

The Land Stewardship



Keeping the Land and People Together

Letter

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The Secret Lives of Seeds

A unique initiative that preserves Native American germplasm is telling us a lot about the past, and possibly something about the future.



Sally Auger holds corn seeds that were sent to her for safekeeping. "It's an awesome responsibility," she says. (LSP photo)

By Brian DeVore

On a bright morning in March, Sally Auger reaches under a pile of papers on her kitchen table and tugs out a handful of history. It's in the form of a small manila envelope; one side is covered with neatly inked script. The writing tells the story of the "Red Lake Hominy Corn" seeds residing in the envelope, which had been mailed to Auger's St. Paul, Minn., home by a resident of the Red Lake Indian Reservation in the northern part of the state.

It seems, according to the little memo on the envelope, that the seed is the product of two strains of corn from different sides of the lake that inadvert-

ently were mixed up one growing season.

"This is how I get the seeds," says Auger. "The stories that go with the seeds are just as important as the seeds themselves."

Auger collects seeds, and their accompanying stories, from Native Americans who live throughout North America. They come wrapped in toilet paper or an old sock—or just dumped unceremoniously into an envelope. Some have been stored in a back closet, while others were found in archeological digs by university researchers.

Often these are seeds that have been handed down from generation to generation with the reverence some families reserve for great-grandma's china set.

"It's an awesome responsibility—

you've been entrusted with something that's been sacred to the family," says Auger.

These little bits of germplasm are an awesome responsibility not just because of the past they represent, but because of the possible future. Auger coordinates the Dream of Wild Health Network, an initiative that collects and preserves traditional Indian heirloom food and medicinal plant seeds. The initiative, which is in its seventh year, has seen its seed collection multiply from about a dozen to over 400 varieties of corn, squash, beans and medicinals. It has grown out of a desire to save an integral part of Indian heritage, while seeking ways to reconnect the land, food and

Seeds, see page 14...

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The *Land Stewardship Letter* is published five times a year by the Land Stewardship Project, a private, nonprofit organization. The mission of the Land Stewardship Project is to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture and to develop sustainable communities. Members of the Land Stewardship Project receive this newsletter as a benefit. Annual membership dues are \$35.

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Commentary !?!?!?

Cementing the building blocks of democracy

By Paul Sobocinski

The Land Stewardship Project, along with allies, beat back attempts by corporate interests to weaken township rights in the 2004 session of the Minnesota Legislature. As described on pages 10 and 11 of this newsletter, that's a major victory for anyone concerned about family farming, the land and the future of our rural communities. Township and county governance is the cornerstone of local democracy, and local democracy, in turn, is the foundation of everything this country was built upon.

LSP members and other Minnesotans rallied around local township power this winter and spring. When LSP co-sponsored a local democracy town meeting, along with Minnesota Farmers Union and Minnesota National Farmers Organization, on March 15, so many people showed up (over 200) that another whole section had to be opened up in the meeting hall. At the end of that meeting, participants pulled out their cell phones and called lawmakers in St. Paul to tell them how important local control was.

The victory at the legislature was huge in affirming that citizens that live and work in rural Minnesota continue to have the ability to decide what kinds of development takes place in their community in the future. But it was a battle won in an ongoing fight over who will control our communities. Supporters of industrial agriculture were successful in significantly weakening our agricultural nuisance laws to the point where citizens may not be able to sue even when their health is in danger. In 2003, citizens were stripped of their right to petition for environmental review of most large feedlots. Also of concern is that this spring our neighbor to the east, Wisconsin, weakened local government's ability to control the placement of livestock operations.

Citizens and farmers have proven that by working together during the legislative season they can save what's important to them. But factory farming's supporters

aren't just working between January and May to undermine local democracy—they are at it 12 months out of the year.

Livestock task force

For example, Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty has convened a "Livestock Task Force" to examine how to make the state's animal agriculture industry more competitive. This task force's recommendations are due out any day now. Already, word has emerged that the task force sees the lack of "predictability and uniformity" at the local level as a serious impediment to the "modernization" of the livestock industry. That's code for: "Local

control is getting in the way of building factory farms." This summer, and during the 2005 Legislative session, you are going to hear a lot of talk from the task force about developing "suitable zones for livestock agriculture."

What they are talking about are suitable "zones" for large-scale industrial agriculture, and the promoters of such zones don't want local township zoning and local folks getting in the way of their plans for factory farm development.

The interests represented on the Governor's Livestock Task Force do not believe local people should have the final word on where or if large livestock facilities are sited in their community. Why? Because it gets in the way of the factory farm model. Rod Hamilton, who is president of the Minnesota Pork Producers Association and a top official at Christensen Farms (the eighth largest hog producer in the nation), sits on the task force. Also on the task force is the key leadership of Cenex Harvest States, Land O' Lakes, Hormel Foods Corporation/Jennie-O Turkey Store and AgStar Financial Services. With representation like that, we should not expect the Governor's Task Force to come up with recommendations that are good for family farmers and rural communities. Companies like Hormel want a model for agriculture that gives them livestock at

•••
*"As an independent
hog farmer, I'm not
afraid of local
democracy."*
•••

Local Democracy, see page 3...

the lowest possible price, and that's not good news for independent farmers. What's good for Christensen Farms—loose environmental regulations and no local control—is not what is good for residents of rural communities.

Farming & local control

Local democracy is not in the way of successful livestock farming in Minnesota. But it does pose a significant barrier to the spread of large-scale industrialized agriculture. It's much easier to influence decision makers in St. Paul that your mega-livestock operation is good for rural Minnesota, than it is to convince a group of local farmers and residents that millions of gallons of liquid manure will make a good neighbor. For Minnesota's family farmers, local democracy has not been a problem because we live with our neighbors, work with our neighbors and farm in a way that's compatible with our neighbors.

As an independent hog farmer, I'm not afraid of local democracy. I am not afraid to work with members of the community. Who better to decide about what their community, township or county looks like than local residents who then have to live with their decision? Who better to decide about the structure of agriculture and economic development in their community?

A people's task force

LSP supports and is working for more successful farmers raising livestock and crops on the land. We want to protect the rural environment by promoting livestock on diversified family farms. We do not believe there needs to be "sacrifice" zones where anything goes. We've joined with other organizations that share our vision—the Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota National Farmers Organization and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota—and created a task force of our own that is looking at how to encourage livestock development in the state that's good for the community and the environment and maximizes return to the farmer (see page 11). We know that livestock development can be done in a way where manure is a valuable nutrient, not a waste product, and the profits generated are not shipped out of the community. Local family farmers are accountable to their neighbors and to the environment. The factory farm model, on the other hand, extracts wealth and



Evan Schmeling (left), Frances Moore Lappé and Gene Hallaway discussed how citizens can work for democracy through their local units of government during a meeting in southeast Minnesota in May. Lappé, author of *Diet for a Small Planet*, among other books, is currently working on a book tentatively called *We Have the Power*. Lappé says the book tells the story of "living democracy" emerging across the American landscape, from farms to schools to the media and politics. Schmeling and Hallaway, along with three of their neighbors in rural Dodge County, talked to Lappé about their work with the Land Stewardship Project to develop sound land use planning. LSP Policy Program Director Mark Schultz and LSP organizer Adam Warthesen were also present at the meeting. Besides being an author, Lappé is a leading sustainability and anti-hunger activist. For more information on her work, visit www.dietforasmallplanet.com. (photo by Mark Schultz)

leaves behind wrecked environments.

A year-round job

Now that the 2004 Legislature has convened, we need to begin our "off-season" work to protect local democracy: attending meetings, writing letters to local newspapers, contacting lawmakers, debunking myths, making our voices heard any chance we get. It also means attending local township meetings and learning more about what makes these democratic institutions tick. It may even mean running for office.

Sound like a lot of work? Maybe, but without a strong, local foundation, the rest of our democratic infrastructure will simply crumble. □

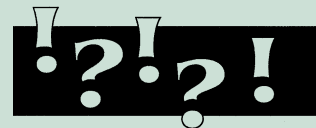
LSP organizer Paul Sobocinski raises hogs in southwest Minnesota. He can be reached at 507-342-2323 or sobopaul@rconnect.com. For more information on legislative issues related to local democracy, go to www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-pr.html.

What's on your mind?



Got an opinion? Comments? Criticisms? We like to print letters, commentaries, essays, poems, photos and illustrations related to issues we cover. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity.

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Farms, fertilizer, fish

Wayward agricultural fertilizer has helped create nearly 150 oxygen-starved regions in the world's oceans and seas, concludes a recent report by the United Nations Environment Program.

The hypoxic conditions are created when nutrients such as nitrogen fertilizer wash from crop fields into aquatic ecosystems, causing a supergrowth of algae. The bacteria that decompose the algae consume oxygen at an extraordinary rate, particularly near the bottom.

As the oxygen is consumed, fish, oysters and other marine creatures have a hard time surviving. In some cases these areas are so devoid of life they literally resemble a "dead zone." The frequency and size of these zones is on the rise, with the total number detected increasing

every decade since the 1970s. These zones are becoming major threats to worldwide fish stocks, and thus to the people who depend on fisheries for food and their livelihoods.

One major dead zone is at the mouth of the Mississippi River in the Gulf of Mexico. The upper Mississippi River basin (upstream from the Missouri River) makes up 15 percent of the drainage basin but contributes more than half of the nitrate-nitrogen discharged to the Gulf, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. It's no coincidence: that region is the heart of corn country, and corn is notoriously dependent on nitrogen fertilizer to be productive. Overall, about half of the nitrogen that makes it to the Gulf is from commercial fertilizer, and 15 percent is from livestock manure. Municipal sewage plants, urban runoff and vehicle and

factory emissions are also sources of excessive nutrients.

In its report, the United Nations Environment Program recommends reducing fertilizer use and establishing more perennial plant systems such as grasslands to help soak up nutrients. Minnesota research has shown that nitrogen losses from corn and soybean fields can be as much as 50 times higher than from land planted to perennials such as hay or grass. In addition, producing livestock in the regions where their feed is raised would help keep nutrients closer to home, say the report's authors.

The UN report is at www.unep.org/geo/yearbook. For more information on what farmers in the Upper Midwest are doing to reduce their impact on the Gulf of Mexico, check out the September/October 1999 issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter* (www.landstewardshipproject.org/lsl/lspv17n4.html) or the July/August 2001 issue of the *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer* (www.dnr.state.mn.us/volunteer/julaug01/hypoxia.html). □

Not all dead zones are in the ocean



That's right—the liquid pictured here is 100 percent pure manure. The fetid pond developed this spring when more than 300,000 gallons of feces leaked from an above-ground storage tank on a Minnesota dairy farm. Environmental officials say the spill was caused by a valve malfunction. Local emergency workers used pumps and sand berms to contain the spill, but not before 100,000 gallons made it into a local creek. Manure has a "pollution strength" that is 160 times greater than raw human sewage, according to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. (Photo submitted)

Popchops for supper

Feedstuffs magazine reports that the folks who brought us carbonated caffeine now want to add some fizz to our meat. Pork chops soaked in soda is just one of several recipes for meat and other dishes being promoted by a Coca-Cola Company Web site called www.secretingredientrecipes.com.

Naturally (or unnaturally, depending on how one looks at it), all of the recipes featured on the site call for one of Coca-Cola's 19 beverages as an ingredient. In case you're wondering, the pork chop recipe calls for three cups of "Diet Coke with Lemon."

Not to be outdone in the race to saturate every last edible product in the world with fructose and preservatives, Coca-Cola rival PepsiCo has requested trademarks for three different "milk drinks."

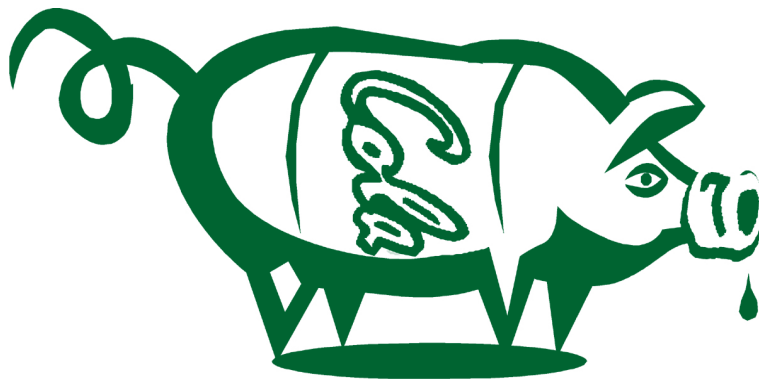


Illustration by Sean Sheerin

Survey: Organic livestock needs organic information

The demand for organic meat is exploding, offering excellent marketing opportunities for livestock producers. But, as Jim Riddle knows all too well, an organic livestock operation consists of more than growing hay without chemicals and feeding it to a few cattle. During the past 23 years, Riddle has been deeply involved with organic agriculture as a farmer, inspector, educator, policy analyst, author and consumer. He knows that farmers trying to raise livestock under organic specifications are finding a dearth of information on everything from keeping animals healthy without antibiotics to sources of approved feedstuffs.

That's why recently Riddle, who holds the position of Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems at the University of Minnesota, surveyed 203 people from 10 states and Canada on what kind of research is needed to support organic livestock production. The majority of those surveyed were farmers, with researchers, inspectors and certifiers also participating. Riddle, a Land Stewardship Project member, found two strong trends emerged from the survey results: 1) the need for a holistic "systems" approach for organic livestock research; and 2) a widespread need for improved processing, handling and distribution systems for approved inputs (feed, feed supplements and medications) and for organic livestock products.

In short, an organic livestock production system needs an organic infrastructure to support it.

The full report on the survey, "Organic Livestock Research Survey," is available by contacting the Minnesota Institute for

Sustainable Agriculture at www.misa.umn.edu/Other/Livestock-Survey_web.pdf or 612-625-8217. □

In farmers we trust

Large-scale industrial farms are not enjoying a good reputation among the general public these days, according to two recent national polls.

In April, the Animal Agriculture Alliance and the National Corn Growers Association released the results of an on-line consumer poll involving 1,002 respondents. The Alliance and the Corn Growers sponsored the survey to determine who consumers trust when it comes to information on livestock production. School teachers, veterinarians, doctors, farmers and ranchers ranked high as sources of information. On the other hand, consumers don't put much trust in animal rights activists or the media. In a press release announcing the poll results, the Animal Agriculture Alliance emphasized the low ratings activists get from the consuming public. That's not surprising: the Alliance is made up of packers, processors, retailers and other players in the meat business. But the Alliance release neglected to mention one other poll result: only a little over 10 percent of the respondents trust "large corporate farms" when it comes to information on

livestock agriculture. Only "trial lawyers" and "groups active in opposing use of animals for food" rated lower on the trust scale. Ouch.

When large-scale industrial operations are put head-to-head with their smaller family farm counterparts, they don't fare much better. In March and April, Roper Public Affairs conducted a national telephone survey of 1,000 people for Organic Valley Family of Farms. Respondents to that poll said, "smaller scale family farms" are more likely to care about food safety than "large scale industrial farms" by a 71 percent to 15 percent margin. Sixty-nine percent polled said smaller scale family farms are more likely to use techniques that won't harm the environment; 22 percent gave large scale industrial operations the nod on this question.

Is consumer mistrust of industrial agriculture showing up at the grocery checkout lane? Mostly not, but both surveys found that people are interested in paying premiums for such things as "humanely raised" meat and poultry.

More information on these polls is at www.animalagalliance.org/main/home.cfm?Section=Trust_In_Agriculture&Category=PressReleases and www.organicvalley.coop/mediacenter/press_release_detail.php?id=210. □

10...

...That's the percentage of surveyed farmers who considered a "confinement hog lot" a desirable economic development activity in their community. The farmers were responding to a question on the 2003 Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll, a random sample of 1,747 farm operators taken by Iowa State University. Confinement hog lots placed dead last in the "desirable economic development" category, right below prisons, solid waste landfills, casinos and slaughtering plants. Farmers' markets were considered the most desirable economic activity. A summary of the poll is available at www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1960.pdf. Call 515-294-6222 for information on getting a paper copy.



U.S. Supreme Court to rule on beef checkoff's constitutionality

Decision expected to determine future of pork counterpart

The U.S. Supreme Court decided on May 24 to hear an appeal of a lower court decision declaring the mandatory beef checkoff program unconstitutional.

In February, the U.S. Justice Department asked the Supreme Court to review the case. The Supreme Court's decision on the mandatory beef checkoff program—which will be issued in early 2005—is expected to determine the finality of both the beef and pork checkoff programs. The Campaign for Family Farms (CFF), a coalition to which the Land Stewardship Project belongs, has filed a lawsuit against the USDA claiming that the mandatory pork checkoff violates hog producers' constitutional rights by infringing on the First Amendment. CFF believes the checkoff forces farmers to pay into a program that's contrary to their interests because it supports factory-style hog production and corporate control of the industry (see timeline below). Farmers' Legal Action Group, which is representing CFF, is

filing a friend of the court brief.

"We fully support the challenge to the constitutionality of the mandatory beef checkoff program," says independent Minnesota hog farmer Jim Joens, a named party in a case concerning the future of the pork checkoff and an LSP member. "It is unfortunate the Bush Administration has continued the lengthy and costly appeal process in this case. Both the pork and beef checkoff programs have lower court rulings agreeing. It is time for the programs to end now. We are confident the Supreme Court will agree and rule to terminate both unconstitutional programs."

The Campaign for Family Farms is a coalition of farm and rural groups leading the fight against the corporate takeover of the hog industry, and working for policies supporting independent family farmers. Besides LSP, CFF member-groups are Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Citizen's Action Coalition of Indiana, and the Illinois Stewardship Alliance.

Farmers' Legal Action Group represents CFF and the individual hog farmers in the checkoff lawsuit. □

Public research subject of D.C. trip

Publicly funded agricultural research was the focus of a recent trip to our nation's capitol taken by George Boody. Boody, the Land Stewardship Project's Executive Director, went to Washington, D.C., and lobbied for USDA-land grant research into adding perennials and diversified crops into row crop systems. He also lobbied for greater emphasis on public, classical plant and animal breeding. This expertise is withering in the face of research that focuses exclusively on biotechnology. Boody met with Congressional members and USDA staff.

While in D.C., he participated in a sustainability science workshop to advise the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service about how to orient its grant programs and formula funds passed on to the land grant universities. Boody also met with officials from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Environmental Protection Agency about LSP's Multiple Benefits of Agriculture Project work and how it relates to the mandate those agencies face to report the outcomes of their work (see December 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 18, or www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mba.html).

Boody can be contacted at 651-653-0618 or gboody@landstewardshipproject.org. □

Pork checkoff timeline

✓ **1986**—Congress passes a law mandating that U.S. hog farmers pay a "check-off" fee for every hog sold.

✓ **April 1998**—Land Stewardship Project and other members of the Campaign for Family Farms (CFF) initiate a national petition drive calling for a hog farmer referendum to decide if the mandatory checkoff program should be ended. More than 19,000 farmers eventually sign the petition, which is approximately 4,000 more than is required by law to trigger a referendum.

✓ **August-September 2000**—In a referendum vote, hog farmers vote 15,951 to 14,396 to end the checkoff.

✓ **January 2001**—The vote results are announced by U.S. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman; he orders the termination

of the program.

✓ **February 2001**—Newly appointed Ag Secretary Ann Veneman cuts a deal with the National Pork Producers Council to



throw out the referendum and keep the checkoff.

✓ **May 2001**—CFF and individual farmers sue to force USDA to adhere to the referendum's results.

✓ **Oct. 2002**—A U.S. District Court

rules that the checkoff is unconstitutional and orders it terminated by Nov. 24, 2002. USDA appeals.

✓ **Oct. 2003**—The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals affirms the District Court judge's ruling. USDA continues using the courts to delay the checkoff's end.

✓ **Early 2004**—It becomes clear the U.S. Supreme Court will consider the constitutionality of either the beef checkoff or the pork checkoff, two programs that are similar in their structure and execution.

✓ **May 24, 2004**—The Supreme Court picks the beef checkoff case.

✓ More than \$170 million in checkoff funds have been collected from U.S. hog farmers since the results of the 2000 referendum prompted Dan Glickman to order the program terminated.

Bacigalupo elected to sustainable ag council

Land Stewardship Project staffer Amy Bacigalupo has been elected to the north central regional administrative council of the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. SARE provides grants for farmers, scientists and others doing research on sustainable production systems. As a member of the council, Bacigalupo will review grant applications. She is the coordinator of LSP's western Minnesota Farm Beginnings program. Bacigalupo also farms near the town of Montevideo, Minn., with her husband Paul Wymar. □

Cornillie legacy helps Farm Beginnings

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings program in western Minnesota has recently been able to expand its library of resource materials through a generous donation of \$350 from the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota's Charles E. Cornillie Memorial Fund. This donation has provided a variety of books, magazines and other publications for Farm Beginning participants to use when planning their own farm enterprises. The resources focus on sustainable methods of animal husbandry, crop production (including fruits and vegetables), grazing, weed control, financial planning and marketing.

Charles Cornillie was a very active participant in the Sustainable Farming Association (SFA), hosting tours on his farm near Elbow Lake and taking part in demonstration projects. He explained in a 1991 issue of the SFA's newsletter that "diversification is the cornerstone of my farm," a philosophy which he definitely carried out. Cornillie passed away in 1995 at the age of 44. To honor his memory and his dedication to being a steward of the land, the SFA started the memorial fund in his name. This gift allows the knowledge of previous generations of farmers to be passed on to today's beginning farmers.

For more information on Farm Beginnings, see page 16. □



Thanks for remembering LSP

Periodically, the Land Stewardship Project is honored to be the recipient of gifts in memory of special people or in honor of special events. We have recently received several of those gifts:

◆ **John and Marge Warthesen** recently gave a gift in memory of Ralph Warthesen, grandfather of LSP staffer Adam Warthesen. They wrote about Ralph: "This gift is given in memory of Ralph Warthesen, who passed away recently. He was a diversified conservation-minded family farmer who loved his work. When he retired from farming he engaged himself into managing his woodlot and became a skilled wood craftsman. During his active farming life he served as county commissioner for four terms and also was a township official in his early days. It seems fitting that his involvement in local government and family farming

is being carried on through LSP. P.S. He also loved fishing and hunting and told great stories."

◆ **Dave and Anne Johanson** recently gave a gift in honor of the wedding of their son Dave Johanson to Andria Williams, intern with LSP's Policy and Organizing Program.

◆ Longtime LSP members **Beth Waterhouse and Don Maronde** celebrated their wedding on April 24. In lieu of gifts, the couple asked family and friends to donate to two groups close to their hearts: Oberholtzer Foundation/Mallard Island study and retreat center and Land Stewardship Project. LSP was excited to receive \$1,020 from 31 people in honor of this special occasion.

LSP thanks all of these donors for their kind memorial gifts in support of our work.

Get a charge out of LIVE WIRE

Sign up for *LIVE-WIRE* for regular e-mail updates and news from the Land Stewardship Project. Stay current on

information and activities related to land stewardship, local food and grassroots organizing. To subscribe, call Louise Arbuckle at 651-653-0618 or e-mail lspwbl@landstewardshipproject.org and put in the subject line "Subscribe LIVE-WIRE." □



Participants in a Land Stewardship Project brainstorming session held in February discussed opportunities and barriers that exist when it comes to passing on farmland to a new generation of farmers. The session, which was held near the southeast Minnesota community of Lewiston, involved established farmers, beginning farmers and other residents from the community. For more on transitioning farms to the next generation, see page 16. (photo by Karen Stettler)



LSP members going to slow food meeting

Land Stewardship Project members Audrey Arner and Richard Handeen have been chosen to participate in an international conference on "slow food" being held in late October in Turin, Italy.

The Terre Madre is being billed as a forum for those who "seek to grow, raise, catch, create, distribute and promote food in ways that respect the environment, defend human dignity and protect the health of consumers." Organizers of the event are planning for 5,000 participants from dozens of countries. Every participant will represent a "Food Community," which means they are part of a chain of production, linked by a common product, ethnic identity, region, history or approach. The conference is being sponsored by Slow Food, an international organization launched in 1989 in response to the homogenization of modern fast food and the industrialization of agriculture.

Before leaving LSP in 2003, Arner worked for the organization for 15 years. She was active in promoting sustainable farming practices and local food systems, among other things. She and Handeen own and operate Moonstone Organics, an organic beef and cropping operation near the western Minnesota community of Montevideo.

LSP's western Minnesota office will be holding a "send-off" event for Arner and Handeen later this summer.

For more information on Terra Madre, visit www.terramadre2004.org. □

Farm Beginnings field days this summer

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings field day series has two events left for the summer:

◆ **Thursday, July 15, Prairie Farm, Wis.**—Community Supported Agriculture vegetable production and profitability; what it takes to be a successful beginning vegetable farmer.

◆ **Saturday, July 31, Wykoff, Minn.**—Low-cost, appropriate technologies for small farmers; Community Supported Agriculture vegetable production.

To attend a field day, call LSP's southeast Minnesota office at 507-523-

3366 to reserve a spot and get directions. LSP members can attend these field days for free. The fee for nonmembers is \$5 per person and \$10 per family. If you choose to become a member of LSP the day of a tour, an immediate benefit will be free admission. □

Grazing workshops

Between June and November the Land Stewardship Project is helping organize a series of free hands-on workshops with Natural Resources Conservation Service State Grazing Specialist Howard Moechnig on grazing management in southeast Minnesota. For more information, contact Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org. □

It's field day season!

Check the Stewardship Calendar on the back of this newsletter (and continued on this page) for a listing of field days and other events. You can also find information on upcoming events at www.landstewardshipproject.org by clicking on **Newsroom** or **Calendar**.

Endowed chair: Livestock can be part of the solution

A livestock industry based on perennial plant systems such as pasture and alfalfa could have a major positive impact on Minnesota's water quality, said a University of Minnesota researcher during a special presentation to the Citizen Task Force on Livestock Farmers and Rural Communities (see page 9) in March.

"Let's get out of the mind-set of just what can we do with corn and soybeans," said Steve Morse, Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems at the University of Minnesota. "As you guys are thinking about the livestock industry...livestock can play such a big role in dealing with water quality problems."

Morse is working with "Green Lands, Blue Waters: A Vision and Roadmap for the Next Generation of Agricultural Systems." This initiative involves land grant universities, non-governmental organizations and government agencies in seven states, including Minnesota. Green Lands, Blue Waters is working to improve water quality by promoting agricultural systems that establish more perennial plants on the landscape. Morse said the initiative's approach is to do this in a non-regulatory way that

"keeps working lands working" and improves economic diversity in rural areas.

During the past 25 years in Minnesota, perennial plant systems such as alfalfa hay and pasture have been systematically replaced by annual crops such as corn and soybeans, said Morse. Alfalfa acreage alone has dropped by 25 percent since 1975. As a result, in many parts of the state much of the landscape is devoid of green plant growth during all but a few months during the summer. This leaves the land vulnerable to erosion and excessive nutrient runoff. Nitrogen contamination of water is 33 to 50 times higher on land planted to annual crops such as corn and soybeans when compared to fields growing perennials such as grass and hay, according to University of Minnesota research being conducted in the southern part of the state.

If perennial plant systems became a bigger part of Minnesota's landscape, reductions in water contamination can come about through a non-regulatory, non-threatening manner, said Morse.

"Modeling shows that if you replace just 15 percent of the corn and soybean acreage with perennials, you can reduce nitrogen runoff by 30 percent," he said. □

...Stewardship Calendar, from page 24

→ **SEPT. 8—Pasture Walk on Winter Storage**, Morris, Minn. (see July 14)

→ **SEPT. 9-10—The Role of Farmers' Markets in America's Food System**, Des Moines, Iowa; Contact: 515-271-2065; www.statefoodpolicy.org/new_developments.htm

→ **SEPT. 11—2004 Northeast Minnesota SFA Harvest Festival**, Bayfront Festival Park, Duluth, Minn.; Contact: 218-727-1414; sfanortheast@yahoo.com

→ **SEPT. 16—PFI Field Day on Corn Past & Future/Rotational Grazing**, Grice Farm, South English, Iowa; Contact: 319-667-2350

→ **SEPT. 19—PFI Field Day on Vegetable Production & Marketing**, Rock Spring Farm, Spring Grove, Minn.; Contact: 563-735-5613

→ **SEPT. 21—PFI Field Day on Breeding & Selecting Corn for Quality**, Natvig/Miller Farm, Cresco, Iowa; Contact: 563-569-8358

→ **OCT. 13—Pasture Walk on Season Extension**, Morris, Minn. (see July 14)

→ **OCT. 23—LSP Farm Beginnings Classes Begin**, New Prague, Minn.; Contact: 320-269-2105 or 507-523-3366

→ **NOV. 10—Pasture Walk on Preparing Pastures & Livestock for Winter**, Morris, Minn. (see July 14)

USDA: CSP sign-up begins July 6

Only 18 watersheds chosen for the entire nation

The USDA's announcement in June that sign-up for the long-awaited Conservation Security Program (CSP) will begin July 6 and run until July 30 is welcome news, but the program being implemented is highly flawed, says Land Stewardship Project Policy Program Director Mark Schultz.

In the Upper Midwest, only three watersheds were selected by the USDA for CSP implementation this summer: the Blue Earth in south-central Minnesota, the

East Nishnabotna in southwestern Iowa and the Chippewa in northwestern Wisconsin. Nationwide, 15 other watersheds have been selected:

- Pennsylvania—Raystown
- South Carolina—Saluda
- Georgia—Little
- Michigan/Indiana / Ohio—St. Joseph
- Indiana/Ohio—Auglaize
- Illinois/Wisconsin—Kishwaukee
- Missouri/Arkansas—Little River Ditches
- Montana/North Dakota—Lower Yellowstone
- Nebraska/Kansas—Lower Little Blue
- Oklahoma/Kansas—Lower Salt Fork Arkansas
- New Mexico/Texas—Punta De Agua
- Texas—Hondo
- Washington—Moses Coulee
- Idaho—Lemhi
- Oregon—Umatilla

Those watersheds are estimated to include 27,000 farms, of which the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) estimates 3,000 to 5,000 will be able to enroll given the budget cap for the 2004 fiscal year.

"CSP is finally getting out of the corridors of USDA and open for sign-up in at least a few agricultural areas," says Schultz. "Unfortunately, not only is the rule nearly a year and a half late, but the Bush Administration has evidently chosen to prevent most farmers from

participating in the program with a restricted implementation plan and low payment rates. Our members are not happy with how far from the original law this program has strayed."

The CSP was passed by Congress in the 2002 Farm Bill as a comprehensive,

CSP Web site

For the latest on the Conservation Security Program, check out www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_csp.html.

nationwide program on a par with federal farm commodity programs. But the USDA's plan limits the program to a few local watersheds each year. Rather than the continuous sign-up envisioned by the original law, the Bush

Administration's plan would give farmers the chance to enroll in the program at best once every eight years. The right of the farmer to renew CSP contracts and stay in the environmental program over the long-term, which is guaranteed in the 2002 law, is effectively voided by the Administration's rule.

The interim final rule somewhat improves the CSP payment rates that were proposed in USDA's draft rule, which was released for public comment in January. Rather than reducing the statutory base payments rates by 90 percent, as was outlined in the proposed rule, the interim final rule reduces the rates by 75 percent, 50 percent and 25 percent for Tier I, II and III CSP participants respectively. At the same time, however, the interim final rule reduces CSP cost share payments from up to 75 percent—as required by law and

included in the proposed rule—to not more than 50 percent.

"A record-setting 14,000 farmers, conservationists, and farm and environmental organizations commented on the USDA's proposed rule early this spring, nearly unanimously calling for CSP to be implemented as Congress legislated it to be—reaching into every county of the country and accessible to all farmers practicing effective conservation," says Schultz. "A few of the recommendations were heard, for which we want to commend hard-working professionals in the Natural Resources Conservation Service at USDA. But overall, the Bush Administration continues to run farm programs through the White House Office of Management and Budget, which apparently cares nothing for conservation-minded farmers or the stewardship of our nation's land and waters."

LSP was an early proponent of the Conservation Security Program, and worked to develop the policy, build support for it, and provide input into the implementation process. LSP is willing to help promote CSP by tapping into the hundreds of producers the organization has worked closely with and who farm in the selected watersheds, says Schultz. LSP will contact those farmers directly, informing them of the process of program sign-up and urging them to push for good uses for the program.

"Maybe by working through the grassroots and through the Natural Resources Conservation Service at the local and state level, we'll shape this program into something of real worth to America," says Schultz. "Despite attempts to strangle it, this can still be a program that helps protect our precious soil and water on working farms." □

The CSP Interim Final Rule has been posted at www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/rules/csp060904.html.

Policy Program open house/cookout July 21

The Land Stewardship Project's Policy Program will be hosting its third annual open house/cookout on the evening of Wednesday, July 21 (that's rescheduled from June 11 due to soggy weather). This is a great chance to meet other members and supporters over delicious grilled food (brats, burgers, and vegetarian options provided) and beverages.

There will be a short presentation on LSP's recent work, and ample time to

talk, discuss issues and meet new people. This year, we will also debut a silent auction; some great items are going to be available to bid on. There's no cost for the event, but we invite everyone to bring a side dish to share and a lawn chair to lounge in. The cookout will be held at the Policy Office: 2919 East 42nd Street, Minneapolis.

For more information, contact Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org.

Legislative Update

LSP's members take leadership role in saving local control in Minnesota

The 2004 Minnesota Legislature may have some unfinished business in terms of passing a general budget and bonding package, but the omnibus agriculture bill has been passed and signed into law. The legislation is a mixed bag as far as family farming and sustainable agriculture goes.

Attacks on local control stymied



Despite pressure from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and one of the state's largest corporate agriculture lobbying groups to weaken local government, township powers survived the 2004 Legislative session. None of the half dozen bills introduced to weaken township rights passed in forms that had any significant impact on township local control. An unusual mix of farm, conservation, environmental and local government groups made protecting local control one of their top priorities during the Legislative session. Land Stewardship Project members from across the state were particularly active in defending local democracy during the 2004 session.

"In Minnesota, we believe in local democracy," says Alan Perish, an official in Todd County's Hartford Township who is also a member of LSP's State Policy Committee. "Township government is closest to the people and should not be weakened. A majority of legislators realized that and chose not to weaken the principle of local control."

In Minnesota, townships and other local governments have the right to enact ordinances to protect the community. These ordinances must be more stringent than state and county regulations. Townships have used this right to place common sense limits on developments such as large-scale factory farms. As a result, township rights have been targeted by proponents of factory farms (see Oct/Nov. 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 5; www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-lsl.html.)

By early March, six bills that would have dramatically weakened township

rights had been introduced at the Legislature. As a result, on March 15 over 200 township supervisors, farmers and rural residents gathered in Willmar to learn about the attacks on township rights and to take action. The event, "Protecting Township Local Control and Independent Livestock Producers," was organized by LSP, Minnesota Farmers Union and Minnesota National Farmers Organization.

"I felt like the meeting in Willmar was a turning point for us," says Jim Falk, an LSP member from Swift County's Camp Lake Township. "We came together to



Nancy Barsness, a Pope County township officer and member of the Minnesota Association of Townships Board of Directors, spoke at the "Protecting Township Local Control and Independent Livestock Producers" meeting in March. (LSP photo)


learn about our rights and left knowing that if we want to keep those rights, we were going to have to fight for them by making our voices heard at the Capitol."

Even before the 2004 Legislative session began, a Minnesota Department of Agriculture official attempted to blame problems in the livestock industry on local democracy, saying in *Agri News* on Nov. 27, 2003, that local governments needed to be reined in. In addition, the Minnesota Agri-Growth Council released a report which attempted to argue that local government was a major reason for the decline in the state's livestock industry (www.agrigrowth.org/livestock.html).

"Corporate interests don't like local control," says Perish. "They want to take township rights and give them to bureau-

crats in St. Paul. They don't like the fact that township officers are looking out for family farmers and local interests, instead of corporate interests. We're concerned about what's best for our individual communities." (See the commentary on page 2 for more on the issue of local control.)

Foreign investors allowed to own dairy farms



On the last day of the 2004 Minnesota legislative session, with budget issues and the bonding bill unresolved, lawmakers made time to push through state law changes that allow holders of foreign investment visas to own Minnesota dairy farms and up to 1,500 acres of farmland.

The proposal was defeated last year due to strong opposition from farm groups and independent dairy farmers.

This year the legislation was authored and aggressively promoted by Sen. Dallas Sams (DFL-Staples) and Rep. Greg Blaine (R-Little Falls). The bill will allow holders of non-immigrant treaty investment visas to own Minnesota dairy farms. Before the session, Minnesota law allowed immigrants to own farmland and limited foreign investment in farmland to 20 percent in most cases.

"As milk prices are recovering and it looks better for getting younger people into dairying, this is exactly the wrong message to send," says Perish, who is a dairy farmer. "Allowing foreign investors to own dairy farms sends the message that we have given up on our next generation of dairy farmers."

Rep. Mary Ellen Otremba (DFL-Long Prairie) offered an amendment to remove the foreign investment visa language, but was unsuccessful by a 15-vote margin. Most House Democrats supported her attempt and were joined by a block of rural Republicans. Rep. Kent Eken (DFL-Twin Valley) raised concerns that the bill could undermine the corporate farm law because it does not prevent foreign capital from being invested in Minnesota

Legislature, see page 11...

dairy operations.

Other concerns cited by opponents of the bill are that foreign investors would outbid local farmers and drive up the price of farmland, making it even harder for beginning farmers and existing farmers who need access to land. In Ohio, foreign financed large-scale dairies have caused major environmental problems, according to the Dec. 6, 2002, edition of the *Dayton Daily News*. The paper reported that at least five large-scale foreign-financed dairies had received environmental violation notices.

The bill was opposed by LSP, Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota Dairy Producers Board, Minnesota National Farmers Organization, COACT and Milk Power. The bill was supported by, among others, Farm Credit Services, the Minnesota Milk Producers and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

"We believe this bill is going to result in foreign capital building large-scale dairies in Minnesota," says Paul Sobocinski, an LSP Policy Program organizer who raises livestock in southwest Minnesota. "We'll be watching the results of this legislation and letting farmers and lawmakers know the impact it has on independent dairy producers and rural communities."

Nuisance law weakened

A provision was passed that severely limits the rights of the neighbors of poorly managed feedlots. When regulatory officials or the operator of a feedlot will not take action to correct problems that are harming neighbors, the courts are a rural resident's last option.

These bills all but eliminate that right. Before the 2004 Legislative session, the law had already provided generous protections to the operators of feedlots from nuisance lawsuits. Under the previous law, when a feedlot causes injury to the health and safety of neighbors, it is not exempt from nuisance suits. The changes that passed in May undo that and exempt feedlots from nuisance suits even in instances where injury to the neighbors' health result.

"Large feedlots, like other businesses, should be accountable for harm caused by negligent management," says Sobocinski.



Sustainable ag help

LSP and other organizations that promote sustainable family farming are excited about provisions passed during the session that provide money for farmers to do on-farm processing, pasture development and environmental improvements.

Two provisions will be helpful to family farmers. The first, sponsored by Sen. Steve Murphy (DFL-Red Wing), dropped the interest rate on the state's "shared savings and loan program" from 6 percent to 3 percent. Because banks were offering financing at below 6 percent, the shared savings and loan money was not being used. Unfortunately, lenders are more accustomed to making loans for conventional practices, rather than sustainable agriculture systems that provide innovative methods for enhancing a farming operation and the environment. Through a revolving loan fund, the state program provides loans of up to \$25,000 to farmers wanting to make on-farm environmental improvements. An attempt by Sen. Murphy to give priority to farmers wanting to convert to organics was stripped by the House.

"This reduction in the interest rates needed to happen," says Ed Gadiant, a Pine Island hog farmer and LSP member. "The money was not getting out to farmers. Farmers can use this money for composting equipment, low-cost livestock housing such as hoop buildings, and equipment to handle



cover crops."

The second provision provides loans for dairy farmers who want to upgrade their operation via pasture improvement and on-farm processing, among other things. This provision, called the "Dairy Modernization" program, was advanced by Rep. Dean Urdahl (R-Grove City). Rep. Lyle Koenen (DFL-Maynard) worked with Rep. Urdahl to get the provision for pasture development and on-farm processing included.

"This legislation plays to Minnesota's strength as a great state for raising cows on pasture," says Dave Minar, a New Prague dairy farmer and LSP member. "California and other states that have gone the route of bigger is better don't have the pasture we do. We have to realize our strengths in Minnesota and support them if we are going to continue a family farm system of dairy farming here."

Dave and Florence Minar rotationally graze 175 cows. They add value to their milk by bottling it and making ice cream and yogurt at an on-farm processing facility. Three of their children work on the farm, which was featured on the cover of the May-June 2004 issue of *Successful Farming* magazine (www.agriculture.com/sfonline/sf/2004/may-june).

"Minnesota needs to encourage more enterprises that allow farmers to add value to their products right on the farm," says Dave. □

For more information on LSP's state policy work, contact Bobby King at 507-523-3366 (bking@landstewardshipproject.org) or Paul Sobocinski at 507-342-2323 (sobopaul@rconnect.com).

Citizen livestock task force formed

Four Minnesota farm groups have come together to create the Citizen Task Force on Livestock Farmers and Rural Communities. The task force will study the challenges facing livestock farmers and rural communities and make policy recommendations to state officials and the legislature. The task force held its founding meeting at the Minnesota Farmers Union office in January to draft its working guidelines.

The four founding farm organizations are the Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota National Farmers Organization, the Land Stewardship Project and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. The groups have invited religious organizations, consumer groups,

Main Street businesses and local government representatives to be a part of the task force.

The task force's working guidelines call for a strong commitment to strengthening the viability of independent livestock producers. The working guidelines also list a commitment to stewardship and meeting consumer demand for high quality, safe food.

To view the statement of purpose of the Citizen Task Force on Livestock Farmers and Rural Communities, visit www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/04/newsr_040224.html. For more information, contact Paul Sobocinski at 507-342-2323, or Bobby King at 507-523-3366.

Smart credit, smart farming

By Caroline van Schaik

It is worse than doing taxes. There's no arguing the pain involved in writing a business plan. But what happens if you put 40 farmers around some excellent food for 15 hours of hand-holding with the experts? Well, you get smarter farmers. Or at least you get ones better prepared to think about their farms as businesses and to put it down on paper.

And that, according to lenders, is something that 84 percent of their agricultural clients *don't* do. The Land Stewardship Project quantified this criticism in a 2002 survey of 530 lenders in Minnesota and Wisconsin (see www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/03/newsr_030826.html for more information on the survey). In response, the Lewiston and Montevideo offices of LSP just completed two separate trainings on how to write a business plan as part of the "Smarter Farmers, Smarter Lenders" work currently funded by USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program.

The push for smarter farmers and lenders isn't just a result of the surveys, and in fact, most of 262 responding farmers told us that external credit is less of a barrier to sustainable practices than farm policy and experience. Yet LSP's Farm Beginnings program has clarified this new and transitioning group's need for outside resources. That often means going to a bank, which points to the lender-expressed need for business plans. But as both students and a lender noted, business plans are not just for banks.

"Shouldn't I be proving to *myself* that I'm a good risk?" mused one student. "It's the same process whether you're using your money or someone else's," said Dean Harrington of First National Bank in Plainview. For some, stepping foot inside a bank was challenge enough. Said Erin Varney at the last class, "We came in [to the workshops] with a bank appointment this month, and that's not going to happen. We didn't allow ourselves enough time to analyze what we've done so far."

She and her husband raise vegetables

and perennials in western Wisconsin and were members of the Farm Beginnings Class of 2001. They have cancelled the bank appointment and instead turned back to the beginning of *Building a Sustainable Business*. This new workbook provided the foundation for the business planning sessions. It has just been jointly published by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and the Sustainable Agriculture Network. Its principle writer, Gigi DiGiacomo, was the lead instructor for the business planning workshops.

Most of the 40 participants were Farm Beginnings graduates. As such, they have been exposed to balance sheets, bankers, and the ideas behind "planning for profit." Several of them acknowledged that they weren't ready for more than that when they took their Farm Beginnings classes but that now they could have used 30 hours of training, instead of 15.

"I found out I was learning more than I expected," said one student in an evaluation. As to actually writing a business plan, "it's still daunting but I feel I've gained a better grasp on it," said another. Participants ranged from the landed to landless; some are farming today, and others have enterprise ideas that range from meat goats to heirloom vegetables with farmstead cheese on the side. A few

had business plans at the start of the workshop; a few more were closer to them by the end.

Students were introduced to business planning as both a process and a written document. Class time was a combination of lecture, discussion, and hands-on exercises around the particular topics of marketing, financial worksheets, risk assessment, and the actual parts of a business plan. DiGiacomo was joined alternately by a consultant in western Minnesota, Ruth Ann Karty; Wayne Pike, a southeastern Minnesota Farm Business Management instructor; Eric Klein, a Farm Beginnings graduate and workshop student; and banker Harrington.

While LSP organizers call business plans an important tool for the old farming toolbox, there are other implements of fine farming in store for beginning farmers, lenders and educators. The "Smarter Farmers, Smarter Lenders" grant is also funding credit liaison training and scholarships for Farm Beginnings graduates to enroll in the Farm Business Management Program, as well as field days, in-service training, and a Whole Farm Planning on-farm short course geared to lenders and educators. □

Caroline van Schaik is coordinating the "Smarter Farmers, Smarter Lenders" initiative out of LSP's southeast Minnesota office. She can be reached at 507-523-3366 or caroline@landstewardshipproject.org. You can read more about farmer-lender issues in the April/May/June 2003 LSL (www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-lsl.html).



"Smarter Farmers, Smarter Lenders" workshop participants discussed developing business plans for agricultural enterprises. (photo by Caroline van Schaik)



Hunger at home & abroad

By Laura Borgendale

When thinking about hunger in this day and age, people usually associate it with poverty-stricken children and families in Third World countries. The fact that there are hungry people in our own country, state and community is often neglected, as people don't realize that the issue of hunger is just as pressing at home. An Intergenerational Dialogue focusing on the problem of hunger at home and abroad was held May 5 at the Community Center in the western Minnesota community of Montevideo to raise awareness about this issue.

Sixty-seven people ranging in age from 3 to 89 attended this event, which was also the recruitment rally for this year's CROP Walk in Montevideo. The annual Chippewa County-Montevideo area CROP Walk was held June 16, helping to raise money for the Church World Service's hunger relief work, the Chippewa County Food Shelf, the Land Stewardship Project and the St. Martin's Fund.

The Intergenerational Dialogue, sponsored by LSP, Church World Service and the Southwest Minnesota Foundation, was an opportunity for people from five different generations to come together and discuss their experiences with and knowledge of food and hunger for themselves, their families and people throughout the world.

The generations represented at the dialogue included:

- **The Civic Generation** (people born between 1901 and 1931).
- **The Silent Generation** (people born between 1932 and 1944).
- **The Boomers** (people born between 1945 and 1963).
- **The 13ers** (also known as Generation X—the 13th generation of European descendants in North America, including people born between 1964 and 1981).
- **The Millennial Generation** (people born between 1982 and 2003).

At the beginning of the dialogue, everyone took their place in a "Circle of

Generations," with the oldest participant standing up first, and the youngest participant taking the last spot. The Circle of Generations represented the great range and diversity of people who had gathered for the common cause of hunger.

The people assembled at the dialogue brainstormed over 70 recommendations for action addressing the hunger issue. The group's main priorities were spending money locally to cultivate the local food economy while educating ourselves about how we buy. They also felt it was important to put a face on hunger through exposure to the struggles of the poor at home and in other places and to educate

people about the issue of hunger by being active in church and school. Finally, the group decided it was important to teach people how to cook and preserve locally grown food from a potential community garden.

"It's exciting to see the ways CROP can make the connection between world hunger and strong local economies," says Vicki Poier, an organizer for the CROP Walk and a dialogue participant. "We tend to think that poverty in other places doesn't affect us, but the same things happen here." □

Laura Borgendale works in LSP's western Minnesota office on the Farm Beginnings program and the Pride of the Prairie local foods initiative. She can be reached at 320-269-2105 or laurab@landstewardshipproject.org



Hazel Keifer, the oldest participant in the Intergenerational Dialogue, and Brenda Sanchez, the youngest participant, take their places in the "Circle of Generations." (photo by Laura Borgendale)

health. What Dream of Wild Health has discovered so far about some of these heirloom seeds says a lot about the wisdom of saving germplasm, the connection between good health and good food, and how little we know about agricultural plants. If the initiative is successful in saving and propagating heirloom Indian food plants, it will not only be an important accomplishment for Native American culture—it could produce benefits for our agricultural and food system at large.

The health connection

It all started with health—or rather the lack of health—among American Indians. Auger is executive director of Peta Wakan Tipi (“Sacred Fire Lodge” in the Lakota language). Tipi is a nonprofit organization that for 18 years has provided transitional housing and support services for homeless, recovering alcoholic Native Americans. Auger has long been concerned about the health problems that plague Indians—diabetes is at epidemic proportions and she is working with the University of Minnesota on a participatory study of asthma on reservations. In the late 1990s, she and others at Peta Wakan Tipi started discussing the connections between the fast-food centered diets of Native Americans and their poor health. Those health problems had not been an issue when Native Americans ate traditional foods, says Auger. But then Indians were moved onto reservations and forced to adapt quickly to commodity foods, which are high in fats and sugars.

“The elders tell us there is no division between medicine and food. It’s all a whole,” she says.

There is a long tradition of Indians being involved in farming and gardening. In the classic anthropological work, *Buffalo Bird Woman’s Garden*, Gilbert Wilson documented how the Hidatsa Indians raised huge crops of corn, squash, beans and sunflowers on the rich bottomlands of the Missouri River in present-day North Dakota. The book, first published in 1917, illustrates the sophisticated methods used by the Native American gardeners to preserve soil quality, store crops and even prevent genetic contamination.

Native American agriculture is not exclusive to the Midwest or Northeast. Since 1983, Native Seeds/SEARCH in Tucson, Ariz., has been working to

conserve, distribute and document traditional seeds that are adapted to the American Southwest and northwestern Mexico. So far, the nonprofit organization has 2,000 varieties of “arid-land adapted” seeds in its collection.

Peta Wakan Tipi was aware of the traditional connections between Indians and gardening/agriculture, and knew many families still had heirloom seeds squirreled away. Auger had a small collection of Indian seeds herself, and in 1997 she planted a few. Soon, through the kind of word-of-mouth Auger calls the “Moccasin Telegraph,” the message got out: there was a place to send those seeds that your family had been collecting for generations; a place where they would be safely stored and propagated. The seeds started arriving. Auger and Paul Red Elk (Red Elk managed gardens for the initiative until last year, when health problems forced him to retire) started documenting the information that came with the seeds—often it’s an extensive mix of family and agronomic history; other times it’s just: “We found these seeds in grandma’s house after she died.” The Network then took steps to preserve the seeds, storing them in a freezer in moisture-proof jars that are amber colored to block out light.

The gardens

On roughly half an acre of land near Farmington, just south of the Twin Cities, Dream of Wild Health’s five part-time employees manage four kinds of gardens each year. One is a “children’s diabetes” garden geared toward Indian youth to teach them about healthy eating. The garden tries to show kids that they can control their quality of life with diet and exercise. The Network works with Indian youth programs and housing developments in the Twin Cities to bring kids between the ages of 8 and 14 out to the gardens to learn about their culture and its connection to good food.

“Just because their grandmother lost her feet to diabetes, doesn’t mean they have to,” says Auger. This summer, Dream of Wild Health will pilot a new diabetes prevention curriculum in conjunction with the children’s garden.

The Network also grows a “women’s medicine garden.” This focuses on medicinals such as Blue Cohosh, Skullcap, St. John’s Wort, Red Clover and Bear Berry. Auger says a medicine garden could be an important part of recovery for Indian women, many of whom have little or no access to medicinal plants growing wild on reservations.

A “Three Sisters Garden” is also part of the mix. This is a plot made up of three traditional Indian crops: corn, squash and beans. The exact mechanics of the Three Sisters system varies from tribe-to-tribe, but basically consists of corn, squash and beans being planted together in a circular pattern. The beans climb the corn stalks, providing nitrogen for the corn, and the squash vines shade the ground to keep weeds in check. Ideally, a symbiotic relationship is created between the three crops, allowing each to thrive.

Finally, there is a seed propagation plot. “Growing out seed”—periodically planting a few of one variety to keep it viable—is a key part of seed saving. Auger says the Network should be growing out a variety around every five years or so. In reality, because of space and resource limitations, the Network has only grown out around 40 percent of its collection so far. One of the dangers of growing out heirloom seed is the risk of pollen pollution from genetically modified plants such as Bt corn. Dream of Wild Health takes pains to bag corn heads during pollination time, and to use trees and other plants as pollen drift buffers whenever possible.

At her kitchen table, Auger turns the pages on a legal pad that lists the Network’s seed collection. There are numbers next to each listing—they tell how many seeds are left of that variety. The numbers are sometimes in the hundreds, but mostly in the double digits. Next to Omaha Squash is written “25.”

“We have seeds we have not tried to grow out or plant because we only have five, or we only have 10,” says Auger.

But there are times when the Network simply must risk the fact that they are in possession of the last in a line, and carry the process forward of propagating the seed. For example, in 2001 they had seven or eight seeds of an 800-year-old corn that had been found in a clay pot in New Mexico. Paul Red Elk planted half of them. And waited. And worried. And hand pollinated. And watched for insect pests. And worried some more.

Finally, that corn produced an ear, and that ear had three kernels on it. Since then, the seed population of that variety has grown to a whopping 25.

“You pray a lot,” says Auger of such an experience. “It’s like waiting for a child to be born.”

Despite the stress that can come with stewarding a seed line back to life, Auger says she is inspired by pioneers like Cora

Baker, a Potawatomi Indian from Michigan who gardened in the Wisconsin Dells for some 35 years. She collected and saved traditional seeds of her own, earning the name "The Indian Seed Saver" within the Native American community. In 2000, shortly before her death at 94, Baker sent seeds to Dream of Wild Health. Through names like Brejo Bean, Trail of Tears, Yellow Eye Bean Six Nations, Seneca Bean, Potawatomi Lima and Black Turtle Bean, a bumper crop of history and culture is revealed before the seeds are even grown out. Baker wrote careful notes on where and when she obtained the seeds, as well as characteristics that really matter: "Seminole Speckled Butter Bean. Good tasting!!"

Auger is excited at the attention the seed saving program is getting within the Indian community. More reservations are planting gardens of their own and showing an interest in traditional, heirloom varieties. Dream of Wild Health has started providing "care packages" of seeds for reservation gardens in the U.S. and Canada, and gives advice on what seeds to use in which climate.

And the seeds keep dribbling in from far and wide about eight to 10 times a year. The Network's freezer is at near capacity, and it desperately needs a larger, permanent home for the gardens. Dream of Wild Health is currently leasing land from farmers Jeff and Mary Adelman. Auger says the arrangement has worked well, but the project needs a more permanent, larger home. And a permanent home for the plots would allow the planting of perennials such as blueberries and medicinal plants. Perennial medicine plants alone can take five to seven years to mature, or become "potent," which makes having access to land in the long-term imperative.

Three healthy sisters

The Dream of Wild Health Network is garnering attention outside the Indian community as well. Craig Hassel, a University of Minnesota food scientist, recently coordinated laboratory analyses of the nutritional value of the Three Sisters crops grown in the garden. He then compared it to the nutritional value of similar food from the grocery store. The Network's Arikara Squash was high in vitamin A and contained over twice the calcium and magnesium found in supermarket squash. The hominy corn

Dream of Wild Health needs land, farmers

The Dream of Wild Health Network needs a larger, permanent site for its various gardens. It's looking for someone to donate 5 to 10 acres. The land needs to be within a 30-minute drive of the Twin Cities so that the urban Native American population can easily participate in the project. The Network is also looking for interns and volunteer technical expertise. Do you have firsthand experience raising vegetables in the Upper Midwest? The Network would love to hear from you.

For more information, contact: Sally Auger, Dream of Wild Health Network, C/O Peta Wakan Tipi, 459 North Wheeler Street, St. Paul, MN 55104; phone: 651-646-8167.

growing under the Three Sisters system had half the calories of its supermarket counterpart, and was much lower in fat. The Potawatomi Lima Beans had three times more selenium than their supermarket counterpart (selenium is a mineral that may be important in preventing cancer and heart disease). These Three Sisters foods are all high in fiber and low in calories, which has implications for Indians who are dealing with diabetes and other problems related to obesity.

Hassel also had the Three Sisters foods analyzed for "antioxidant" activity. Antioxidants have received a lot of attention in recent years because some research indicates they can protect humans from the normal wear and tear of modern life. It's long been known that consuming fruits and vegetables with high levels of antioxidants is associated with lower incidences of cancer and cardiovascular disease. The Potawatomi Beans had an astounding 21 times more antioxidant activity than market beans. A follow-up study during the 2003 growing season found that other bean varieties being grown by Dream of Wild Health also tested very high in antioxidants.

Hassel, who is an associate professor and extension nutritionist at the U of M, says he was surprised by the results—at first. "Once I got over the initial shock, it made sense."

The researcher explains that modern plant breeding selects for such characteristics as yield, productivity, appearance, taste and ability to be transported long distances. It's only been in recent years that nutritionists have looked at the healthfulness of foods beyond basic vitamin and mineral content.

"You're selecting for something, which means you're selecting against something else," he says.

In this case, that something else that's been selected against may be overall nutritional value. But Hassel cautions against using studies like this to point to a single reason for the high nutritional value of heirloom vegetables. Is it the element itself, its interaction with other elements, or even the amount of time the food stays in the body that creates the health benefit? Is there something about the synergy of the Three Sisters system that creates exceptionally high nutritional value in each of the plants?

Hassel says this shows how little scientists really do know about plants and their nutritional value. The Dream of Wild Health Network is also a prime example of how important it is not to throw anything away—to save seed that may not seem useful today but could become quite valuable once our knowledge advances.

Auger is excited about Hassel's research, and this spring Dream of Wild Health planted more Mandan Red Lima Beans. Working with Hassel, Auger hopes to harvest 300 pounds of the beans and process them into some sort of food product, such as macaroni. The resulting product will then be tested to see if the high nutritional value is sustained throughout the processing. If it is, the next step would be a commercial product that could be marketed. Such an item may produce enough income to help make the grant-dependent Dream of Wild Health Network more self-sustaining. But even more importantly, it could get nutritious food with a rich cultural heritage onto the supper tables of Indians.

"Not every Indian is going to grow a garden," says Auger. "This is a realistic way to get them some healthy food—food that was ours to begin with." □

Interested in seed saving?

Seed Savers Exchange (SSE), founded in 1975 near Decorah, Iowa, is a nonprofit organization that saves and shares heirloom seeds. One of the resources offered by SSE is *Seed to Seed*, a guide for home gardeners who want to produce and store seeds on a small scale. SSE published the second edition of the Suzanne Ashworth book in 2003. For more information, contact SSE at 3094 North Winn Road, Decorah, IA 52101; phone: 563-382-5990; Web site: www.seedsavers.org.

Farm Beginnings

Beginning Farmer & Rancher Conference highlights communication on/off the land

The challenges of getting started in farming these days are daunting, and government agencies, nonprofit organizations and established farmers recognize that. Thus, in recent years a number of resources have been developed to help wannabe farmers overcome some of the barriers that stand in their way. During a rainy Saturday in late March, some 200 people from at least half a dozen states and Canada gathered in Kearney, Neb., to learn more about some of those tools: tax breaks, low-cost production systems, business planning guidelines, whole farm management strategies, credit options, networks for finding land being sold by retiring farmers. But perhaps the most critical tool discussed during the “Beginning Farmer and Rancher Conference” had little to do with tax codes, sweat equity or even farmland itself.

“Farmers have to crack the hermetic seal of communication,” said Don Jonovic during his keynote address at the conference, which was sponsored in partnership by the Land Stewardship Project, the Center for Rural Affairs, the University of Nebraska and the USDA’s Risk Management Agency.

Going against type

Jonovic, a columnist and author who serves as a consultant for family run businesses throughout the United States, said if agricultural operations are to be passed onto the next generation successfully, farm families need to start talking about everything from production goals to how much retirement income potential an enterprise should generate. Open communication goes against the independent, go-it-alone stereotype of farmers, but it is key, particularly when several family members are involved, says Jonovic, who has worked with farmers for the past 20 years. Some family members may have long-term aspirations for the farm that have little to do with its productivity.

“A child may not be interested in farming, but very interested in the farm—they want a place the grandchildren can go to,” said Jonovic, adding that, “If heart is just as important as economic return on

investment, that’s OK, as long as you acknowledge it and are aware of it.”

That communication needs to extend beyond family members to outside consultants and advisers, which can also be difficult for farmers. But getting input from outside an operation can provide a fresh, objective look at a business. And getting that input should be an ongoing process.

“Meeting with advisers is a process, not an event,” said Jonovic.

John Baker, who is the administrator of the Beginning Farmer Center at Iowa State University, agreed that communication is a commodity that is in short supply on most farms.

“Most farmers never talk about a succession plan—ever,” he said. “They talk about everything—markets, production—except the ultimate question: how to continue the success of the operation into the next generation.”

Baker cited an Iowa survey where two-thirds of the respondents said they would never retire or even semi-retire from farming.

Gwen Garvey, who coordinates the Wisconsin Farm Center’s Farm Link program, says communication can start with something as simple as learning how to hold a good “farm meeting.” For a successful meeting to take place, some pre-planning must be done. Family

members and others involved in a farming operation must agree beforehand on everything from who will chair the meeting and take minutes, to the time limit and whether it will take place at the kitchen table or somewhere off farm (see www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/homeec/cba11s01.html for guidelines on conducting a farm business meeting).

Transitioning outside the family

The comments of Jonovic, Baker and Garvey were mostly directed at farm families who may be dealing with the transition of an operation between parents and children, or other closely related relatives. But a number of the participants in the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Conference were people who are not in such a situation. There were young people looking for farms, established or retiring farmers seeking successors, and non-farmers looking for a way to pass on their family’s operation to someone who will be good stewards. In that case, communication is still critical. For example, retiring farmers looking for successors need to make it clear just how much of a connection—financial and otherwise—they want to have with the operation in the future. Remember that Iowa survey John Baker cited? Of the one-third of the farmers who said they were going to retire and in fact had named a successor, 70 percent said they were going to get at least 27 percent of their income from the farm enterprise.

Beginning Farmer, see page 17...



Some 200 beginning farmers, established farmers and others interested in where the next generation of farmers will come from attended the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Conference. (LSP photo)

“That’s an important thing for the successor to know,” said Baker.

For beginning farmers who aren’t going to inherit an operation, a part of communicating is getting the word out within the community (and beyond) that you want to farm, and that you have the drive and skills to make a serious go of it. Several states, such as Nebraska and Wisconsin, have “land link” programs that connect beginning farmers with retiring farmers. These programs can help, but ultimately their success is reliant on developing a working relationship that can be akin to marriage.

Loud & proud

Todd and Julie Stewart of Meadow Grove, Neb., talked at the conference about how, without any family connections, they got established on their crop and livestock operation. Todd, who worked as a teacher after graduating from college, thought there was no way he would ever get established on anything more than a “hobby farm.” Then, while he was working at a co-op feed mill, a retired farmer came in and offered to rent him 320 acres. With little more than a tractor, a manure spreader and a windrower, the Stewarts got their start. Eventually, through the Center for Rural Affairs Land Link program, Julie and Todd hooked up with Bob and Gudron Warrick and developed an arrangement to buy the retiring couple’s farm. Bob Warrick has long been involved in sustainable agriculture issues, which matched the Stewarts’ interest in such enterprises as organic cropping and deep-straw hog production. Bob also liked Todd’s work ethic. “I didn’t have an exhaust on my truck so everyone knew when I drove through town,” the 43-year-old recalled. “Bob would comment, ‘Well, I know when you got home from work last night.’”

The Stewarts are now working with a young farmer from Iowa who hopes to become a partner in the operation.

“I know the day he comes to me and says, ‘I want to go out on my own,’ I will have succeeded,” said Todd. “The mentee has become the mentor.” □

LSP belongs to the National Farm Transition Network. For information on an organization near you that belongs to this network, visit www.extension.iastate.edu/nftn/ or call John Baker at 515-727-0656 or 800-447-1985.



Dan Wilson (right) discusses his swine system with Minnesota hog farmer Eric Klein during a tour on March 26. Klein, a Farm Beginnings graduate who now serves as a mentor for the program, was one of several passengers on the “Farm Beginnings Express” van trip. LSP took the van from Wisconsin to the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Conference in Nebraska. One of the van’s stops was Dan and Colin Wilson’s farm in northwest Iowa. The Wilsons raise hogs without antibiotics using deep straw and a greenhouse-type structure. Dan is serving as a mentor to a Farm Beginnings graduate from southwest Minnesota. (LSP photo)

Farm Beginnings prepares for 2004-2005 session

The Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings program for 2004-2005 will begin classes Oct. 23. The classes, which are held approximately twice a month, will run until March 18. After March, course participants will have the opportunity to attend a series of on-farm educational field days.

As in the past, Farm Beginnings will continue to emphasize goal setting and business planning in its classes. But a couple of new twists are being added to the program. First, instead of holding classes in two locations—in the past they’ve been held in southeast and southwest Minnesota—Farm Beginnings will convene at one central location in New Prague, just south of the Twin Cities. Class presenters will be established farmers—that’s nothing new. But, thanks to the fact that Farm Beginnings is now entering its

eighth year and has more than 185 graduates to its credit—60 percent of whom are farming—many of those presenters will be alumni of the program. This aspect will make the program, already known for its practical nature, even more steeped in the real world of getting started in farming.

For information on enrolling in Farm Beginnings or serving as a mentor, contact Amy Bacigalupo in LSP’s western Minnesota office at 320-269-2105 or amyb@landstewardshipproject.org. In southeast Minnesota, contact Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org.

More information on Farm Beginnings is also available at www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_farmbeginnings.html.

Food Alliance at work

By Ray Kirsch

As spring turns to summer, work on Midwestern farms is at a fever pitch. But it's good work—promising work. The work of planting, of new births, of planning, of watching pastures green and fruit trees blossom.

And with these farms, Food Alliance is at work—educating the public and building the market for Food Alliance certified foods. This is also promising work—the work of shared marketing and outreach with the goal of rewarding certified farms for their good stewardship. Following is a rundown of what the Food Alliance has been up to, and what we have planned for the near future.

Retail partners

Our retail partner list continues to grow (54 partners) with the addition of two new Kowalski's stores, a new Coborn's store opening in Sartell, and



new retail partner Eastside Food Co-op in Minneapolis. Fall promotional plans are underway with long-time retail partners Coborn's and Kowalski's. Additionally, we will be working with Sodexo to expand the number of food service venues in the region sourcing Food Alliance certified products. For a listing of Food Alliance retail market partners, check www.thefoodalliance.org/mwwhere.html or call 651-265-3682.

Distributor partners

Food Alliance continues to increase its number of distributor partners. Russ Davis Wholesale, J & J Distributing,

Food Alliance featured in *Minnesota Grown*

Several Food Alliance Midwest producers are featured in the 2004 *Minnesota Grown Directory*. To find the producers quickly, turn to page 47 of the directory and look up the numbers for the farms.

The 2004 *Minnesota Grown Directory* includes a record 567 farmers who provide everything from fresh produce and ornamental plants to meat and dairy products. For a free copy of the directory, call 1-888-868-7476 or log onto www.minnesotagrown.com.

Malat, Roots & Fruits Cooperative Produce, Bix Produce, and Sysco Minnesota are all helping their customers source certified products. Food Alliance producers were featured at the spring Sysco Minnesota Food Show, giving us the opportunity to speak to many food service providers—restaurants, healthcare facilities, schools—about Food Alliance certification. Many food service providers are interested in supporting local farmers and through Sysco's Farmers Market Program they can purchase products from Food Alliance certified producers.

Blue Sky Guide

For the past three years, Food Alliance Midwest has been featured in the *Blue Sky Guide*, a fund-raising coupon book featuring businesses with an environmental mindset. The *Blue Sky Guide* has been extremely successful in promoting sustainable living throughout the area. Food Alliance Midwest is now partnering with the *Guide* to sponsor a new sustainable dining guide. This guide will identify restaurants that support local farmers and sustainable agriculture by, among other means, serving Food Alliance certified foods. The inaugural edition of the guide will be available this fall. For more information, go to www.FindBlueSky.com.

In the media

Public education efforts have been fruitful this spring. *Meet the Anti-Tyson* was a feature on National Public Radio's *Marketplace* in April (www.marketplace.com).



In 2003 some 1,500 Minnesota State Fair goers learned about Food Alliance farmers at a special "Taste Tent" near the Grandstand. Again this year Food Alliance Midwest will have a major presence at the State Fair, which runs from Aug. 26 to Sept. 4. There will be a Food Alliance booth at the Minnesota Farmers Union building, and a special "Minnesota Cooks!" event on Aug. 31 will feature food produced by Alliance certified farmers. (LSP photo)

Food Alliance, see page 19...

publicradio.org). The story profiled Oregon Country Beef, a Food Alliance certified cooperative in Oregon that's now providing all of the beef for 36 Burgerville Restaurants in the Pacific Northwest. Scott Exo of Food Alliance's national office was interviewed for the broadcast.

More locally, Food Alliance producers Pine Tree Apple Orchard and PastureLand Cooperative were featured in the latest edition of the *Mix*, a Twin Cities Natural Foods Cooperative publication. Food Alliance also garnered a nod in *Minnesota Monthly's* food issue

as a certification to look for, as well as *Mpls./St. Paul* magazine's special "Living Green" insert.

The *Minnesota Grown 2004* directory now includes a symbol for Food Alliance certified farms, in addition to a Food Alliance index listing. The directory debuted at the Living Green Expo, held May 1-2 in St. Paul. The expo drew over 11,000 people, and provided us the opportunity to introduce the certification to the hundreds who stopped by the Food Alliance booth. In addition, Food Alliance was represented at two Green Expo workshops: Jean Andreasen talking about eco-labeling, and LSP staffer Caroline van Schaik talking about the power of consumer food choices.

Where do those dollar\$ go?

The basic fee for Food Alliance certification depends on how much product you sell, but ranges from approximately \$400 to \$1,000 per year. At first blush, that may seem like a big chunk of change. But let's compare it to the expenses of the average farm in the Upper Midwest, as estimated by the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Annual Farm Expenditures in the Upper Midwest

www.nass.usda.gov/wi/misc/expendit.pdf

Expense Category	Average Expense Per Farm (\$)	Percent of Total Expenses
Labor	\$8,606	9%
Feed	\$11,394	11.9%
Fertilizers/Chemicals	\$14,686	15.2%
Taxes	\$4,471	4.7%
Livestock	\$6,394	6.7%
Interest	\$6,250	6.5%
Farm Services	\$12,933	13.5%
Rent	\$7,212	7.5%
Fuels/Machinery	\$11,600	12%
Supplies/Construction/Other	\$12,560	13%
TOTAL	\$96,106	100%

Basic Food Alliance certification fee	\$400 to \$1,000	4% to 1%
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EDITOR'S NOTE: Now this is where we could say something cute like: "Time to complete a Food Alliance application: one hour. Basic Food Alliance certification fee: \$400 to \$1,000. Commitment to attend State Fair as Food Alliance certified producer: two hours. Value of Food Alliance public education and marketplace development: priceless. There are lots of ways to spend \$96,106 and sell your products in an undifferentiated commodity market. For everything else, there's Food Alliance." But we don't want to beat a dead horse.

Help out at the Fair

Food Alliance Midwest is looking for volunteers to help out at the Minnesota Cooks! event Tuesday, Aug. 31, and to cover the booth in the Farmers Union building from Aug. 26 to Sept. 4. For more information, contact Jean Andreasen at 651-265-3682 or jean@foodalliance.org. Volunteers receive free admission to the Fair.

Producer services

Food Alliance Midwest intern Mary Kaye Medinger has completed several Food Alliance farmer profiles for the Food Alliance Web site. We're also working with Food Alliance certified producers to create informational brochures about everyone's favorite spring fruit: strawberries. Funds from a USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) producer grant are available in 2004 to partially cover the cost of Food Alliance certification for commercial strawberry growers. Contact me for more information about the cost-share grant.

The State Fair

As you make plans for summer, you'll want to be sure to attend Minnesota Cooks! at the Minnesota State Fair on Tuesday, Aug. 31, in Carousel Park. Last year's event with Minnesota Farmers Union was so popular that we're doing an encore. With more chefs and more farmers serving up delicious local foods, this event may become a regular feature of the great Minnesota get-together. You won't want to miss it.

Paying dividends

We're having a great 2004 so far and we anticipate our good work—with our farmers' good work—paying dividends. Those dividends will come in the form of education, market share, farm prosperity, consumer health and good food for a healthy future. □

Food Alliance Midwest Certification Coordinator Ray Kirsch is based in the Land Stewardship Project's Twin Cities office. To get your farm Food Alliance certified, contact Kirsch at 651-653-0618 or ray@foodalliance.org.

For more information about Food Alliance education and marketing work, contact Jean Andreasen at 651-265-3682 or jean@foodalliance.org.



Chris James talks about food with a consumer at the 2004 Community Food and Farm Festival, which was held the first weekend in May at the Minnesota State Fair Grounds. The festival was co-sponsored by the Land Stewardship Project and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Minnesota Grown program. Chris, along with his wife Susan, operates Fresh Earth Farms, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation in Denmark Township, Minn. For a listing of CSA enterprises and other farms that direct-market food, log onto www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html or call 651-653-0618. (LSP photo)

Food handling fact sheets

Through its work coordinating the Pride of the Prairie initiative, the Land Stewardship Project is working to break down the barriers that sometimes prevent local food from being purchased by local food service operations. In 2002, nutritionist and consultant Lynn Mader surveyed 25 food service operations and found that purchasers sometimes did not buy locally produced foods because they believed local farmers did not qualify as an "approved source."

LSP joined forces with the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, farmers and restaurateurs to develop a set of local food handling fact sheets. These fact sheets were made possible by the USDA's North Central Sustainable Agriculture Professional Development Program.

Food Handling Fact Sheets:

- ✓ *Sale of Shell Eggs to Grocery Stores and Restaurants*
- ✓ *Sale of Meat and Poultry to Grocery Stores and Restaurants*
- ✓ *Providing Safe Locally-Grown Produce to Commercial Food Establishments and the General Public*

To download these fact sheets in pdf format, visit www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html. For information on getting paper copies of the fact sheets, call LSP's western Minnesota office at 320-269-2105. That's also the number to call to learn more about Pride of the Prairie. On the Internet, check out www.prideoftheprairie.org. □

Watson recognized by James Beard Foundation

By Dana Jackson

Land Stewardship Project member Lucia Watson is well known for serving top quality foods produced by regional, sustainable farmers at her Minneapolis restaurant. Her menu changes weekly to take advantage of fresh foods available in every season. Watson is greatly appreciated by farmers who sell her their meats and vegetables and by many loyal customers who enjoy how she and her staff of 60 prepares them.

Appreciation for Watson's skills as a chef extended beyond Minnesota borders this spring when she was named one of five top nominees for the title of Best Chef Midwest, an honor given yearly by the James Beard Foundation, a nonprofit culinary organization. A chef from Chicago eventually won the award, but being nominated puts Watson in the limelight again and affirms what regular diners have known about the chef's skills since Lucia's Restaurant opened in 1985. Watson was named Restaurateur of the Year in 2001 by *Mpls./St. Paul* magazine.



Lucia Watson

Watson is an advocate for locally produced foods, and has participated in two LSP events promoting food and farm connections: she hosted the first farmer-chef dialogue in 2003 (see April/May/June 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter*; www.landstewardshipproject.org/news-lsl.html), and was one of the main presenters at a day-long Pride of the Prairie program in Morris, Minn., last summer.

Her philosophy is best expressed in an essay she wrote for the 2002 *Greenbook*, which is published annually by the Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Program of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture: "For me, relying on small-scale, locally produced food from a real, live, caring farmer guarantees me superior quality of flavor while supporting the land

issues I believe in. I propose that if farmers are stewards of the land, chefs become stewards of the table, providing food that is purchased and prepared consciously."

LSP Associate Director Dana Jackson spoke about "Stewards of the Table" at the Agriculture, Food and Human Values Conference in early June.

Stewardship Food Network

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

Some of the production methods used by the Network 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 contact information for the farmers so consumers can call or e-mail them personally to learn more about production methods, availability of products and prices. For a complete listing, contact our Twin Cities office at 651-653-0618, or go to www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html.

LSP periodically updates and makes corrections to its Stewardship Food Network list. If you are an LSP member who would like to be listed, call 651-653-0618 or e-mail cathye@landstewardshipproject.org. Here are the latest additions/corrections:

Southeast MN

□ Farm on Wheels/Cozy Meadows

Mike & Linda Noble
53288 110th Avenue
Kenyon, MN 55946-4330
Phone: 507-789-6679

E-mail: farm.on.wheels@juno.com

Web site: www.cannon.net/~farmonwh

→ Products: *Grass-fed beef, pork, chicken, duck, turkey, goose & eggs*

◆ Certified by: Oregon Tilth

□ Lively Stock Farm

Dave & Diane Serfling
RR-2, Box 176
Preston, MN 55965-9553
Phone: 507-765-2797

E-mail: dsdserf@yahoo.com

→ Products: *Pork, lamb, beef & chicken*

Western WI

□ Martell Eggs & Produce

Mike & Sue West
N7934 535th Street
Spring Valley, WI 54767
Phone: 715-684-3300

→ Products: *Eggs, fruits & vegetables*

✗ Also services: *Farmers' markets in Wisconsin communities of Baldwin, River Falls & Spring Valley*

Twin Cities Metro

□ Bad Axe Farmer's Alliance

Three southwest Wisconsin farms
Annake Witkop, Outreach Coordinator
E5221 Sag City Road
Viroqua, WI 54665
Phone: 608-675-3225

E-mail: rootsdown@mwt.net

→ Products: *Community Supported Agriculture produce operation*

□ Blue Roof Organics

Sean & Annie Albiston
14611 Manning Trail N.
Stillwater, MN 55082
Phone: 612-625-3598

E-mail: sean@bluerooforganics.com

Web site: www.bluerooforganics.com

→ Products: *Garlic, dry beans, herbs & produce*

✓ Volunteers/interns? *Yes*

□ Common Harvest Farm

Dan Guenther & Margaret Pennings
212 280th Street
Osceola, WI 54020-4113
Phone: 715-294-2831

→ Products: *Community Supported Agriculture produce operation*

□ Fresh Earth Farms

Chris & Susan James
6455 Oakgreen Avenue South
Denmark Township, MN 55033
Phone: 651-436-2778

E-mail: FreshEarthFarms@earthlink.net

Web site: www.FreshEarthFarms.com

→ Products: *Community Supported Agriculture produce operation*

□ PastureDirect Beef & Lamb

Three Rice County, Minn., farms
Phone: 952-652-2876
E-mail: info@pasturedirect.com

Web site: www.pasturedirect.com

→ Products: *Beef & lamb*

✗ Also services: *Northfield, Minn., Farmers' Market*

Opportunities

Resources

Good-bye cropland, hello pasture

There's little doubt converting a cornfield to a well-managed pasture produces environmental and economic bonuses, but how does one take that first step toward grass? "Converting Cropland to Perennial Grassland" describes economic considerations for making the switch, methods of establishing pasture on croplands, and how to manage established pastures. The report, produced by Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA), also features profiles of two farms that have

made the switch from crops to grass.

For a free copy, visit <http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/grassland.html>, or call 1-800-346-9140. □

2-year sust. ag degree

A new sustainable agriculture degree program is scheduled to be launched this fall at Marshalltown Community College in central Iowa. This will be the first two-year sustainable agriculture degree program of its kind in the Midwest. The "Sustainable & Entrepreneurial Agriculture" degree program, which is being developed with the help of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, will train beginning farmers, sharpen skills for existing farmers, and help farmers from Iowa's im-

migrant communities who would like to enter agriculture. The degree will provide students with experiences in producing and marketing agricultural products.

The college will hold a special event July 24 to introduce the public to the new sustainable agriculture program. For more information, contact Linda Barnes at 641-752-7106 or linda.barnes@iavalley.edu. □

Reefer unit available

Land Stewardship Project member Nick Jones is getting the word out on a refrigerated truck that's for sale. The 225.5 cubic foot box, mounted on a diesel pickup, could make a nice addition to a direct-marketing farming operation. For more information, call Kelly Biensen at 641-483-2286 or e-mail biensen@marshallnet.com. □



Safe Food Bacteria, Biotechnology, and Bioterrorism

By Marion Nestle

2003; 350 pages; \$27.50 (hardcover);
\$15.95 (softcover)

University of California Press

2120 Berkeley Way
Berkeley CA 94704-1012
www.ucpress.edu

Reviewed by Jim Koplin

When I was a youngster—I'm now in my seventy-second year—growing up on a farm in Minnesota's Ottertail County, I would stand by my mother's arm waiting for the cake batter to be poured into the pans—so that I could lick the bowl, spoon and beater. Now we are told not to eat raw cookie dough, cake batter, Caesar salad or anything containing raw eggs. Multiply this example many times over. Food has moved from the material that is ingested to fuel all the growth and maintenance processes of each cell of our body, and something each culture has surrounded with pleasure, to a "risk management" task in the kitchen. Only one board for raw meat. Wash hands after touching raw meat. Only use a hand towel once. And on and on.

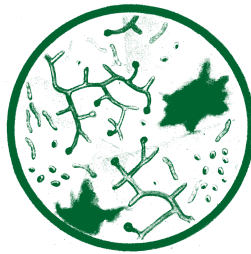
What has happened in these intervening decades? To help us understand, Marion Nestle has written *Safe Food: Bacteria, Biotechnology, and Bioterrorism*. This is a companion volume to *Food Politics* (see December 2003 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 20), in which she expands on the history in the previous book to focus specifically on safety, details the current circumstances, and proposes solutions for recovering a safe supply of food.

Because food is so central to the core of our being, perceived danger is difficult to assess. People will eat raw milk cheese and raw oysters knowing there is a small risk, but one everyone can understand. Many of these same people will balk at eating genetically modified food, where the scientifically measured risk is small, but where they feel the choice is involuntary and undemocratically presented. So there is risk measured in the usual

scientific way, and the more complex value-based risks which Nestle has labeled "dread and outrage."

Nestle's writing is complete, and fairly dense with detailed references for every argument. Here is a brief illustration from each of her main topics:

→ **Bacteria:** The contamination by bacteria is a problem of increasing severity. The growing and processing of food items has changed dramatically in the last 50 years in the direction of intense consolidation of production and processing corporations. Along with this has developed a vast distribution system where food travels great distances within countries and across borders. Yet the basic laws governing this area were written in 1906 [and amended many times]. What now exists is an intricate structure of agencies with conflicting and



Bacteria

overlapping duties. As Nestle writes: "The USDA regulates corn dogs; the FDA regulates bagel dogs. The USDA regulates pepperoni pizza; the FDA regulates cheese pizza." This pattern exists everywhere. These odd jurisdictions have not been streamlined because the giant producer/processor corporations like it the way it is. They can slip through and around the system to do pretty much what is profitable. Any attempt at change is met with lobbying and money until the project is defeated.

In the 1980s, the federal General Accounting Office found that current inspection procedures could not keep up with the faster processing methods. They proposed a change modeled after the techniques used to make food safe for astronauts. Called Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP), the principle is to have inspections all along the chain from production, through processing to storage (compared to one inspection at the end). Attempts to implement the plan have been blocked by political maneuvering to the present time. Here is where dread and outrage comes into play.

→ **Biotechnology:** Food safety serves as a stand-in for many of the "real" issues

involved in this recent entry in the politics of food safety—such as the consolidation of the world food supply in the hands of fewer and fewer major corporations. This is another example of the valued-based factors affecting people more than the scientifically measurable risk. By the way, Nestle provides an excellent appendix that gives the reader an easy to understand introduction to the actual theory and technique of genetic modification.

→ **Bioterrorism:** Mad cow disease is a much-discussed topic in the news today. Although the risk is low from this and other infections like foot-and-mouth disease—these rank high in consumers' feelings of dread and outrage. Food pathogens are difficult to understand, and people judge they are not getting the complete story from the government and the press. A result is that confidence is undermined in the entire system that supplies our food.

A political animal

The general conclusions are the same as they were in Nestle's *Food Politics* book: food safety, just as with other aspects of food policy, is in the main a political problem. The solution lies where it does for many of the problems we face today: In the preservation of our democratic institutions through grassroots political activity.

Nestle closes the book with a one-page table of suggested political actions to help improve both the safety of the food supply and our trust in it: Here is a list of the top item in each of the categories: **1) the food industry**—insist that the industry accept responsibility for safe food as opposed to "blaming the victim" by saying it is a responsibility of the consumers; **2) the federal government**—create a single food agency; **3) the public**—join consumer groups that promote food safety, environmental protection, and broader aspects of food security.

Those are extensive "marching orders" for all of us who are already busy. But anything less will keep food on the path to becoming an ever-increasing health threat. □

Land Stewardship Project member Jim Koplin has been a volunteer at In The Heart Of The Beast puppet theater in Minneapolis for many years. He recently became co-owner of the May Day Cafe, a hub of the neighborhood near Powderhorn Park in Minneapolis.



Membership Update



Steady stewardship

By Cathy Eberhart

If there is anything I have learned in my 15 some years of being connected with Land Stewardship Project—either as a member or now on staff—is that sustainability is not a quick fix. Stewardship is not something you do once and then forget about; it is an ongoing process of carefulness and thoughtfulness.

Unfortunately, the reality of nonprofit life is that fundraising is ongoing too.

We can all dream about the day when LSP is no longer needed—when stewardship of the land is practiced everywhere and thriving rural, urban and suburban communities recognize their interconnectedness in the healthy food that they eat. And, in the ideal world, citizens will be integrally involved in all decisions that affect the health and well-being of their communities.

But until then, there is a lot of work to do. And that work requires funding.

Annual membership dues

Being able to count on the annual membership dues of our members is crucial. Membership dues and individual donations are the solid core of LSP's budget. The loyalty of our members never ceases to impress me.

Of the nearly 2,000 members that Land Stewardship Project currently has, half have been members for five or more years (one-fifth have been members for 10 or more years). This long-term commitment is invaluable. At the same time, we are thrilled to welcome the more than 585 new members that have joined us in the past 18 months. We encourage you to get involved.

Gifts beyond membership

We also greatly appreciate the extra gifts that many of our members give beyond membership. In addition to renewal reminders that you receive each year on or around the anniversary date of your membership dues, we also send out two special appeals covering specific areas of our work. Our most recent special appeal on democracy has already

raised over \$18,000—from current members and new and renewing members. Thank you!

Monthly or quarterly pledges

Taking one more step, several of our members have accepted the challenge to provide regular ongoing support to LSP via monthly or quarterly gifts through their credit card or checking account. Monthly or quarterly gifts via our "Stewardship Circle" provide a reliable, steady source of support that we can count on.

James Wellman of Minneapolis gives monthly through his checking account. "The work that LSP does meshes with my longtime interest in farming and stewardship of the land," he says. "I think that the staff and people associated with LSP are terrific. One of my criteria for giving is how well an organization puts the money to use—the proportion of overhead to actual work—and LSP satisfies that. I realize that the best way to give at a higher level is to set it up so that donations come in regularly and the organization can count on it and budget for it."

Bonnie Haugen, an LSP board member and dairy farmer from southeast Minnesota, also gives monthly. She had this to say about her decision: "I think

Land Stewardship Project is a worthwhile organization and by giving this way I could stop feeling guilty about putting it off from month-to-month. I believe in the concerns that LSP is working with and actually doing something about. The information they put out is having an effect. The staff really cares both about these issues and about how the money is spent. They are careful, efficient and conscientious."

Join LSP's Stewardship Circle

You can join LSP's Stewardship Circle by filling out the information on the donation envelope inside this newsletter. While LSP can accept pledges through both credit card and automatic withdrawal from bank accounts, the latter is a bit more efficient in terms of staff time and transaction fees. For this reason, we can accept donations as small as \$5 a month using the bank account option, but prefer a minimum of \$20 per month or quarter for credit card pledges. Contact me at 651-653-0618 or cathye@landstewardshipproject.org for more information.

By joining the Stewardship Circle, you will be supporting more than LSP; you'll be providing the fuel for a movement. As Bonnie Haugen says: "This is one group that is creating needed momentum to not let the water get dirty and soils get washed away, while keeping the people on the land and making a healthier environment for us all." □

Cathy Eberhart is LSP's Membership Coordinator.

Support LSP in your workplace

The Land Stewardship Project is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund (MEF), which is a coalition of 18 environmental organizations in Minnesota that offer workplace 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, call 651-653-0618 or e-mail lsplib@landstewardshipproject.org.

STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **JUNE to NOV.—A Series of Workshops with Howard Moechnig on Grazing Management in Southeast Minnesota** (see page 8)

→ **JULY 7—Organic Field Plot Tours**, Moorhead, Minn., area; Contact: 218-281-8688; kande001@umn.edu

→ **JULY 10—On-Farm Workshop with Howard Moechnig on Pastured Livestock Watering Systems**, Tom Scarponcini Farm, Lewiston, Minn., Contact: Caroline van Schaik, LSP, 507-523-3366; caroline@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JULY 14—Pasture Walk on Avoiding the Mid-Summer Browns**, West Central Research & Outreach Center (WCROC) Morris, Minn.; Contact: Dennis Johnson, 320-589-1711; dairydj@mrs.umn.edu

→ **PFI Field Day on Integrating Poultry, Grapes & Sweet Corn**, Kuntz Farm, Sigourney, Iowa; Contact: 641-932-3031

→ **JULY 15—LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day on CSA**, North Creek Community Farm, Prairie Farm, Wis.; Contact: LSP, 507-523-3366

→ **JULY 16—Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Summer Symposium & Farm Tours**, Canistota & Freeman, S. Dak.; Contact: 701-883-4304; www.npsas.org

→ **JULY 18-19—Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota ReUnion & ReCreation Celebration**; Contact: Mary Jo Forbord, 320-760-8732; mforbord@sfa-mn.org

→ **JULY 19—Hayride & Farm Tour at Homeplace Organic Beef**, Clearwater, Minn.; Contact: 320-963-3690; pclahr@yahoo.com

→ **JULY 20—Organic Agriculture Field Day**, Southwest Research & Outreach Center, Lamberton, Minn.; Contact: 507-752-7372; http://swroc.coafes.umn.edu

→ **Herb Walk**, Don Popp Farm, Hutchinson, Minn.; Contact: 320-963-3690; pclahr@yahoo.com

→ **JULY 21—LSP Policy Program Open House/Cookout**, Minneapolis, Minn. (see page 9)

→ **JULY 23—Annual Meeting of LSP's Board of Directors**; Contact: Jo Anne Rohricht, 651-645-6043

→ **JULY 24—Introducing the Sustainable Ag Program at Marshalltown Community College** (see page 21)

→ **JULY 26-28—Presentations on the Multiple Benefits of Ag Project by LSP staff & members at the Soil & Water Conservation Society Annual Conference**, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: 515-289-2331; www.swcs.org

→ **JULY 27—Gardening the Organic Way**, SWROC, Lamberton, Minn.; Contact: 507-752-7372; kronb003@umn.edu

→ **JULY 27-29—Upper Midwest Grazing Conference**, La Crosse, Wis.; Contact: Larry Tranel, 563-583-6496, ext. 14; www.wisc.edu/cias/uppermidwest

→ **JULY 28—PFI Field Day on Open Pollinated Corn & CSA**, Krouse Farm, Mt. Vernon, Iowa; Contact: 319-895-6924

→ **JULY 28-AUG. 1—Windy River Renewable Energy & Sustainable Farming Fair**, Little Falls, Minn.; Contact: www.windyriver.us; 218-764-2321

→ **JULY 30—Farrowing in Alternative Swine Systems: Herd Health**, ISU Farm, Newell, Iowa; Contact: 712-272-3512

→ **JULY 31—LSP Farm Beginnings Field Day on CSA & Draft Animals**, Wykoff, Minn.; Contact: LSP, 507-523-3366

→ **AUG. 5—PFI Field Day on**

Sustainable Row Crops, Livestock & Gardening, Greenfield, Iowa; Contact: 515-743-8412

→ **AUG. 5-7—Summer Meeting of the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (MSAWG)**, Lanesboro, Minn.; Contact: Mark Schultz, LSP, 612-722-6377; marks@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **AUG. 7—PFI Field Day on Creating Edible Perennial Landscapes in Central City Neighborhoods**, Des Moines, Iowa; Contact: 515-232-5661, ext. 104

→ **AUG. 9—PFI Swine Workshop: Am I Really Making Money?**, Fredericks Farm, Osage, Iowa; Contact: 515-732-5724

→ **AUG. 7-14—Flourish Summer Camp: An Experience in Arts & Ag for ages 12-18**, DreamAcres, Wykoff, Minn.; Contact: 507-352-4255; www.wmich.edu/tillers/

→ **AUG. 9—Demonstrating & Publicizing Organic Ag Methods in Minn.**, Webster Farm Organics, Foreston, Minn.; Contact: 320-983-2289

→ **AUG. 11—Pasture Walk on Irrigated Grazing**, Verndale, Minn. (see July 14)

→ **AUG. 16—PFI Field School for Weed Ecology & Mgt. Through Crop Rotation**, ISU Agronomy Farm, Ames, Iowa; Contact: 515-294-7486

→ **AUG. 26-SEPT. 4—Food Alliance Midwest Booth at the Minnesota State Fair** (Minnesota Farmers Union building), St. Paul; to volunteer at the booth see page 19

→ **AUG. 31—Food Alliance Midwest Minnesota Cooks! Event**, Minnesota State Fair, St. Paul (see page 19)

Stewardship Calendar, see page 8...

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



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