glacial”—and she’s not referring to the farm’s lateral moraine. After all, it took Libbey and Landgraf a few years to realize agrarianism and environmentalism could preside on the same piece of real estate.

“Sometimes you get so wrapped up in the work that you want change to happen now,” says Libbey. “You have to have some patience and understand our work is only going to be a piece of it. Sometimes you need to sit back and feel good about the here and now.” □

### Give it a listen

To listen to an *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring Jan Libbey and Tim Landgraf (episode 70), see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=11](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=11).



## Bringing It to the Table On Farming and Food

By Wendell Berry

Introduction by Michael Pollan

2009; 234 pages

Counterpoint Press

www.counterpointpress.com

Reviewed by Sarah Stai

Land and Stewardship Project members need no introduction to Wendell Berry—the prolific author has become something of a prophet in sustainable agriculture. His latest book, *Bringing It to the Table*, might well be called “The Best of Berry.” This collection of previously published writings offers new readers a handy introduction to Berry’s influential work while giving long-time Berry fans a go-to compendium of key contributions.

Michael Pollan, who is becoming a legendary food and farming writer himself, introduces the book. Pollan relates the humbling experience of reviewing Berry’s writings, having realized how few of his own insights are as original as he would like to think. He characterizes Berry’s style as “at once perfectly obvious and completely arresting,” tempting readers onward with this preview: “To read these essays is to feel that way over and over again, to be somehow stopped in your tracks by the plainly self-evident.”

With the book divided into three parts, *Bringing It to the Table* is really a boxed set of Berry’s “greatest hits.” Part I consists of nine essays, published between 1971 and 2004, that outline Berry’s over arching theme: industrial agriculture lacks an appropriate context; the context for sustainable agriculture is nature; and modeling agriculture after natural systems leads inevitably to local adaptation.

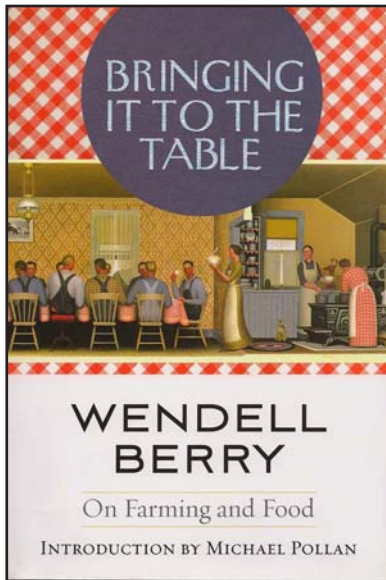
“Nature as Measure,” the first essay in Part I, lays the foundation for Berry’s core belief that agriculture needs to emulate nature. Nature’s standards include productivity, but also require that the land be used well and that people are willing and able to use it well. Subsequent essays elaborate on how productivity is tied to “the nature of a place,” how energy sources are intricately related to proper use of the land, and how family farms and a return to true husbandry will ensure that people can engage in proper land use.

The essays of Part II, ranging from 1979

to 2006, profile individuals whose farming illustrates the philosophies outlined in Part I. The first three

essays highlight, for example, how draft horses can have a place on modern farms by helping to complete the plant-animal cycle of ecological farming and capitalizing on solar energy. The final two essays of this section seemed a better fit with Part I but provided a helpful introduction to organic farming pioneer Sir Albert Howard, as well as the inspiring work on perennialization of grains crops being conducted by the Land Institute in Kansas.

The essays within Parts I and II are not



organized in chronological order, making it difficult at times to connect the dots. The historical perspective does illuminate the painfully slow pace of paradigm shifts (as far back as 1971, for example, Berry was talking of the burden that “food safety” regulations place on small producers); at other times it calls attention to our progress. In 1989 Berry was lamenting the insufficient number of people caring for the land; now we know that farmer numbers are increasing for the first time in over a century.

*Bringing It to the Table* showcases the most fundamental contributions of Berry’s life’s work, and it leaves you wanting more.

My only disappointment as a reader was that the path to “more” was not clearly paved. Just as a song’s artistic value can be difficult to interpret when isolated from its original album, I found myself craving more information on the original context of

• • •  
*For me, an ecologist and farmer-wannabe, the writings made my aspiration seem the most natural transition possible.*  
• • •

Berry’s essays. An author’s note introducing Parts I and II (or more extensive footnotes) about where essays were originally published and

the current relevance of certain references to contemporary events would have unified the collection and made it easier to follow-up with additional reading.

The final section of the book brings an unexpected twist. Not only is there the sort of author’s note I had sought earlier, but the selected writings of Part III consist primarily of excerpts from Berry’s novels and short stories.

While switching gears from essays to fiction may seem disruptive, it was an effective way of underscoring the cultural elements that feature so prominently in Berry’s work. He believes that food and farming need to be connected not only with nature, but with families, communities and traditions. These excerpts of fictional characters preparing and enjoying meals together, as people have done throughout history, brought the book to a poignant end.

This book is a source of intellectual stimulation, with many gems that stop you in your tracks (as Pollan promised in his introduction). It also inspires, in ways that will depend on the reader.

For me, an ecologist and farmer-wannabe, the writings made my aspiration seem the most natural transition possible. From now on, I will refer all people whose jaws drop when I talk of being a farmer to the essay “Conservationist and Agrarian,” which summarizes an elegant argument for the common ground between those who want to preserve wildness for its own sake and those who understand that domesticity depends on wildness.

Lastly, the book acknowledges the heart and soul of sustainable agriculture. In trying to answer the question of why “good farmers farm well for poor pay and work as good stewards of nature for no pay,” Berry writes that through all his experience and analysis, “Always the answer is: ‘Love. They must do it for love.’” I suspect there is something in *Bringing It to the Table* for all lovers of good farming, whether you’re an old Berry fan or a new kid on the block. □

*LSP member Sarah Stai is a Bloomington, Minn.-based freelance ecologist, educator and writer. She and her husband recently started a suburban market garden business as a step toward their dream of being farmers.*

## Dark Dreaming, Global Dimming

By Joe Paddock

2009; 109 pages

Red Dragonfly Press

www.reddragonflypress.org

Reviewed by Dana Jackson

Read Joe Paddock's new book of poems, *Dark Dreaming, Global Dimming*, to experience his

ecstasy in the beauty and wisdom of nature, as well as agony in its relentless destruction by human hands. The poet calls it the "big story that sounds now from the deep recesses of our minds," from dreams translated into poems.

In his prefatory, Paddock explains: "Our way of being here on dear old green and blue suffering planet is reaching its limits. Earth, air, fire and water, over and over, are telling us so." Though we live in "the holy land," as expressed in the poem printed be-

low, the other poem on this page regrets that "we cannot hear" the guidance from nature to protect that holiness.

The image of the crow on the cover of *Dark Dreaming, Global Dimming* appears in several poems, representing the "dark gods come to judge us for all we've forgotten." The poet acknowledges their cruel predation of baby song birds, but is amused in "Crow Joy" by a crow that torments a squirrel, pecking at him repeatedly as he tries to eat seed spilled from a bird feeder until the squirrel retreats to a tree trunk, and the crow emits a loud victorious caw. "I

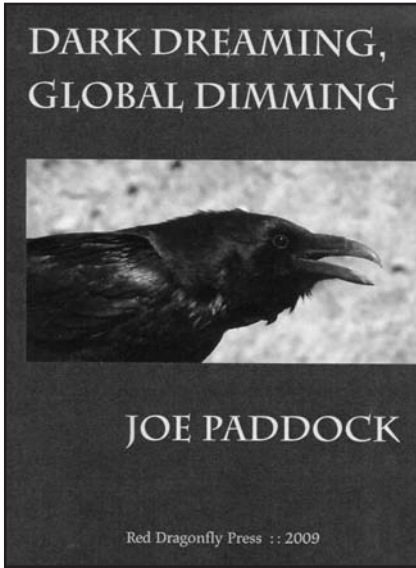
swear to God a crow can laugh," says the poet.

Spiders, opossums, trout, snapping turtles, a wren, wolves, roots and prairie grass, a lone buffalo and much more of the natural world show up in Paddock's poems and in his dreams. The dreams about a woman in an abandoned farmhouse, about an animal man, about wolves, etc., are mysterious, with hints of deep truths but no assumptions that the reader should

discover clear analogies or interpretations.

For a profound experience, play a Mozart symphony quietly in the background and read *Dark Dreaming, Global Dimming*—aloud. □

Dana Jackson coordinates the St. Croix River Valley Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign out of the Land Stewardship Project's Twin Cities office (see page 22).



## We Cannot Hear

We move within great guiding rhythms: yahonking geese who know their way, coiling vines that find the sun, honeybees that dance for their hives, describing, point by point, the way to flower-finds. Most perfect guidance.

From everywhere in the universe, the immense flight—energy and wisdom of the infinite—continually swarms in on us, but, fixed on glut, lean bellies and beautifully abstract breasts, bushels, the market, bull and bear, *we cannot hear!* Our sensitive ear has been jammed.

We could be guided, continually corrected by the whole wondrous webbing were we open....

Through blood-tinted twilight, shifting flights, energy patterns elaborating wisdom, winging

steadily away.

— Joe Paddock, from *Dark Dreaming, Global Dimming*  
Red Dragonfly Press, 2009

## Here in the Holy Land

The wonder is, it is that there is anything at all, but here, yes, a great exploding ball shines and drifts slowly across our sky each day, and everything here opens to its embrace, drinks its fire.

And here, too, Life groans and forces its way spews its infinity of seed into every possible cleft and crevice, and the deeply rooted green vine coils sensuously up the trunk, up the wall, and the creek is asquirm with wonders that swell and churn, dimple its surface, hinting of things we cannot know.

— Joe Paddock, from *Dark Dreaming, Global Dimming*  
Red Dragonfly Press, 2009

## Give it a listen

To listen to an LSP *Ear to the Ground* podcast (episode 37) featuring Joe Paddock reading some of his work, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=4](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html?t=4).



## MN organic directory

The 2009 *Directory of Minnesota Organic Farms* lists more than 250 of the estimated 650 certified organic farms in the state. The directory lists producers by location and by what they produce. Farmers can use the guide to contact each other and food processors can use it to source ingredients for their organic products.

The directory can be downloaded at [www.mda.state.mn.us/news/publications/food/organicgrowing/organicdirectory.pdf](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/news/publications/food/organicgrowing/organicdirectory.pdf). It is also available by calling 651-201-6012. □

## New CSP guides

The first nationwide sign-up for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) wrapped up this fall, but it's not too early to begin preparing for the next round of applications, which should be sometime in early 2010.

The Land Stewardship Project has recently updated its CSP fact sheet to provide the basics on getting started in the application process. It's available in pdf at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/CSP10.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/CSP10.pdf), or by contacting Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or [adamw@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:adamw@landstewardshipproject.org).

In addition, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's *Farmers' Guide to the Conservation Stewardship Program* is now available on LSP's website at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/CSP\\_Farmers\\_Guide\\_9-09.pdf](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/CSP_Farmers_Guide_9-09.pdf). This is a user-friendly how-to manual that provides an overview of the enrollment process and describes how the 2008 edition of CSP is different from the old one. It also helps applicants determine if their farm qualifies and describes what type of documentation is required. □

## LSP's award-winning podcast

The Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast was recently named one of the "Top 11 Green Food Radio Shows" in the U.S. by journalists at the Mother Nature Network ([www.mnn.com/food/farms-gardens/stories/top-11-green-food-radio-shows](http://www.mnn.com/food/farms-gardens/stories/top-11-green-food-radio-shows)). We now have over 70 *Ear to the Ground* episodes online and have recently re-organized our podcasts by category and year to make them easier to peruse.

The categories are: Ag and Food Policy ♦ Beginning Farmers/Farm Beginnings ♦ Culture and Agriculture ♦ Global Ag ♦ Grass-roots People Power ♦ Innovative Farming and

Farmers ♦ Innovative Marketing ♦ Local Food Systems ♦ Multifunctional Farming ♦ Stewardship Farming/Farming with the Wild.

We've also made it easier to listen online and download individual shows. To listen in, go to [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org), and click on the **Podcast** link under the **LSP on the Web** heading. □

## Farm to school toolkit

The 2009 Farm Bill contains provisions to help make it easier for schools to carry locally produced foods. Just in time for implementation of these provisions, the *Farm to School Minnesota Toolkit for Food Service* provides guidelines for serving healthy meals in school cafeterias, improving student nutrition, providing health and nutrition education opportunities and supporting local farmers.

This online tool addresses such questions as:

- Where do I start with a farm-to-school program?
- How can I get my staff on board?
- What local foods are in season during the school year?

- How do I find local food?
- What about the purchasing process?
- What are the regulations?
- How can I promote local food in my school?
- What challenges am I likely to face?
- What are other schools doing?

This toolkit is based on materials developed in the Willmar, Minn., school district during a three-year pilot project funded in part by the Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships. The toolkit is available at [www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu](http://www.mn-farmtoschool.umn.edu). □

## Sustainable ag grants

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for its latest round of sustainable agriculture grants. The MDA is accepting grant applications from farmers and researchers who are working on projects that promote sustainable farming systems. The application deadline is Jan. 15, and a total of \$90,000 will be available in 2010. Projects funded by the grants program are reported on in the *Greenbook* ([www.mda.state.mn.us/greenbook](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/greenbook)).

Applications are available at [www.mda.state.mn.us/about/divisions/esap.htm](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/about/divisions/esap.htm) or by calling 651-201-6012. □

## 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.

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](mailto:mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org).



**MINNESOTA**  
*Environmental Fund*



**LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT**

## Membership Update

in our membership materials. If you'd like to become a monthly donor today, please fill out and return the envelope in the center of this newsletter or contact us at 612-722-6377 or [mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org).

Again, Thanks for being a member. With your help, we are creating change from the ground up. ☐

# Nurturing LSP's work all year long

By Mike McMahon

As you may have noticed from reading this *Land Stewardship Letter*, the Land Stewardship Project is growing. Membership numbers are up, the scope and depth of our work has increased, and we've added staff to keep pace. With your help, LSP has added new faces to each of our major programs — Policy and Organizing, Community Based Food Systems and Farm Beginnings.

The growth of LSP's work reflects the changes we're making to our food and farming system — helping new and established farmers care for the Earth, organizing to win passage of policies that enhance stewardship and support family farmers, making local nutritious food more accessible to all people, and standing up and fighting back against corporate agriculture practices that threaten our environment and food supply.

You may not realize it, but your membership is a big part of the positive changes we're seeing throughout the food and agriculture system. LSP is successful because our members provide the leadership, commit the funds and take the actions necessary to make progressive reforms. As LSP grows, we are adapting to meet the challenges facing sustainable farmers and rural communities.

This year LSP has begun to work on one of the biggest issues facing Americans: health care. LSP brings a unique voice to this critical issue, that of farmers and rural people whose health care costs are excessive (see page 12).

At first glance, health care may strike you as a little outside of LSP's mission of promoting and supporting sustainable agriculture. But consider the critical role food plays in fostering public health. In addition, many farmers, small business owners and rural residents are on their own in finding health care for their families, and people across the country are faced with the impossible choice of paying for food or medication. So it becomes clear that a sustainable food

system requires good, affordable health care for everyone — no exceptions.

As LSP's work has grown and adapted, we're also working to upgrade how we work and communicate with members. We've recently launched a Facebook page and updated our website ([www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org)). If you're a member of Facebook you can find LSP's page by looking under the **LSP on the Web** heading at [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org). In the coming months we will continue to make changes to our online communications, so please check back often.

As LSP makes changes, I'd like to ask you to make a change too — I'd like you to join LSP as a monthly donor. Monthly donors are important sources of income for the work LSP does. Spreading donations over the course of a year makes larger gifts on modest incomes possible. Soon you'll be able to become a monthly donor directly through LSP's secure website, and we will be highlighting the monthly giving option

Mike McMahon is LSP's Membership Coordinator.

## LSP Membership ???

If you have any questions about your Land Stewardship Project membership, please contact Membership Coordinator Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or [mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org).

You can renew your membership with the envelope included with this newsletter, or visit [www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-joinus.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/index-joinus.html). ☐

## Get current with

**LIVE  WIRE**

Sign up for the *LIVE-WIRE* for regular 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](mailto:aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org), and put in the subject line, "Subscribe *LIVE-WIRE*." ☐

# Thank you!

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

- ◆ **Sunny Ruthchild**  
*In honor of Jonathan Cushman & Staci Short.*
- ◆ **Molly Nutting**  
*In honor of Tom Taylor & Mary Conway.*
- ◆ **Kevin Reich**  
*In honor of Tom Taylor & Mary Conway.*
- ◆ **Kathy Strom**  
*In honor of Tom Taylor & Mary Conway.*
- ◆ **Sally Waterman**  
*In honor of Tom Taylor & Mary Conway.*
- ◆ **Anthony & Rita Pucci**  
*In honor of Tom Taylor & Mary Conway.*
- ◆ **Ron Kroese & Kimberly Colburn**  
*In memory of Victor Ray & Leo Rowekamp*
- ◆ **Leslie Foote & Stanley Pollock**  
*In memory of Vic Ormsby*
- ◆ **Lynn Nankivil & Ken McCullough**  
*In memory of Vic Ormsby*
- ◆ **Jim & Nancy Reynolds**  
*In memory of Vic Ormsby*
- ◆ **Kristi Einhorn** (on behalf of the Marketing Operations Development Team of Target Corp.)  
*In memory of Vic Ormsby*
- ◆ **Greg Gaut & Marsha Neff**  
*In memory of Vic Ormsby*
- ◆ **Martin & Barbara Nelson**  
*In memory of Vic Ormsby*


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



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## STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

- **DEC. 7** — **LSP Greenhouse Workshop**, Whitewater Gardens, Altura, Minn. (see page 20)
- **DEC. 11** — **Vegetable storage crops workshop**, West Madison Ag Research Station, Verona, Wis.; Contact: John Hendrickson, 608-265-3704; [www.cias.wisc.edu](http://www.cias.wisc.edu)
- **DEC. 12** — **LSP Farm Beginnings Tractor Maintenance Workshop**, Hutchinson, Minn. (see page 16)
- **JAN. 3-5** — **Wisconsin Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Conference**, Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells, Wis.; Contact: [www.waga.org](http://www.waga.org); 920-478-3853
- **JAN. 8-9** — **Practical Farmers of Iowa 25th Anniversary Conference-Jubilee**, Marshalltown Community College; Contact: [www.practicalfarmers.org/events/annual-conference.html](http://www.practicalfarmers.org/events/annual-conference.html); 515-232-5661
- **JAN. 9-10** — **LSP Farm Beginnings Planning Your Whole Farm Workshop**, Minneapolis, Minn. (see page 16)
- **JAN. 15** — **Deadline for Minnesota Department of Agriculture Sustainable Ag Grants** (see page 30)
- **JAN. 15-16** — **Minnesota Organic Conference & Trade Show**, St. Cloud Civic Center; Contact: Mary Hanks, 651-201-6012; [mary.hanks@state.mn.us](mailto:mary.hanks@state.mn.us); or [www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic)
- **JAN. 20-22** — **12th Annual Midwest Value Added Agriculture Conference & 4th Annual Wisconsin Local Food Summit**, Eau Claire, Wis.; Contact: [www.rivercountryred.org/valad.html](http://www.rivercountryred.org/valad.html); 715-834-9672
- **JAN. 21-22** — **Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference & Trade Show**, St. Cloud (Minn.) Civic Center;

Contact: 763-434-0400; [www.mfvga.org](http://www.mfvga.org)

→ **JAN. 23** — **LSP Farm Beginnings Time Management Workshop**, Minneapolis, Minn. (see page 16)

→ **FEBRUARY** — **5th Annual LSP Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol**, Saint Paul, Minn.; Contact: Bobby King, LSP, [bking@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bking@landstewardshipproject.org); 612-722-6377

→ **FEB. 4** — **2010 session of the Minnesota Legislature convenes**; Contact LSP's Bobby King at 612-722-6377 for information on how to promote legislation that supports family farms, sustainable agriculture, local food systems & rural communities

→ **FEB. 4** — **Free showing of the film *HomeGrown***, Bell Museum, 7 p.m., U of

### Cast your LSP 'Local Food Hero' vote by Dec. 11

The Land Stewardship Project has been nominated for a 2009 "Local Food Hero Award" by the magazine *Edible Twin Cities*. Go to page 19 for details on how to cast your vote before the Dec. 11 deadline.

M, Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: <http://sites.google.com/site/agrofoodreading/Home/food-film-series-fall-2009> or Jerry Shannon at [shann039@umn.edu](mailto:shann039@umn.edu)

→ **FEB. 7-10** — **ACEEE Forum on Energy Efficiency in Ag**, Madison, Wis.; Contact: [www.aceee.org](http://www.aceee.org); 202-507-4000

→ **FEB. 9-11** — **Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Winter Conference**, Watertown, S. Dak.; Contact: [www.npsas.org](http://www.npsas.org); 701-883-4304

→ **FEB. 15-16** — **Home Grown Economy 2010—Equipping You to Build Community Based Food Systems**, Southwest Minnesota State University, Marshall (see page 20)

→ **FEB. 18-20** — **18th Annual Wisconsin Grazing Conf.: Pastures, People, Planet, Profits**, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.; Contact: 715-289-4896; [www.grassworks.org](http://www.grassworks.org)

→ **FEB. 20** — **Annual Meeting of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota**, St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.; Contact: Jerry Ford, [jerry@marienne.com](mailto:jerry@marienne.com); 320-543-3394; [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org)

→ **FEB. 25** — **State of Organic Seed Symposium**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: [www.seedalliance.org/Advocacy](http://www.seedalliance.org/Advocacy); [matthew@seedalliance.org](mailto:matthew@seedalliance.org)

→ **FEB. 25-27** — **21st Annual Organic Farming Conference & Organic University**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: [www.mosesorganic.org/conference](http://www.mosesorganic.org/conference); 715-778-5775

→ **MARCH 13-14** — **Beekeeping in Northern Climes Short Course**, University of Minn., St. Paul; Contact: [www.extension.umn.edu/Honeybees/components/publiccourses.htm](http://www.extension.umn.edu/Honeybees/components/publiccourses.htm); 612-624-4798

→ **MARCH 18** — **LSP Farm Beginnings Workshop on Record Keeping**, St. Cloud, Minn. (see page 16)

→ **APRIL 1** — **Free showing of the film *The Read Dirt on Farmer John***, Bell Museum, 7 p.m., U of M, Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: <http://sites.google.com/site/agrofoodreading/Home/food-film-series-fall-2009> or Jerry Shannon at [shann039@umn.edu](mailto:shann039@umn.edu)

→ **APRIL 3** — **Beekeeping in Northern Climes Short Course—Part 2** (see March 13-14)

→ **SEPT. 1** — **Registration deadline for 2010-2011 session of LSP's Farm Beginnings program**; Contact: [www.farmbeginnings.org](http://www.farmbeginnings.org); 507-523-3366

Check [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org) for the latest on upcoming events.