

# The Land Stewardship

Keeping the Land and People Together



# Letter

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## Putting the Rural Development Pieces Together

*What does it take to make an innovative economic development proposal into a practical, daily reality?*

By Brian DeVore

Second of two articles

It's a snowy winter morning in northwest Iowa, but the food is good and hot inside Firehouse 29. People stamp the snow off before entering the former Sioux City fire station and sit down at long tables. Around the perimeter of the cavernous room where fire trucks used to be parked are local farmers selling everything from grass-fed beef and pastured pork and eggs, to hydroponic tomatoes, garlic and crafts. Volunteers take customers' orders and come back with eggs, bacon, toast and other main-

stays of a Midwestern breakfast.

A man in his late 60s finishes up his bacon and eggs. "How was everything?" Candace Seaman, the hostess whose husband-chef Paul Seaman cooked the meal, asks.

"Wonderful," he says. The man explains he used to truck eggs, and was often shocked at the poor quality of the shipments. But the eggs he just polished off were top-notch, he reports. "That bacon was great," he adds, pausing a moment. "This is great," gesturing toward

the whole room. Seaman then goes into an informal, but informed, explanation of why the food was so good. As it turns out, the bacon and eggs were produced by farmers right in this room, she says. The former trucker thanks her, and wanders over to the farmers' market to learn more about the source of his breakfast.

This "Floyd Boulevard" breakfast, which serves 120 to 200 people every Saturday morning, plus around 125 more for special Sunday brunches, is putting a face on Northwest Iowa's food. It's part of a multi-pronged strategy to make local, organic food a major part of the four-

Driver's Seat, see page 22...



Woodbury County official Rob Marqusee discussed family farming and economic development issues during a Saturday breakfast at the Floyd Boulevard Market in Sioux City, Iowa. The farmers' market/local foods breakfast is part of a multi-pronged strategy to revitalize the region's rural economy. (LSP photo)

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## Commentary !?!?!?

### Renewable rural development

By Kamyar Enshayan

There has been a lot of excitement lately about the growth of the corn-based ethanol industry. In fact, the USDA recently estimated that corn used for ethanol will increase 34 percent in the coming year. The reason offered is straightforward: corn, especially here in the Midwest, is a resource we have in abundance. So why import oil from far away? Plus making corn into fuel helps farmers market their crop at a better price.

I would like to put these ideas in a broader context, hoping to better understand what is happening around us here in the heartland.

Economist Ken Meter has assembled data from the USDA's Agricultural Census and the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis for many counties around the nation to characterize the nature of commodity agriculture. For the eight-county area around Black Hawk County, Iowa, where I live, we have about 8,500 farmers who mostly raise corn and soybeans, along with some livestock. On average, from 1999 to 2003, these farms sold \$1.08 billion worth of crops annually. But they spent \$1.14 billion every year to produce those crops. That's a loss of \$62 million, every year. Most other

**Renewable, see page 3...**



*Illustration by Sean Sheerin*



Iowa counties are doing worse, even as we are inundated with images of bin-busting harvests.

During the same period, our eight-county area farms received \$173 million per year in federal government crop subsidies for corn and soybeans. By every measure rural communities are declining. These subsidies have not helped, because they are not community-building tools—they are commodity-exporting subsidies for two specific crops. Ethanol fits well into this picture.

Commodity agriculture is acre-based. It requires land, grain elevators, fuel and chemicals. A convenience store and a bar are all that's left in many rural towns. But a human community requires churches, schools, health clinics and civic organizations, and "modern agriculture" has no place for them. Most of the subsidies end up in more seeds, chemicals and machinery from the same companies that these farms sell their crops to. So we have a sort of company town with its token currency. And not surprisingly, these companies shape the federal farm policies that bring them the wealth. This is not something farmers alone can change. They are simply trying to make a living in an unfair system they have little control over.

In addition to this economy of loss, we are seeing soil loss and degradation as a result of harsh farming practices encouraged by federal crop subsidies. We are seeing corn fertilizer and corn pesticides in our drinking water.

#### 4-headed beast

In May, Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack signed into law a bill that is being touted as the most aggressive package of pro-ethanol legislation in the country. This measure creates a four-headed monster, a quadruple gravy train of ethanol subsidies. First, you have the huge federal corn subsidies that mask an economy of loss I described above. Then you have the federal ethanol subsidies to makers of ethanol. The third head of the monster is all the tax dollars the Iowa Department of Economic Development is handing out to build the ethanol plants. The fourth head is the one that makes ethanol blend cheaper at the gas station via subsidies to ethanol retailers.

It would be very interesting to add up the total annual subsidies our state and federal governments provide to make corn ethanol cheap, and then to think



## 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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how better we could have spent it towards revitalizing our rural communities. The idea that farms will be able to provide an endless supply of energy for a wasteful culture that demands more and more makes no sense. There is nothing "renewable" about it. It will take us back to more of what we have already seen—soil degradation, pesticides and nitrate in our drinking water. Live Green. Go Yellow. And erode brown.

Just like in coal mining company towns, questioning policy is not cool, and after a while people begin to internalize it and believe it. Corn and ethanol are sacred in the Midwest, and few lawmakers would want to appear unsupportive.

#### An economy of gain

It is possible to tame the monster. Look at what we have going for us: skilled farmers, the best soils in the world, community-minded people, sunshine and excellent rainfall. How can we guard these assets and build on them?

First, we already know how to farm without damaging the soil or polluting our waters. Farmers are out there doing it every day, and land grant research is putting real numbers on the viability and benefits of these innovative sustainable practices. There is solid data here to create good public policy for the nation and for our state.

Another much needed strategy is to expand local/regional markets for local

farm products. Farmers I know do not want favors, just fair markets. In my eight-county area, while farmers lose \$62 million annually, consumers spend \$500 million on food every year. Local food systems would reconnect our plates to their fields, our grocery expenditures to their livelihood.

Now imagine if only \$1 million per year of that \$173 million crop subsidy for our eight-county area were invested in strengthening the local food economy of our region. We would see more truck farms, more orchards, more canneries and creameries, more bakeries, more processing facilities, all meeting primarily local/regional food needs.

We need to be smarter, see a broader picture, and not fall for the pie-in-the-sky biofuels "magic bullet," ignoring all that we already know. We have lots of work to do to accomplish this. □

*Kamyar Enshayan is an agricultural engineer and directs the Local Food Project at the Center for Energy and Environmental Education at the University of Northern Iowa ([www.uni.edu/ceee/foodproject](http://www.uni.edu/ceee/foodproject)). He is also a member of the Cedar Falls City Council, and author of the recent book, *Living Within Our Means: Beyond the Fossil Fuel Credit Card*. Enshayan can be reached at 319-273-7575 or [Kamyar.enshayan@uni.edu](mailto:Kamyar.enshayan@uni.edu).*

# #2...

...That's the 2006 ranking of Minneapolis, Minn., in the "local food and agriculture" category among the nation's 50 most populous cities. The ranking was made by SustainLane ([www.sustainlane.com](http://www.sustainlane.com)), which annually ranks U.S. cities based on sustainability factors such as air and water quality, public transit and energy use.

SustainLane formulates its rankings using a combination of surveys, interviews and statistics. Minneapolis was ranked number two in the "local food and agriculture" category because of the high number of farmers' markets and community gardens present in the city. The city's farmers' markets were also lauded for accepting Women, Infants and Children (WIC) vouchers, enabling more residents to purchase fresh, local food.

Boston was SustainLane's number one "local food and agriculture" city; Philadelphia was ranked number three.

# Art Hawkins: 1913-2006

The conservation world lost a living example of the “land ethic” in March when Land Stewardship Project member Art Hawkins died while sitting near a lake he helped protect during the past half-century. Hawkins was 92. He is survived by his wife, Betty, three children—Arthur Jr. (Tex), Amy and Ellen—and four grandchildren.

While a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin in the 1930s, he was one of three original “wildlifers” to study under the famed conservationist Aldo Leopold, who wrote extensively about the “land ethic” and how working farmland could have a positive impact on the environment.

Hawkins worked with the Faville Grove project. It involved 10 farms in the Madison, Wis., area that participated in an effort on the part of Leopold and his students to improve wildlife habitat. Art was in charge of the Wildlife Experiment Area and he and other graduate students lived in a vacant farmhouse in the community.

Art and the other Leopold apprentices went on to shape the then-emerging wildlife ecology field in many important ways. During the mid-1930s, he worked with Leopold on wildlife research conducted in southwest Wisconsin’s Coon Valley, the nation’s first watershed-wide soil erosion control effort. In 1938 he helped design the first lightweight wood duck nesting box. As an employee of the Illinois Natural History Survey and later the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Art pioneered methods for counting ducks.

“Look at nearly any type of waterfowl management activity that exists today...and it’s likely to have been touched in some way by Art Hawkins,” wrote the *Outdoor News* recently.

But Hawkins didn’t limit his environmental work to ducks and geese. During the 1970s, he developed a church program that brought together parishioners with a common interest in the environment.

Art was recognized many times for his

work over the years, and the 2006 Rally for Ducks, Wetlands and Clean Water at the Minnesota State Capitol was dedicated to him.

## A Minnesota ‘shack’ experiment

In 1954, Art and his wife Betty moved to a worn out dairy farm near Lino Lakes, Minn., and started carving out their own version of the Leopold family’s “shack” experiment in central Wisconsin. Over the years, the farm has become a haven for waterfowl, songbirds and at least one pair of nesting ospreys. It’s the land ethic in action, and it’s taking place within a 20-minute commute of both Twin Cities downtowns.



**Art Hawkins, a consummate observer of the comings and goings of nature, is shown here checking his notes at the Leopold “shack” in Wisconsin.** (photo by Ed Pembleton/Leopold Education Project)

“One of the reasons for coming out here to Lino Lakes is I wanted to get experience with the government programs that were available at that time, like the soil bank setaside program and the pond development program,” Art recalled in a 1997 interview with the *Land Stewardship Letter*. “I was pushing these programs myself around the country and I thought I better have some experience with how they were actually working.”

Soon after they began rebuilding the ecosystem on the farm, the 35E freeway cut off part of their land. They lost a court battle to keep the land intact and several acres of hardwood timber were destroyed by the new Interstate Highway system.

When Art and Betty raised concerns in the early 1990s about a proposed housing project near the farm, the developer sued them for “defamation of character.” Such nuisance lawsuits, called Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP), have been used by developers to intimidate citizens and grassroots groups who may want to speak out on land use issues. But the Hawkins family didn’t back down, bitterly fighting the lawsuit for two years. The developer finally dropped his SLAPP. Even better, their struggle inspired the Minnesota Public Participation Act of 1994. Art himself testified at the capitol in favor of the legislation, which is considered one of the nation’s strongest anti-SLAPP laws.

Lake Amelia, a shallow, 200-acre state-owned body of water, borders one side of the property, providing habitat for loons and an endless variety of other waterfowl as well as shore birds. Like his mentor, Art kept meticulous records of nature’s comings and goings, and had listed some 200 birds, 36 mammals and 16 reptiles and amphibians on the land.

The Hawkins children have continued Art’s conservation legacy. Ellen works for the U.S. Forest Service, and Amy, who lives on another part of the original family property, is active in many local

environmental issues. Tex is a biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Instead of a traditional funeral service, in May the Hawkins family held a special prairie workday to honor Art. Participants got together to plant trees, establish prairie plots and talk about his legacy.

Said Ellen Hawkins during the memorial service, “Dad had a strong work ethic and a strong land ethic and for him to see all these people out today working to help the land would be to him the perfect day.” □

*See page 5 for more on Art Hawkins and his influence on farmland conservation.*



# Return to Coon Valley

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Art Hawkins' son, Arthur (Tex) Hawkins, contributed a chapter to the 2002 book, *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems*. This book, which was published by Island Press, was edited by the Land Stewardship Project's Dana Jackson, along with her daughter Laura. In his chapter, "Return to Coon Valley," Hawkins wrote about a recent visit he had made to an area in southwest Wisconsin where conservation legend Aldo Leopold had worked with farmers during the 1930s. In this excerpt, Tex describes the connections between conservation farming, Leopold, Coon Valley and his own father's background.

*By Tex Hawkins*

Having neatly captured the essence of the bureaucratic snarl and gridlock that continues to impede some conservation efforts today, Leopold proceeded to define what makes the example of Coon Valley as applicable today as it was during the dust bowl:

"The farmer is still trying to make out what the many-voiced public wants him to do. The administrator, who is seldom trained in more than one of the dozen special fields of skill comprising conservation, is growing gray trying to shoulder his new and incredibly varied burdens. The stage, in short, is set for somebody to show that each of the various public interests in land is better off when all cooperate than when all compete with each other. This principle of integration of land uses has been already carried out to some extent on public properties like the national forests. But only a fraction of the land, and the poorest fraction at that, is or can ever become public property. The crux of the land problem is to show that integrated use is possible on private farms, and that such integration is mutually advantageous to both the owner and the public."

The same year that Leopold published these words, he bought a worn-out and

abandoned farm near Baraboo, along the Wisconsin River, and set about involving his family in the restoration of the land and the chicken coop that became known as "the Shack." Since the impoverished soils on their farm had never been very suitable for pasturing cattle or growing feed corn, the Leopolds restored their farm to native prairie, woodland, and marsh.

Today, the property literally sings praises to the Leopold family every day of the year. Breezes whisper through the pine needles and rustle through oak leaves in the winter. Frogs and toads sing in the spring. Owls hoot on summer nights. Jays call and squirrels chatter while they plant the seeds for future pines and oaks each fall. The voices of nature tell us what can happen when Leopold's "land ethic" is put into practice on any marginal farm.

Aldo Leopold also taught ecological restoration principles to his graduate students in wildlife management at the University of Wisconsin. And during the 1930s, my father assisted "The Professor" while working on his master's thesis and writing "A Wildlife History of Faville Grove," documenting land management changes on a cluster of conservation farms just east of Madison.

These farms were homesteaded by the Faville family in 1845. Stoughton Faville's daughter Ellen married Frank

Tillotson, who eventually took over the farm, and their eldest daughter Betty married Art Hawkins, my father, in the summer of 1941. The ceremony was held on the family's unbroken prairie reserve, which still borders the Crawfish River north of Lake Mills.

About ten years later, my parents bought their own worn-out dairy farm beside marshy Lake Amelia, about fifteen minutes north of St. Paul. And for the past fifty years they have applied Leopold's lessons on land stewardship to restore ecological integrity to that portion of suburban Minnesota. Ospreys and loons now nest there each summer.

As far as I know, neither the Leopold nor the Hawkins farms ever turned profits producing commodities. But they did produce other forms of wealth and security. Countless natural blessings were shared among family members, while environmental and educational benefits were shared with surrounding communities. These benefits were locked in when my parents put their land under easement with the Minnesota Land Trust. The experiences that I had, growing up on a restored farm under the influence of Leopold and my parents, I suppose are what eventually brought about my return to Coon Valley. □

*For more information on The Farm as Natural Habitat, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_agroecobook.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_agroecobook.html).*



**Over the years, the Hawkins family has made a worn-out dairy farm north of the Twin Cities into a haven for wild flora and fauna. (LSP photo)**

# Myth Buster Box

An ongoing series on ag myths & ways of deflating them

## → Myth:

Meat that's labeled "all natural" is produced in a significantly different manner than meat produced in a "conventional" system.

## → Fact:

The word "natural" may well be the most misused (and misunderstood) term in U.S. food labeling. Major companies like Tyson and Smithfield are quite fond of using the term. In the Midwest, Gold'n Plump chicken, which has its birds raised in confinement systems on contract farms in Minnesota and Wisconsin, has been using clever advertisements, billboards and its website to promote its product as "natural" and containing "no added hormones."

Such claims are perfectly legal, but more than a little confusing to the average consumer. According to the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, "natural" can be used on a label as long as a product does not "contain any artificial flavor or flavoring, coloring ingredient, chemical preservative or any other artificial or synthetic ingredient; and the product and its ingredients are not more than minimally processed (ground, for example)."

Under these guidelines, Smithfield can legally claim its pork chops are "all natural," but that tells consumers nothing about the company's use of antibiotics, or its reputation as one of the largest agricultural polluters in the country, for that matter. Tyson's all natural "Fresh Family Roaster" may contain no artificial flavor, but such labeling language provides no background on the poultry giant's run-ins with the U.S. Justice Department (see page 29).

"No added hormones" is also a misleading term to use on meat labels. In fact,

it has not been legal to use hormones in U.S. pork and poultry production for several years. A "no added hormones" claim for pork and chicken is legal as long as it's followed by a statement that federal regulations prohibit the use of hormones, but sometimes that disclaimer is in a squint-inducing type. Saying a chicken breast contains "no added hormones" is a little like marketing cotton as being produced "without the use of slave labor."

So what's a busy consumer to do? The ideal situation is to buy food products such as meat straight from local farmers who can answer direct questions about their production practices. That's not always possible, of course. Looking for products that are cer-

[www.foodalliance.org/midwest/index.html](http://www.foodalliance.org/midwest/index.html).

The Land Stewardship Project's Stewardship Food Network lists farmers who direct-market meat and other products to consumers. The latest list is in the Jan./Feb./March 2006 *Land Stewardship Letter*. Free copies are available in the Land Stewardship Project's various offices, or by visiting [www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-mail.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-mail.html).

The Consumers Union has developed a user-friendly website ([www.eco-labels.org](http://www.eco-labels.org)) that allows consumers to check on the credibility of 137 "green" product labels, including the Food Alli-



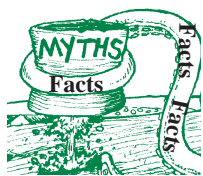
A billboard for Gold'n Plump chicken touted the "natural" nature of the company's product recently. According to USDA specifications, the word "natural" mostly refers to the processing and packaging of food such as pork and poultry. (LSP photo)

tified by a third-party agency is the next best thing. Food Alliance Midwest and Certified Organic are well-established certification systems that utilize stringent standards to make sure consumers are getting what they think they are getting.

## → More information:

Check out the Food Alliance Midwest's criteria for livestock production at

[www.eco-labels.org](http://www.eco-labels.org). The website allows people to learn more about products that are eco-labeled compared to those that are conventionally farmed or produced. Consumers can also compare labels quickly with a shorthand report card that can be printed out and used while shopping.



## Myth Busters series now on the Internet

The *Land Stewardship Letter's* popular *Myth Buster's* series is now available on our website. You can download pdf versions at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-myth.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-myth.html). For information on obtaining paper copies of the series, contact Brian DeVore at 612-729-6294 or [bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org). □





## Strength in numbers

*2 recent studies make the argument for ag systems based on biodiversity*

### Organic farming's tight hold on nitrogen

It's no surprise health-conscious consumers will vouch for the personal benefits they derive from organic farming systems. No chemicals in the production system means no chemicals on their supper table. It also means fewer chemicals in the general environment.

However, that's not to say organic farming systems don't have the potential to contribute to some forms of pollution. For example, concerns have been raised in recent years that the livestock manure and other forms of non-petroleum based fertilizer treatments organic farmers use could still find their way into local streams and lakes, causing contamination problems. Of particular concern is nitrogen, a key plant nutrient that's found in conventional fertilizers as well as organic sources of fertility. Nitrogen has a nasty reputation for not staying in one

place, often leaching down through topsoil during heavy rainfalls. It can find its way into underground drainage pipes, called tile lines, which eventually empty into streams and rivers. Runaway Midwestern nitrogen has been blamed for a myriad of water pollution and human health problems, including the "Dead Zone" in the Gulf of Mexico. To a Louisiana shrimper whose livelihood has been destroyed by agricultural pollution, it doesn't matter if the nitrogen came from manure or anhydrous ammonia.

But one recent study shows that the use of the kind of diverse cropping systems required for organic production keep nitrogen right where it's supposed to be: in the field. During three growing seasons, University of Minnesota researchers at the Southwest Research and Outreach Center in Lamberton measured the amount of nitrogen flowing

from the tile lines that drained two fields: one organic, one conventional. Both the conventional and organic fields grew the mainstay crops of corn and soybeans. But the organic system also rotated in small grains such as buckwheat, rye and flax, as well as hairy vetch and alfalfa hay.

The conventional system used anhydrous ammonia as the source of nitrogen fertilizer, while the organic land received treatments of beef and hog manure. Legumes such as alfalfa were also plowed into the soil as a source of fertilizer in the organic system. No matter what the nature of the fertilizer, the same amount of nitrogen was made available to the two fields during the three-year study period.

The results were dramatic, according to Jeff Strock, a soil scientist who did the research with Kari Rolf. In 2004, for example, 38 pounds of nitrogen flowed out of the conventional field's tile drainage line, while the organic plot hung onto all but eight pounds of its nitrogen. The federal drinking water standard for nitrogen in water is 10 parts per million. Every year of the study, the conventional field's drainage water exceeded that standard. Its organic counterpart was below the standard the entire time.

Why was the organic field so reticent to give up its nitrogen? It comes down to

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**Organic**, see page 8...

### Making a mass of grass hardier

The study described above shows a key environmental benefit of having a diverse set of annual crops planted on the land. But what if the plant system that's present is a perennial that grows back year after year? Just having something present on the soil, such as alfalfa hay, 12 months of the year, year-after-year is an ecological plus from the get-go. But a study released in June shows that a highly diverse stand of perennial plants is much more stable and resilient over the long haul. The result is a more productive grassland system that can generate massive amounts of biomass for harvest, as well as numerous environmental benefits.

For a decade, researchers at the University of Minnesota's Cedar Creek experimental ecological reserve studied the effects of increasing biodiversity on plantings of grass. The study plots varied in diversity from just one species of grass up to 16 different species. The results,

which were reported in the June 1 edition of the scientific journal *Nature* ([www.nature.com](http://www.nature.com)), are a good argument for increased biodiversity: on average, the plots with the highest diversity were much more stable and resilient than monocultural plots. In other words, these diverse plots were much better able to withstand what nature tossed at them: adverse weather, pests and disease.

And a more stable plant system means in the long term a more productive plant system. From 2001 to 2005, for example, plots containing 16 species had, on average, 180 percent more biomass than monocultural plots.

David Tilman, a University of Minnesota ecologist and one of the authors of the study, says this particular study stopped at 16 species, so it's not clear at what point, if any, biodiversity stops being a benefit in a grassland system.

That more varieties of plants in one place make a more productive patch of

land overall may come as a surprise to anyone who associates increased biodiversity with an outbreak of weeds decimating a crop field or garden. An acre of corn—an annual row crop harvested for its grain—is quite different from a patch of perennial plants that measure productivity in terms of biomass. Row-crop agriculture's drive to optimize yields of specific commodities can't tolerate a system that produces something as general as "biomass." Weeds may add diversity—and thus biomass—to a grain field, but they can also dramatically reduce the bushels of wheat, corn or soybeans produced on that acreage.

But in terms of biomass production, the Cedar Creek results make sense. If you have a plot of land planted to all the same species of perennial plants, they will all react to, let's say, dry weather in the same way. What if that species is not drought tolerant? In a season of adequate moisture, all the plants in the plot thrive.

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**Biomass**, see page 8...

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**...Organic, from page 7**

how much water leaves the land after a heavy rain or snowmelt. It's no accident that the organic field's drainpipe produced 41 percent less water than the conventional plot's tile line outlet. Strock says the organic system has much higher soil quality—it's full of microorganisms and other elements that often get destroyed in a chemical-intensive cropping system. Higher quality soil is much healthier hydrologically—in other words, it can better handle and hang onto water. The organic cropping system used forages and small grains in the rotation, plant systems that slow down water movement and reduce surface runoff, giving water a chance to percolate slowly down through the soil profile.

Strock is hesitant to credit the organic system per-se for the lower amounts of nitrogen pollution. He says that similar results could perhaps be gotten in a system using conventional chemical fertilizer if that system also utilized diverse resource conserving crop rotations such as small grains and alfalfa.

"It's not that organic is better...what's important is the cropping diversification," says Strock. "If you've got cropping system diversity, then you've got improved water quality."

But premium prices paid for organic

crops provide a major incentive for farmers to go to the extra work of establishing a diverse cropping system. To be certified organic, farmers must utilize diverse cropping systems to naturally break up pest cycles, build up soil and protect the land from erosion. A farm field that doesn't grow corn and soybeans exclusively will not produce as much of what the market, and the government, pays farmers to raise. Farmers often express frustration at the lack of a profitable market for environ-

mentally friendly crops such as oats, or, in areas lacking livestock, even alfalfa hay. Organic premiums help deal with that frustration financially, even at a land grant research station.

"We earn a lot that pays our light bill off our organic acres," says Strock. □

*For more on the organic crop studies at the Southwest Research and Outreach Center, visit [www.organicecology.umn.edu](http://www.organicecology.umn.edu) or call 507-752-7372.*



**Minnesota organic farmer Martin Diffley checks on a stand of hairy vetch, a legume that provides a chemical-free source of fertility while protecting the soil.** (photo by Nick Lethart)

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**...Biomass, from page 7**

And when the rains stop, all the plants suffer. Such a lack of diversity exposes that plot to extremes in productivity—it's feast or famine time. In a highly diverse situation, individual plants may suffer depending on the weather that year, but the plot as a whole does well. It's a plant's version of teamwork.

The increased biomass that results from all that teamwork also produces another important ecological service: it helps the soil trap and store significant amounts of carbon. At Cedar Creek, the most diverse plots trapped roughly a half-ton of carbon per acre, whereas the monocultural stands of grass stored almost no net carbon. Trapping carbon in soil is seen as a major tool for dealing with the greenhouse gas/global climate change problem.

The Cedar Creek study results come at a critical time in the debate over what ecosystem "services" perennial plant systems can provide human beings.

Increasingly energy experts are looking to perennial plant systems as sources of cellulosic biofuels. It's hoped that such renewable sources of energy will help wean the U.S. off of fossil fuels, while cleaning up the air. The federal government is currently pushing switchgrass as one source of a renewable biofuel. But Tilman and other ecologists are concerned that turning over vast expanses of land to monocultures of plants such as switchgrass will lead to pest problems, loss of wildlife habitat, less trapped carbon and all the other ills associated with lack of biodiversity.

Tilman recently spoke about his study at "Feeding Ourselves in the Future: A Journalist's Workshop on the Science and Policy of Food," which was sponsored by the Minnesota Journalism Center and the University of Minnesota's Ecosystem Science and Sustainability Initiative. He foresees a time when highly diverse grassland plantings could serve as sources of biofuel. Farmers would harvest the biomass in the fall and it would be hauled to local processing

plants. An efficient method for compacting and transporting the hay would need to be developed. But the ecologist says such a system would not be all that different from how the prairie ecosystem operated before European settlement: fires in the autumn would take off the mature biomass, laying the groundwork for new growth the following spring.

Tilman also likes the idea that highly diverse grasslands could serve as stable sources of feed for ruminant animals, which are very efficient at turning biomass into food. It's another example of how agriculture can be the low-cost provider of ecological services like soil and water protection, while producing food and fuel for a growing world. More agricultural solutions are needed that deal with some of society's biggest demands on the ecosystem, says Tilman.

"The two largest global human environmental impacts come from our need for food and energy." □

*For more on research at Cedar Creek, see [www.lter.umn.edu](http://www.lter.umn.edu).*



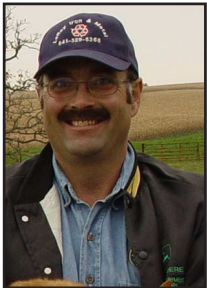
Scholarship Fund” to:

**Dave Serfling Memorial  
Scholarship Fund  
Niman Ranch Pork Co.  
2551 Eagle Avenue  
Thornton, IA 50479**

Details are at [www.nimanranch.com](http://www.nimanranch.com).  
For more on Dave Serfling, see the  
Jan./Feb./March 2006 *Land Stewardship  
Letter*, or visit [www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/06/newsr\\_060109.htm](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/06/newsr_060109.htm). □

## Dave Serfling Scholarship Fund created

Niman Ranch Pork Company has set up a scholarship fund in memory of Dave Serfling, a Land Stewardship Project member who was killed in January in an automobile accident.



**Dave Serfling**

Serfling was a founding member of the Niman Ranch Pork Company, which produces pork humanely and without antibiotics using deep straw, pasture and other sustainable systems. A mentor

to many of Niman’s farmers, Serfling frequently advised them on how to improve the quality of their hogs, and provided his own hogs as the genetic foundation for many new Niman Ranch herds. In 2005, Serfling was recognized by Niman for his family’s high quality pork.

The scholarship will be presented annually. Niman hopes to award between \$500 to \$1,000 each year, with the help of contributions. The scholarship will be given to a student pursuing a degree in sustainable agriculture and/or related to a Niman Ranch farmer.

If you are interested in contributing to the scholarship fund, send a check payable to “Dave Serfling Memorial

## See you at the Fair!

If you’re attending the Minnesota State Fair in Saint Paul this year (Aug. 24 to Sept. 4), make sure to stop by the new Eco-Experience at the Progress Center building. Part of the Eco-Experience will be devoted to food and agriculture, and the Land Stewardship Project will be present during one of the days of the exhibit. In fact, if you would like to volunteer to work at the LSP display, contact our White Bear Lake office at 651-653-0618.

See page 27 for details on the Minnesota Cooks event Aug. 29 at the Fair. □

Chris James of Fresh Earth Farms talked about Community Supported Agriculture with interested eaters during the Community Food and Farm Festival in early May. Fresh Earth was one of 16 operations that participated in this year’s Festival, which was held as part of the Living Green Expo at the Minnesota State Fair Grounds. The Expo ([www.livinggreen.org](http://www.livinggreen.org)) is an annual event that highlights options and ideas for sustainable living.

During the past eight years, the Community Food and Farm Festival has evolved into a prime opportunity for consumers to learn more about sustainable practices and meet farmers who are direct-marketing produce, meat and dairy products.

The 2006 Community Food and Farm Festival was co-sponsored by the Land Stewardship Project and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Minnesota Grown program. For more information, including a listing of farmers who direct-market food, call 651-653-0618, or see [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org), and click on “Food & Farm Connection.” (LSP photo)

## 2006 Community Food & Farm Festival





## Voices getting positive audience reactions

Audiences who see the 30-minute film documentary, *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women*, produced for the Land Stewardship Project by Cynthia Vagnetti, react the same way to certain scenes. They perk up and smile when the camera focuses on cows, goats, lambs, calves, barn cats and little children. And they laugh when Florence Minar explains that she was worried that her neighbors would be irritated by having to stop their cars and wait for the cows from Cedar Summit Dairy to cross the road. But they told her, "Oh, No, I try to get there to see the cows cross the road."

Audiences vary in their familiarity and experience with farming, but there's usually someone in every group who relates an experience during the discussion about buying directly from a farmer, either through a CSA or at a farmers' market. "I've seen her at the Saint Paul Farmers' Market," one participant told LSP volunteer Gina Johnson, referring to Linda Noble shown in the film unloading packages of meat from her truck at a farmers' market.

LSP volunteers have been presenting the *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women* program in churches and food co-ops, mostly in the Twin Cities area.

Volunteers who live in or near the Minnesota communities of Kenyon, Willmar, Montevideo, Gibbon and Delano are also available to show and discuss the film with church or club groups. Contact Dana Jackson at 651-653-0618 to schedule a showing for your group.

The DVD of *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women* is also available for purchase from LSP's White Bear Lake office. An educational packet that includes the DVD can also be purchased. Call 651-653-0618 for details. □

## Shh! I'm bidding

The Land Stewardship Project is planning to hold its first online fundraising auction in the fall of 2006.

If you have a product to donate or you know someone who might be willing to donate a product, or if you have any ideas for the auction, please contact Cathy Eberhart at 651-653-0618 or [cathy@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:cathy@landstewardshipproject.org). □

## Hunter, Long serving LSP internships

**Mitch Hunter** is serving an internship with the Land Stewardship Project's Policy Program. Hunter recently graduated from Deep Springs College, a liberal arts college located on a self-sustaining cattle ranch and alfalfa farm in California's High Desert. He has worked as a cowboy and attended the American School of Warsaw in Poland. Hunter is a National Merit Scholar, as well as a recipient of the Morris K. Udall Undergraduate Scholarship, which goes to students intending to pursue careers related to the environment.

As an intern, Hunter helped organize LSP's Family Farm Capitol Breakfast in April, as well as the Minnesota Environmental Partnership's Citizens'

Day at the Capitol. He also recently attended the National People's Action Conference in Washington, D.C., with other LSP staff and members.

**Rachel**

**Long** recently started her internship with LSP's Policy Program. In June, she received a bachelor's degree in government, with a minor in gender studies, from Lawrence University in Appleton, Wis.

While at Lawrence University, Long wrote Congressional case studies and conducted oral history interviews. She has also worked as a canvasser for the

Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group.

During her LSP internship, Long is working on federal agriculture policy organizing and a petition drive related to the 2007 Farm Bill. □



**Mitch Hunter**



**Rachel Long**



Land Stewardship Project member Dave Minar talked in early June about his family's dairy farm and processing plant during a tour consisting of journalists from California, Illinois, Missouri and Minnesota. The journalists were taking part in "Feeding Ourselves in the Future: A Journalist's Workshop on the Science and Policy of Food." The workshop was sponsored by the University of Minnesota's Ecosystem Science and Sustainability Initiative and the Minnesota Journalism Center. For more information, call 612-624-7723, or visit [www.cnr.umn.edu/sustainability](http://www.cnr.umn.edu/sustainability). (LSP photo)



## LSP summer celebrations July 19, Aug. 5 & Sept. 7

Land Stewardship Project's Policy Program office, as well as its offices in southeast and western Minnesota will be holding special celebrations later this summer:

→ The LSP Policy Program's 5th Annual Open House will be held on July 19, from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. LSP will provide grilled brats, burgers and veggie burgers, as well as refreshments. Bring a dish to share and a chair to relax in. There will be a brief presentation on LSP's recent work and a silent auction fundraiser. This is a great way to introduce someone to LSP. If you have an item that you could donate to the silent auction, or have any questions, contact LSP's Mike McMahon at [mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org) or 612-722-6377.

→ Former LSP staffer Richard Ness will keynote LSP's annual southeast Minnesota "Food, Family and Farming" summer celebration/hog roast, Aug. 5, at the John and Donna Bedtke farm near Plainview. For more information, contact our Lewiston office at 507-523-3366 or [lsps@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lsps@landstewardshipproject.org).

→ LSP's western Minnesota office will feature a hog roast on the banks of the Minnesota River at its membership appreciation night Sept. 7, from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. The event will be at Memorial Park in Granite Falls, Minn. The meal will start at 6 p.m., and there will be a silent auction to help raise funds for LSP's work. Bring a dish to share and consider canoeing the river while you're there. For details, call 320-269-2105, or e-mail [lspswest@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:lspswest@landstewardshipproject.org). □

## Farm Beginnings™ tours this summer

The Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ program will be holding two public tours this summer:

→ On July 21-22, there will be a tour of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) produce operation near the southeast Minnesota community of Rushford. Contact Karen Stettler in LSP's Lewiston, Minn., office at 507-523-3366 or [stettler@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:stettler@landstewardshipproject.org) for details.

→ On Sept. 9, there will be a tour of a CSA farm that is using a solar green-



A "Culinary Garden Tour and Supper" featured the Winona County, Minn., home of Barb and Martin Nelson on June 3. Nearly 30 people learned about sustainable landscape design during the Land Stewardship Project event. The participants also discussed the connections between local food and economic development. For more information, contact Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366 or [caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org) (photo by Caroline van Schaik)

house to produce vegetables during the winter. That farm is located near Milan, in western Minnesota. For more information, contact Amy Bacigalupo in LSP's Montevideo, Minn., office at 320-269-

2105 or [amyb@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:amyb@landstewardshipproject.org). □

See page 20 for more on *Farm Beginnings*.

## Kickapoo Fair July 29-30 in SW Wisconsin

In celebration of America's rural heritage and the vital role of farming in the country's

past, present and future, Organic Valley Family of Farms is hosting the third-annual Kickapoo Country Fair July 29 and July 30 in the southwest Wisconsin community of La Farge. The free event will also help draw attention to the need to attract young people to farming. The Land Stewardship Project is helping put on this event, and will have a booth at the fair.

For more information, visit [www.organicvalley.coop/kickapoo](http://www.organicvalley.coop/kickapoo), or contact LSP's Karen Stettler at

507-523-3366; [stettler@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:stettler@landstewardshipproject.org). □

## Community garden



Stan Barker of Speedy's Lawn Service tilled ground in May for a community Garden in the west central Minnesota community of Willmar. The Land Stewardship Project worked with various community groups and individuals to establish the garden for a diverse mix of residents. For more information, contact LSP's Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105 or [amyb@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:amyb@landstewardshipproject.org). (photo by Bill Zimmer, West Central Tribune)



## Minnesota Legislature: Attempts to weaken local democracy defeated

By Bobby King

### Local democracy stays strong

The 2006 session of the Minnesota Legislature ended in May with local democracy still strong in Minnesota. Special interests have long sought to limit local democracy, especially the powers of townships and counties to restrict factory farms. This year corporate agricultural interests spent big money on a series of advertisements broadcast on Minnesota television station WCCO that attacked local democracy. These ads, which ran before and during the state legislative session, failed to produce any results for its agribusiness and commodity group sponsors.

Once again a strong coalition that included the Land Stewardship Project, the Minnesota Environmental Partnership, the League of Women Voters, Clean Water Action and others worked together to head off any legislation that would weaken the powers of local governments to have a strong say in what type of development is allowed in the community.

Several bills were proposed that would have weakened community and township rights. One proposal would have dramatically weakened the powers of townships and counties to enact an interim ordinance. Interim ordinances allow local governments to put a temporary moratorium on major development. This is critical when a community is faced with unanticipated large-scale development such as a factory farm. The interim ordinance can provide a time-out on all major development while the community considers its options. Because of quick action by LSP and others, this legislation did not pass.

### Dairy tax credit

LSP and other farm groups pressed up until the end of the session for passage of the Dairy

Investment Tax Credit. This legislation, introduced by Rep. Dean Urdahl (R-Grove City), would have allowed dairy farmers to take a 10 percent state tax credit on up to \$500,000 of improvements made to their farm. LSP worked with Rep. Greg Davids (R-Preston) to ensure that the tax credit was eligible for improvements related to pasture development and on-farm processing. Despite agreement among a diverse group of farm organizations, Governor Tim Pawlenty, as well as House and Senate leadership, the legislation failed to pass.

### Beginning farmer legislation

LSP worked with Rep. Lyle Koenen (DFL-Clara City), Rep. Davids and Sen.

Gary Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls) on legislation that would allow a state tax credit for renting land to a beginning farmer. This proposed legislation would have provided a state tax credit to a landowner who rents land to a beginning farmer. The credit is 10 percent of the cash rental price for up to three years. The proposed legislation was based on a successful Nebraska program and addresses one of the biggest barriers to beginning farmers—access to land. Rep. Davids and Rep. Koenen worked together to get the legislation included in the House Omnibus Tax bill, but ultimately it failed to make it into the final tax bill. LSP plans to pick the issue up next session. □

*Bobby King is an organizer in LSP's Policy Program. He can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org. See page 13 for a Q and A on the 2006 session of the Minnesota Legislature.*



The Land Stewardship Project's Family Farm Breakfast in April brought together Minnesota Legislators and LSP members to discuss the importance of local control and proactive legislation such as tax breaks for beginning farmers. Sen. Jim Vickerman and Rep. Greg Davids, chairs of the Senate and House Policy Committees respectively, spoke about legislative proposals related to family and sustainable agriculture. The food was provided by local farmers and the breakfast was held at the Christ Lutheran Church across from the Capitol Building. (LSP photo)



## People power at the legislature

Paul Sobocinski and Bobby King are Land Stewardship Project organizers who work on state policy issues. Part of what they do is help LSP and its members get across their message about the need for legislative measures that are positive for family farms, sustainable agriculture and rural communities. Sobocinski and King recently discussed the results of the 2006 Minnesota Legislative session.

**LSL:** *Efforts to weaken local democracy—the powers of townships and counties to control developments like factory farms—seemed to go nowhere this session. This happened despite the fact that the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association spent over \$100,000 of check-off dollars on a series of highly misleading television advertisements that blamed hard times in rural areas on local democracy. Is there growing support for local control within the Minnesota Legislature?*

**King:** The support from legislators is growing and it is a direct result of the hundreds of LSP members, township officers and others who have let legislators know that this a bedrock issue for them—one on which they will not compromise. LSP ran a grassroots campaign that included a radio ad in response to the Soybean Growers' TV ads. Our ad featured Janet Hallaway, a LSP member from Dodge County who spoke from her personal experience. Her township used local control to protect the community from an unwanted factory farm.

**Sobocinski:** We have also been able to engage other farm and environmental groups on the issue. The Minnesota Environmental Partnership has made protecting community and township rights a priority for the last three years and that has been critical. Minnesota Farmers Union, the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota and the Minnesota National Farmers Organization have all taken stands on this issue as part of the Citizen Task Force on Live-

stock Farmers and Rural Communities. Together with these groups we made the case that the values that underlie more livestock on family farms and strong local democracy are the same—that strong local democracy is good for family livestock farmers.

**LSL:** *This is the third year in a row that there have been failed attempts to weaken local democracy. Do we expect future attempts? How does it look long-term on this issue?*

**King:** Clearly, weakening local democracy is a priority for the largest corporate ag interests and the groups that push that agenda—the Agri-Growth Council, the Minnesota Pork Producers Association, the Soybean Growers and others. They even formed a new group—the Minnesota Farm and Food Coalition—to put a friendly face on the same tired agenda.

We will continue to organize on the issue, because there is no doubt that there will be future attempts to weaken our rights. Every year our membership grows because of our work on this issue. These members are across the board: farmers, urban folks and township officers.

• • •

*“The key to passing progressive legislation that helps family farmers is engaging more and more people in our organizing and in engaging legislators.”*

—Paul Sobocinski

• • •

**LSL:** *During this session, LSP made tax breaks for dairy farm improvements and renting land to beginning farmers two of its priorities. Why is this?*

**Sobocinski:** LSP's State Policy Committee, which is made up of members from around Minnesota, decided these were key initiatives. We really wanted a piece to help beginning farmers. The initiative that we developed was based on a program that is working in Nebraska. Access to land is one of the largest barriers for beginning farmers, and while there are some programs to help them buy land, there are none that help them rent land, even though most beginning farmers rent.

**King:** The Dairy Improvement Tax Credit was an initiative of Governor Tim Pawlenty but as initially proposed it was one-sided and did not include on-farm processing and pasture development. We

worked to make sure that these provisions became part of the bill as it moved forward. LSP members played a key role in making the arguments for why this makes sense. Loretta Jaus, an organic dairy farmer, provided key testimony and information based on pasture development. Dave Minar, who processes milk, cream, yogurt and ice cream on his Cedar Summit Farm, helped develop the on-farm processing piece. This is how LSP policy proposals are created—by our farmer members. These proposals are grounded in their experience.

**LSL:** *It seems we came close to passing these proposals. What does the future look like for these initiatives?*

**King:** We expected that the tax credit for renting land to a beginning farmer would take more than one year. It did move further than we thought and was included in one version of the House Omnibus Tax bill. Next year we will start with more LSP members ready to work for this piece and more legislators aware of it.

**Sobocinski:** LSP pushed hard for the dairy improvement tax credit until the end. In the end, proposals like this were overshadowed by the push to pass funding for stadiums for the Twins and Gophers. The dairy improvement tax credit was just one of the many initiatives that got pushed out of the way as the Legislature made stadiums their number one priority.

**LSL:** *Do citizens underestimate the power of personal contact with their legislators?*

**Sobocinski:** The key to passing progressive legislation that helps family farmers is engaging more and more people in our organizing and in engaging legislators. Constituents are the single most effective way to counter the power of corporate lobbyists. Communication and dialogue with legislators is key. They don't hear from their constituents nearly as much as they should. And an affiliation with a group like LSP is key. When you go to your legislator and say, “I'm a member of LSP and here is what is important,” that's key. You add to LSP's power and credibility in the eyes of lawmakers. It shows there is a constituency out there. That's very effective. □

*Paul Sobocinski can be contacted at 507-342-2323 or sobopaul@rconnect.com. Bobby King can be contacted at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org.*

# Proposed grass-fed label released

*Comments on final label accepted until Aug. 10*

After three years of work on the part of the Land Stewardship Project and a wide array of other sustainable agriculture interests, the USDA has released proposed rules for how grass-fed meat can be labeled. The proposed standard applies to cattle, sheep and other ruminant livestock, but not pigs. It requires the animals certified as “grass-fed” receive at least 99 percent of their lifetime energy source from a grass or forage based diet. This is a significant increase from the original proposal issued in late 2002 stating that at least 80 percent of the diet be made up of grass and forage.

LSP worked through the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (SAC) to pressure the USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service to revise the rules, bringing them more in line with what livestock farmers and consumers were demanding in grass-

fed products. In April, a group of LSP farmer-members traveled to Washington, D.C., to, among other things, encourage officials to develop a solid grass-fed label, and to release it as soon as possible (see Jan./Feb./March 2006 *Land Stewardship Letter*, page 10).

Ferd Hoefner, Policy Director for the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (SAC), says the USDA deserves credit for listening to farmers and concerned consumers on this issue.

Terry VanDerPol, an LSP organizer and grass-based beef producer in western Minnesota, is co-chair of the SAC Marketing and Rural Development Committee. She says she’s very happy with the more stringent requirements of the proposed label.

“We are committed to raising our animals on grass for the sake of health

and the environment and we need a straightforward label that reflects and rewards those commitments in the marketplace,” she says. “An 80 percent standard would have quickly destroyed the market.”

However, the effort to create a strong grass-fed label is not finished. The public has until Aug. 10 to submit comments to the USDA on the proposed rules. VanDerPol says it is key that farmers and especially consumers send the government a message of support for a strong final label. □

## Grass-fed comments

Written comments on the proposed grass-fed label must be submitted by Aug. 10 to:

Martin E. O’Connor, Chief, Standardization Branch, Livestock and Seed Program, AMS, USDA, Room 2607-S, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-0254.

Comments may also be sent via [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). Comments should refer to Docket No. LS-05-09.

For more information, contact Terry VanDerPol at 320-269-2105 or [tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org).

## LSP at National People’s Conference in D.C.

In early May, six Land Stewardship Project members and leaders attended the National People’s Action (NPA) conference in Washington, D.C. The conference was a gathering of leaders from community organizing groups across the nation who for three days attended workshops, celebrated each other’s victories and took collective action.

NPA includes a broad diversity of people and supports neighborhood groups working on topics such as affordable housing, predatory lending, education, health care, immigrant rights and family farm issues.

During the conference, LSP members presented in the “Food, Family Farms and Environmental Justice” workshop. LSP member Brad Trom from Blooming Prairie, Minn., spoke about how his neighbors in Dodge County have been working together to protect their community from factory farm development and have stopped an outside investor from building a huge unwanted mega-dairy. Dwight Ault, Austin, Minn., area farmer and LSP member, presented on the importance of farm programs like the Conservation Security Program (CSP), which supports conservation on working farmland.

“It was a real revelation into the hearts and minds of those people in attendance,”

says Ault. “The conference proved that people of different races and religions can work together for justice and peace as well as get things done. It was a wonderful experience.”

Following the conference, LSP members met with the staff of Minnesota Representative Martin Sabo, who serves on the U.S. House Appropriations Committee, to talk about proposed cuts to CSP in the 2007 Appropriations Bill.

For more information, contact Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or [adamw@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:adamw@landstewardshipproject.org).

More on National People’s Action is at [www.npa-us.org](http://www.npa-us.org). □



Land Stewardship Project members and staff took a break from the NPA Conference to pose in front of the Lincoln Memorial. Pictured are (left to right): Mitch Hunter, Dwight Ault, Becky Ault, Adam Warthesen, Brad Trom and Grant Ault.



## The connections between erosion & eating

By *Caroline van Schaik*

This spring I had a conversation about the Land Stewardship Project's Stewardship Food Network and whether it really helps move our member-farmers' products. I use the list ([www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html#SFN](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html#SFN)) at work a lot and also, our farm is listed. Literally the next evening, we got a call at home from a southeast Minnesota resident who also was using it, and two days later I delivered lamb to this new customer.

Shipping food out of the area moves wealth and economic development elsewhere. Homegrown food eaten here means wealth stays close to home.

For an organization that takes its inspiration from the farm, this matter of food has run in the background for a long time. Yet southeast Minnesota LSP members recently named it out loud as one of four regional priorities. It's time to bring local food systems to the forefront.

It is a natural evolution. LSP's training of farmers and researching the environmental consequences of growing things dovetails nicely with helping everyone to another serving of the best of those products. This business of good food could produce more farmers to meet the burgeoning demand. It would mean jobs for the seed cleaners, truckers, and the financial advisers—among many others—needed to service this agricultural activity.

It should also mean cleaner water and better habitat for the wildlife and people in our midst.

Through the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture initiative ([www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs\\_mba.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_mba.html)), LSP and its partners have already shown the relationship between vegetation and water: the more permanent the former, the cleaner the latter. Our recently completed research in the Whitewater River region (Logan Creek sub-water-

shed) showed us how if farmers slightly reduced their fertilizer use and restored a modest amount of pasture, they would save soil.

What can we do with this knowledge? How can we turn it into cash for farmers and better fed and financed communities for all? We used to characterize erosion control and other positive farming consequences as the non-market benefits of sustainable farming. In fact they are very marketable. These are the public goods of agriculture at its best, the kind of multi-functional agriculture that global thinkers still insist is the only way of the



**A recent potluck meal at a meeting in LSP's Lewiston office provided members of the community a chance to connect agricultural policy and local food production. (LSP photo)**

future. But the thinkers don't know how to deliver these benefits, and in the meantime, farmers aren't getting a decent return for their wetland restoration or thriving trout stream.

In Winona County, where I work, this business of local food has the rumblings of great potential if it is built upon the same good practices that get us cleaner water. It could mean better water quality and an infusion of farmer-driven economic activity in a region in serious need of both.

More than half of all farm families in Minnesota receive government farm payments, which average nearly \$8,000 a year, roughly a quarter of the average net cash farm income. In some southeast Minnesota counties, the relationship is 50

percent or better.

But there is mounting excitement over local, "place-based" products that reflect specific farming practices as well as regionality and perceived healthful attributes. These are some of the multiple benefits of agriculture, too. So after years of research and presentations on the importance of fishable streams and perennial vegetation, LSP finds itself looking anew at this work.

We've articulated the need for public demand and willingness to pay to urge certain decisions about farmland management. We've hammered away at the need to measure agriculture by other outcomes than merely volume of product. "Multiple benefits" and "performance" have become accepted phrases in the agricultural vernacular. Federal farm policy offers the innovative Conservation Security Program as evidence of the growing priority placed on environmental outcomes.

These are clear indications of success in awakening the public conscience to the public good in good farming. LSP's work in southeast Minnesota (and elsewhere) is increasingly focusing on the idea that our daily bread and cheese need our attention—or rather, the farmers, processors, and distributors of our local bread and cheese need help finding one another. We find ourselves fielding queries along these lines:

"What's local on the menu?"

"Can you deliver organic carrots for 2,500 meals?"

"How do I prepare grass-finished beef for my customers?"

Answer practical questions like that and it becomes clear that an agronomic problem like erosion control is also an economic development issue. Thus the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture initiative finds itself maturing into the fields of food and rural development, with forays into energy as well. □

*Caroline van Schaik works with the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture initiative in LSP's southeast Minnesota office, and raises sheep near La Crescent, Minn. She can be reached at [caroline@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:caroline@landstewardshipproject.org), or 507-523-3366.*

# The dumping game

## A West African farmer calls for subsidy reforms

West African farmer Seydou Ouerdraogo sometimes feels like he's watching a gigantic ping-pong match between the United States and the European Union. At stake in the game are subsidies for crops such as corn and cotton. Such subsidies were originally set up to help farmers, but in recent years they've actually hurt producers all over the world, including in Ouerdraogo's home country of Burkina Faso.

"While they're playing, you and I and the people of my country are watching as it goes back and forth, back and forth," the farmer told a group of farmers and other rural residents in the Land Stewardship Project's southeast Minnesota office in April. "Reforms in subsidies would benefit first small farmers here in America. And if that reform is benefiting small farmers here, it's also going to benefit small farmers in Africa," he said, talking through an interpreter.

Ouerdraogo was in Minnesota this spring as part of a cross-country tour to get the message out that unlimited commodity subsidies are benefiting a handful of mega-producers and agribusiness firms at the expense of family farmers all over the world. While in the state, the farmer met with LSP members in Lewiston and Montevideo, as well as with regional newspaper journalists. His visit was sponsored by LSP and Oxfam America. An affiliate of Oxfam International, the Boston-based Oxfam America is dedicated to finding long-term solutions to poverty, hunger and social injustice around the world.

An increasing number of groups, including LSP and Oxfam, are calling for a reform of the commodity subsidy system when the new Farm Bill is written in 2007. U.S. farmers receive subsidies for producing corn, soybeans, cotton, rice and wheat. In theory, these subsidies are meant to help family farmers. However, a number of studies have shown that because of loopholes in the system, the majority of the subsidy payments go to a handful of mega-producers. One government study shows that half of all federal crop subsidies in 2003 went to farms with household

incomes of more than \$75,772, up from \$55,607 in 1997. Meanwhile, the commodity subsidy program punishes farmers who try to diversify into cropping systems that are better for the environment and add economic diversity to rural communities. LSP and other groups are calling for subsidy payment reforms, as well as increased funding and implementation of programs such as the Conservation Security Program, which rewards farmers for diversifying.

The downside to the current subsidy system was no news to the LSP members who met with Ouerdraogo in April. They've seen their local Main Streets emptied and landscape damaged as a result of the system. However, the cotton and grain farmer provided a firsthand account of how unlimited subsidies are posing literally a life or death threat to farmers like himself. Ouerdraogo raises cereal crops for his own family's food needs, but it is cotton that is their cash crop. They're not alone. There are 15 million people in West Africa that make their living off of cotton, and Burkina Faso is the fifth biggest producer of the

fiber in the world. Countries like Benin and Burkina Faso earn between 30 percent and 40 percent of their export revenues from cotton alone. The hand-picked cotton that comes from the region has an excellent reputation around the world for high quality. However, when the U.S. and European Union subsidizes its cotton producers to the point where they overproduce, it causes excess supplies to be dumped on the world market, sending prices plummeting. It costs about 68 cents per pound to grow cotton in the U.S., according to recent figures. But it is exported at prices ranging from 45 cents to 55 cents. In 2005, farmers like Ouerdraogo were able to sell their cotton for 45 cents per kilogram. This year they sold it for 35 cents. It's looking like in 2007 the price will drop another 5 cents. Meanwhile, the price of inputs keeps rising. Selling cotton for 35 cents per kilogram does not even cover the cost of production, and farm families have had to make some hard choices, he said.

"When your child is sick, you're afraid to send that child to the hospital, because you won't even have the money to pay for the medicines that child will need."

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Dumping, see page 17...



While in southeast Minnesota, West African farmer Seydou Ouerdraogo visited the farm of Land Stewardship Project members Mike and Jennifer Rupprecht. Pictured at the Rupprecht farm are (left to right): Katie Danko, Field Organizer for Oxfam America; interpreter Malick Maria; Jennifer Rupprecht; Mike Rupprecht; Ouerdraogo; and interpreter Colin Rusel. (photo by Adam Warthesen)



Families can't afford to send their children to school, and communities can't pay for maintenance of even basic essentials like drinking water systems.

Low cotton prices have also meant that countries like Burkina Faso can't afford to invest in the infrastructure required to process their raw product into finished items that the international markets demand. Currently, 98 percent of the cotton that is exported from Ouerdraogo's homeland is raw.

One option would be to stop raising cotton as a cash crop, and produce more corn, for example. But the farmer says that the same unlimited subsidy system plagues other crops as well. Corn producers can't even sell their crop to Niger, a large market for the grain, because it is flooded with cheap, subsidized corn from the U.S. and European Union. The Niger River Valley could produce enough rice to supply all of West Africa, but small rice farmers can't compete with all the cheap rice flowing in from Pakistan.

"So why would I leave one problem to take on another one? When I mentioned ping-pong, I was talking about cotton, but you can just as easily say agriculture in general," said Ouerdraogo. "Whatever you're producing, it's the same problem.

It's the conflict between the fact that our markets are open to agribusinesses and the large producers in places like the U.S., but the market here is not really open to us."

A trade system that was fairer would not only benefit the economies of rural African communities, but would save U.S. tax money. In 2002, for example, the U.S. gave \$10 million in foreign aid to Burkina Faso. But it's estimated that the country lost \$15 million that year because of the current subsidy system.

"Can you really say there is any monetary help there in reality?" Ouerdraogo asked.

The farmer said he and his fellow African producers don't want a handout; they just want a chance to sell their product in a fair market, and get a good price for a top quality product.

The World Bank reported that if the current subsidy system was reformed to stop the practice of dumping cheap commodities on the world market, the price of cotton would rise 13 percent internationally. Ouerdraogo said that could mean an increase in the price he gets of as much as 10 percent, to 50 cents per kilogram.

"Today if I was told I could sell my cotton for 50 cents per kilogram, I would be rich."

Adam Warthesen, an LSP Policy Program organizer, agreed that reforming

farm subsidy payments so that they don't encourage massive overproduction would help farmers here as well as in places like West Africa. LSP members and staff recently took that message to lawmakers and USDA officials during a fly-in to Washington, D.C.

"It's real important to have people like Seydou come and talk to us so we can see the importance of building a stronger, more progressive movement to reform federal policy so it's better for the land, better for family farmers and more balanced and fair internationally," said Warthesen.

"The results won't come overnight," said Ouerdraogo. "All I'm asking is that we figure out ways to work together so that the voice of farmers all around the world can be heard." □

*For more on LSP's efforts to reform federal farm policy, contact Adam Warthesen at 612-722-6377 or [adamw@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:adamw@landstewardshipproject.org).*

*For more on Oxfam America's work, visit [www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org), or call 1-800-776-9326.*

*To listen to an audio podcast featuring Seydou Ouerdraogo, see [www.landstewardshipproject.org/rss/podcast.php](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/rss/podcast.php).*

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## Turn here crude oil

### *The Diffley's second stand for stewardship*

*By Joe Riemann*

The name "Gardens of Eagan" has been synonymous with progressive food and farming practices for over 30 years. Organic since 1975, this fifth-generation family farm is one of the oldest certified organic operations in the country. In 2005, the farm shipped 30 semi-loads of fresh produce to the Twin Cities. The owners, Atina and Martin Diffley, were named the MOSES 2004 Organic Farmers of the Year. But this summer they are possibly facing an ironic end to their admirable history of using sustainable farming methods that generally avoid petroleum-based inputs.

This past winter the Minnesota Pipeline Company (MPC), a Koch

Industries company, proposed a \$300 million pipeline project that would pass through 13 Minnesota counties, bringing Canadian crude oil to a refinery near the Twin Cities. According to MPC's website, the company chose the projected route "after considering how to best serve communities, landowners and environmental considerations." This community service and "environmental consideration" just happens to shove a crude oil pipeline through what is currently Gardens of Eagan's broccoli and kale field. The proposed pipeline would require a 100 to 125 foot construction right-of-way, and a permanent right-of-way of 50 feet. Once in operation, crude oil would be pumped through the pipeline at a rate of 165,000 barrels per day at a hydraulic pressure of 1,462 pounds per square inch.

The Diffleys told the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* newspaper that pipeline would destroy six acres of fields, disturbing topsoil across a wide area. Such a disturbance could possibly cause Gardens of Eagan to lose its organic certification. The farm has spent 15 years building the soil, creating a symbiotic ecosystem of beneficial birds and insects, feeding the Twin Cities, and putting life back into their land. The pipeline would threaten years of work to build up soil quality through the use of organic methods, and expose the farm to the risk of an oil spill. Fortunately, safe, alternative routes for this pipeline are available in the area.

An administrative law judge is expected to make a decision on the pipeline route this fall.

### **Turn Here Sweet Corn**

This isn't the first time the Diffleys

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**Oil, see page 18...**

have butted heads with rampant development.

In the late 1980s, Martin and Atina were forced to part with some of their family's farm when the Eagan School District used eminent domain to force the sale of the property. The Diffeys then had to sell off the remaining family property due to ever-increasing tax assessments caused by sprawling suburban growth. For several years, they had to farm on rented land in 10 to 12 different locations, while a 140-acre farm they purchased in nearby Farmington completed its transition into organic certification. This story was played out in Helen DeMichiel's 1991 documentary film, *Turn Here Sweet Corn*, which the Land Stewardship Project helped present around the region, sparking awareness and discussion about land preservation and the dangers of urban sprawl. While the Diffeys lost that battle, their efforts helped activate rural farmers and land-owners, resulting in land trusts and heightened awareness about the importance of local, sustainable agriculture and land conservation.

"As a culture, a society, we've got to get serious about land use issues," Atina says, "Fifteen years later [after *Turn Here Sweet Corn*], it shouldn't even be a question that an organic farm 45 minutes from the city is facing this."

While society as a whole hasn't learned this valuable lesson, Gardens of Eagan has incited another era of activism. In just a few weeks this spring, the public



**A proposed pipeline would pump crude oil across the Gardens of Eagan farm at a rate of 165,000 barrels per day and at a hydraulic pressure of 1,462 pounds per square inch. (photo contributed by Gardens of Eagan)**

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*"As long as we treat oil...as an unending resource, something we can just use until it's done, I don't believe we're going to achieve sustainability in our culture...As [oil] gets more and more expensive it's not going to be as easy for us, for people in Minneapolis and St. Paul, to be eating vegetables that come all the way from Mexico or California. And that's going to make the difference; I think pretty soon land around cities is going to be seen as absolutely necessary for food production for people living in the cities."*

— Ron Kroese, co-founder and former Executive Director of LSP, speaking in the 1991 film *Turn Here Sweet Corn*

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sent at least 1,400 letters to the Office of Administrative Hearings opposing the pipeline's proposed route through the middle of the farm. The Office of Administrative Hearings is taking comments until Sept. 22 about alternative routes for the pipeline. The outrage grabbed media attention, quickly igniting more reaction. In addition, Eureka Township and Dakota County, where the farm is located, have drafted resolutions that oppose the construction of the oil pipeline through Gardens of Eagan or any other fragile agricultural land in danger of being irreparably damaged.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture, in response to the Diffeys' plea, has agreed that mitigation plans need to be written for specialty fresh produce operations that reflect the needs of the local community. The Diffeys have submitted a proposed mitigation plan to the Agriculture Department that would in effect require the pipeline

company to leave the farm the way it found it. For example, the proposed plan would require no loss of topsoil and make it so the pipeline's equipment would need to be power washed before coming onto the property. The company would also be required to measure the farm's soil nutrient levels, as well as the presence of beneficial birds and insects, and take steps to

make sure those aspects of the farm's ecosystem were left undamaged at the conclusion of construction. If the farm were to lose certification because of the project, the company would be required to buy the land, according to the proposed mitigation plan.

In theory, such requirements could make it so difficult to mitigate damage that developers would avoid building on such operations. If such a mitigation plan were approved by the state, it would be the first of its kind in the country. It could be a model for how agricultural lands are treated in the midst of development.

"It's a lot of work, but this issue becomes a land use issue, where our food is grown and how," says Atina. "It's not a fight; this is an opportunity to educate." □

*Joe Riemann is an LSP communications intern.*

## How to help

Written comments regarding the pipeline route must be submitted to the Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings by Sept. 22. That office can be contacted at 612-341-7600 or [www.oah.state.mn.us](http://www.oah.state.mn.us).

In August and September, there will be public hearings in the counties that would be crossed by the MinnCan pipeline. It is important that during those hearings officials hear from the public about the importance of protecting family farms such as Gardens of Eagan.

Go to [www.gardensofeagan.com](http://www.gardensofeagan.com) for details on the meetings and to view the model organic farm mitigation plan the Diffeys have developed.

Gardens of Eagan can also be contacted at 952-469-1855.



# UCS: Grass can mean healthy food

*But study cautions against overly zealous health claims*

Thanks to some good science and media coverage of pasture operations, it's fast becoming part of the conventional wisdom that grass-fed beef and milk is good for the land and the animals involved. But what are the impacts on the people who consume these products? During the past decade, several studies have documented that pasture-raised meat and dairy products can have numerous human health benefits, mostly because they lack "bad" fats and contain "good" fatty acids. But taken as a whole, this body of work isn't exactly accessible or consumer-friendly. Polysyllabic terms like "conjugated linoleic acid" and "omega-3 fatty acid," tend to swim around in the typical shopper's head like alphabet soup run through a blender. Isn't all fat bad? Doesn't acid burn you?

A new report by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) goes a long way towards clarifying the health benefits of grass-fed meat and milk and could be a major tool for determining what claims will be allowed on such products in the future. The report comes at a time when the grass-fed meat and dairy industry seems on the verge of becoming something quite big, providing a way for farmers to produce healthy food profitably in an environmentally sound manner.

In putting together *Greener Pastures: How grass-fed beef and milk contribute to healthy eating*, UCS nutritionist Kate Clancy reviewed all the studies published in English that she could find on the comparisons of fatty acids in pasture-raised milk and meat with levels in conventionally produced milk and meat. She then converted these levels into amounts per serving of milk, steak and ground beef.

The report focuses primarily on two "fatty acid" groups found in grass-fed meat and milk: omega-3 fatty acids and conjugated linoleic acid (CLA). The omega-3s—alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)—are the so-called "beneficial" fatty acids. Numerous clinical human studies indicate that fatty acids such as EPA and DHA help prevent heart disease, among other things. CLA has been shown to produce a variety of health benefits in laboratory animals, including cancer prevention. CLA's role in human nutrition has yet to be studied extensively. *Greener Pastures*

provides a chart that clearly summarizes what the scientific community knows and doesn't know about the various health effects of these acids.

"There is agreement among diet and nutrition experts that the benefits of certain fatty acids are for real," says Clancy, who spoke recently at a workshop sponsored by the University of

## What you can say now

According to *Greener Pastures*, several claims can legally be made today when it comes to grass-fed meat and milk, including:

- ◆ Steak and ground beef from grass-fed cattle can be labeled "lean" or "extra lean."

- ◆ Some steak from grass-fed cattle can be labeled "lower in total fat" than steak from conventionally raised cattle.

- ◆ Steak from grass-fed cattle can carry the health claim that foods low in total fat may reduce the risk of cancer.

- ◆ Steak and ground beef from grass-fed cattle can carry the "qualified" health claim that foods containing the omega-3 fatty acids EPA or DHA may reduce the risk of heart disease.

## What you may say in the near future

*Greener Pastures* also lists claims that may be made in the future as more is learned about the health effects of these fatty acids, including:

- ◆ Steak from grass-fed cattle might be labeled a "source" or "good source" of EPA/DHA.

- ◆ Some milk and cheese from pasture-raised cattle might be labeled a "source" of the beneficial acid ALA.

Minnesota's Ecosystem Science and Sustainability Initiative and the Minnesota Journalism Center.

But lack of good clinical human studies when it comes to the human health benefits of grass-fed products is still a real sticking point. And that, says Clancy, limits what health claims farmers and others who are marketing such products can legally make.

"Producers should be careful what they put on their labels," she says.

*Greener Pastures* also has an important message for the research community and government officials: more needs to be done to figure out the human health benefits of grass-fed meat and milk. The

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*"Producers should be careful what they put on their labels."*

— researcher Kate Clancy

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report recommends that the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation and other organizations support increased research on the health effects of omega-3 fatty acids and CLA. As part of that research, government and industry should provide funding for scientists to conduct extensive sampling of pasture-raised dairy and beef products in an attempt to determine the specific content of fatty acids like CLA.

Determining the positive benefits of grass-fed meat and milk will do little good if farmers can't produce it in a profitable and efficient manner. The Union of Concerned Scientists report acknowledges that well-managed pasture systems can be profitable, but expresses concern that U.S. farmers lag behind their counterparts in Argentina, Ireland and New Zealand when it comes to implementing grazing on a widespread basis. One challenge faced by graziers is choosing the best mix of forage species that would maintain healthy animals while producing the highest levels of fatty acids such as CLA. Clancy says more research needs to be done on what pasture management systems will produce the healthiest outcome for the animals, the farmers' bottom lines, the environment and the consumers.

"Grazing has gone on for tens of thousands of years without people really understanding why it works," says Clancy.

Now it's time to figure out why it's worked for so long, and how it fits in the future of profitable farming and healthy food. □

For a copy of *Greener Pastures: How grass-fed beef and milk contribute to healthy eating*, see [www.ucsusa.org](http://www.ucsusa.org), or call 617-547-5552.

## Comment on the grass-fed label

The public has until Aug. 10 to comment on the USDA's proposed rules for how grass-fed meat can be labeled. See page 14 for details.

# Farm Beginnings™ hits the field

## Applications for 2006-2007 being accepted

The 2005-2006 session of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ program moved out of the classroom this spring and has been holding field days recently on working farms.

Farm Beginnings provides participants an opportunity to learn about low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. So far this year, class participants have had the opportunity to see livestock production, vegetable farming and other aspects of agriculture firsthand.

See page 11 for details on the remaining Farm Beginnings field days that are open to the public.

### Accepting applications

Farm Beginnings is now accepting applications for its 2006-2007 class session. For more information on the Minnesota Farm Beginnings program, go to [www.farmbeginnings.org](http://www.farmbeginnings.org). In southeast Minnesota, you can contact Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366 or [stettler@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:stettler@landstewardshipproject.org). In western Minnesota, contact Amy Bacigalupo at 320-269-2105 or [amyb@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:amyb@landstewardshipproject.org).

In 2005, Farm Beginnings expanded out of Minnesota. For more information, contact:

◆ **Nebraska:** Martin Kleinschmit,

402-254-6893 or [martink@cfra.org](mailto:martink@cfra.org).

◆ **Central Illinois:** Leslie Cooperband at 217-244-2743 ([lcooperb@ad.uiuc.edu](mailto:lcooperb@ad.uiuc.edu)); Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant at 217-968-5512 ([cvnghgrn@uiuc.edu](mailto:cvnghgrn@uiuc.edu)); Terra Brockman at 309-965-2407 ([tlcterra@jasmith.net](mailto:tlcterra@jasmith.net)); [www.farmbeginnings.uiuc.edu/index.html](http://www.farmbeginnings.uiuc.edu/index.html).

◆ **Illinois Stateline:** Parker Forsell at 608-498-0268 or [CRAFT@csalearningcenter.org](mailto:CRAFT@csalearningcenter.org); [www.csalearningcenter.org](http://www.csalearningcenter.org).

### Sample a class with a podcast

The Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* podcast is periodically featuring programs on Farm Beginnings. See page 30 for details on how to listen to these programs. □

## Aimee Finley The push & pull of farming

If successful farming is a walk upon a taunt tightrope, then Aimee Finley is an agronomic acrobat. The 25-year-old woman has taken two seemingly opposing forces—stubbornness and a willingness to ask for help—and blended them into one effective management strategy. Bringing two opposites together can be tricky, but it can also result in a kind of creative, productive tension. In Finley's case, she now has a dairy operation that just three years out of the chute is growing much faster than she ever imagined. Her original goal of milking around 70 cows has had to be ramped up to fit the reality of a 90-cow milking herd that looks to pass 100 by fall.

"I didn't know we would grow as fast as we did," says Finley as she takes a break from the morning chores on the 200 acres she rents from her grandparents near St. Charles, in southeast Minnesota.

First the role of stubbornness in getting it done: When Finley was in high school, her family moved from the St. Charles area to Wisconsin. The Finleys had always been dairy farmers and Aimee had gotten deeply involved in showing dairy cattle at 4-H shows. She wasn't willing to give up the show animals she had grown attached to, and she took them with her, eventually placing the 10 animals on a farm where they were milked and Aimee helped with the chores.

Those original "pets" served as the germ of her current herd, and she still milks some of them today.



Finley went on to college at University of Wisconsin-River Falls, where she got a degree in agricultural educational, and was one course shy of a double major in dairy science. After graduation in 2003, she was offered a handful of jobs that would have provided all the things that are supposed to make a college degree worth the trouble: regular salary, benefits, vacation. But Finley still had those cows, as well as a nagging desire to farm.

"I like knowing I determine my own success," she says. "I like setting my own goals. If you're working for someone else, you're working for someone else's goals."

She also had an opportunity to rent her grandparents' land back in her hometown. She didn't know how long that opportunity would exist, since the farm is within the city limits of a town that is becoming a bedroom community for Rochester, just

20 minutes away. Subdivisions, Interstate Highway 90 and State Highway 14 hem the farm in on three sides.

And another experience gave her the idea that farming was a realistic career option. While in college, Finley took the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ course. The program provides participants an opportunity to learn firsthand about low-cost, sustainable methods of farming. Students take part in a course that teaches goal setting, financial planning, business plan creation, alternative marketing and innovative farming techniques. Established farmers and other professionals present at the seminars and provide a strong foundation of resources and networks for those interested in farming.

Finley was encouraged to take the course by her father, Joe, who has long been associated with LSP and who ended up attending most of the classes with her. In addition, a Minnesota Farm Business Management instructor she is working with was impressed with the financial planning aspect of the course and recommended taking the class.

"I think anytime you sit down and look at and go through the numbers, the more realistic it becomes," Finley says. "You have a better feel of how you're running your business."

Finley also learned through the classes and the course's on-farm field days the nuts and bolts of setting up a grass-based grazing operation.

**Fresh Faces, see page 21...**



She isn't a fan of operating and maintaining a lot of field equipment, a must when producing milk using a system of housing the cows inside year-round and hauling feed to them. Her grandparents' farm is hilly and has wet spots that have claimed more than their share of stuck tractors. Finley feels pasture is the best use for this rugged land. She also finds the cows are healthier out on rotationally grazed paddocks.

### A support network

Hard work and grit have gotten Finley off to a good start, but she knows sweat equity will only take one so far. While in Farm Beginnings, she saw the benefits of networking with other farmers.

Finley started milking 65 to 70 cows in 2003. The farm had not had milk cows on it for at least seven years, so some upgrades had to be made to the milking parlor and barn. In addition, converting the corn and soybean fields to pasture was a lot of work. By the end of 2004, she had her rotational grazing system going full steam and the cows were calving a lot of heifers, which was conducive to growing the milking herd. In 2005, she was milking 90 cows, and the workload was getting a little overwhelming.

Joe Finley, who had a town job back in the St. Charles area at the time, had been helping on the farm. As the herd grew, Aimee asked if he would be interested in working fulltime on the operation. He was.

These days, Finley is striking another balancing act of trying to determine how big to grow the herd, and how much to invest in her grandparents' farm. She's considering options to increase profitability without getting much bigger, such as accessing premium milk prices by organically certifying the herd or selling to a grass-fed specialty market. Lurking in the background is the thought that someday development will engulf the neighborhood and she will need to move her operation to a permanent location.

Farm Beginnings and the first few years of fulltime farming have also taught Aimee where the best use of her and Joe's time and labor lies. Sometimes it's better to just hire out certain jobs. During the growing season, the cows get most of their nutrition from the grazing paddocks, but in the winter they rely on stored feed such as haylage and corn silage. That feed must be cut and stored during the summer—it's a lot of work and requires a major investment in time and equipment.

These days the Finleys have the haymaking done by a neighbor, who also

it's not the easiest lifestyle.' As a community they've been very supportive."

Thanks to her growing herd, Finley has even had a chance to give back to the farming community already. She has sold a few of her heifers to a couple who recently graduated from Farm Beginnings and are getting started in their own dairy operation. She also is considered a role model for young women who would like to farm but have gotten the message it's not the right career choice for them.

"There are actually a lot of young women my age who really, really want to



Aimee Finley (LSP photo)

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*"There are actually a lot of young women my age who really, really want to farm but everyone's telling them...there's no way it's possible."*

— Aimee Finley

• • •

makes a total mix ration for the cattle. It costs money to have others do these jobs, but Aimee feels it's a good investment, allowing her to focus on the herd. It's also fun to see how much her neighbors, some of them former dairy farmers, enjoy helping a young producer.

"Obviously you have those people who say you're never going to make it," says Finley. "But I'd say everybody we work with, whether it be our nutritionist, or the vet, or the banker, even the community people say, 'We really love that you're trying to do it, even though

farm but everyone's telling them there's no way they can do it, there's no way it's possible," says Finley as she heads out to check on her grazing herd. "It's obviously possible, or I wouldn't be doing it." □

For information on how to listen to an audio podcast featuring Aimee Finley (Ear to the Ground No. 21), see page 30.

## Fresh Faces- Fresh Farming

To read other profiles of graduates of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings™ program, see the Oct./Nov./Dec. 2004 issue of the *Land Stewardship Letter*, or log onto [www.farmbeginnings.org](http://www.farmbeginnings.org).

county Siouxland experience. There's nothing unique about farmers' markets, meals structured around local food, or a committed group of volunteers promoting such activities. What stands out here is that an initiative like this is seen as more than a nice little boutique event for bringing people into a struggling downtown. It's an integral part of an overall strategy to make agriculture—food producing agriculture, rather than raw commodity producing agriculture—a key part of northwest Iowa's economy. Also unique is that this drive to make local, organic food a player in the economy is being done with the help of a local government entity—Woodbury County in this case.

### Prime development

In June 2005, the Woodbury County Board of Supervisors approved tax breaks for landowners who convert farmland to certified organic production. In January, the Board said the county must favor organic food raised within 100 miles of the historical courthouse when making purchases for its jail (see sidebar on page 23).

It's too early to tell what real impact, if any, these policies will have; as of early summer no farms in the county had made an organic transition because of the tax break, and the food purchasing program was just getting off the ground.

Iowa State University's Rich Pirog says that if the Woodbury County initiative is to grow past the "exciting potential" stage, multi-faceted, broad-based efforts must take place. It will likely take several years for this to succeed, and that means constant monitoring and support to bolster the program, says Pirog, who leads the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture's Marketing and Food Systems Initiative.

"In Woodbury County, things are prime right now," he says. "The key is going to be pulling all these pieces together."

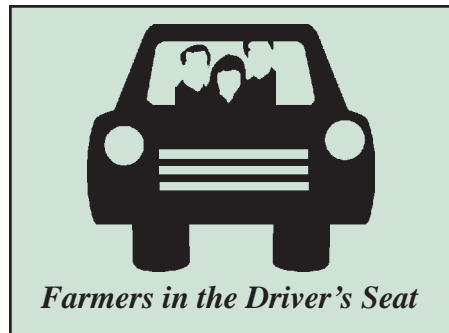
Perhaps that makes Rob Marqusee the puzzle master. As the county's Rural Economic Development Director, he helped set things in motion by developing the organic tax credit and local food purchasing policies. Now his office is serving as the epicenter for all of the infrastructural changes that are needed to make this a reality.

"I've never had so much fun in my life," says Marqusee after breathlessly

reeling off the various ventures related to local/organic foods he's juggling.

The former attorney justifies grappling with so many puzzle pieces by making a basic economic argument: tax breaks to get someone to convert to organics are not a financial drag on society—they are an investment. Spending a few thousand dollars now to help farm families adopt a system that will help keep them in business will return benefits to the community many years down the line, he argues. Not providing the tax break, or not buying food locally, all in the name of saving money in the near term, will cost the community hundreds of thousands of dollars when a family farm goes out of business and stops being an entrepreneurial presence in the community.

Marqusee quotes studies that show organic farming and local food initiatives



can be of great economic benefit to a community. He also cites dire statistics showing how the production of raw commodities like corn and soybeans is decimating rural communities.

But Marqusee also realizes that a \$20 per acre tax credit, or a few thousand dollars worth of local food sales alone won't reshape the region's agriculture. He knows there are other pieces as well, and is working with local citizens, farmers and educators to develop them. Woodbury County's drive to make family farming an important economic driver will require committed activist citizens, support from educational institutions, a technical support network for farmers, and savvy consumers. If nothing else, the passage of the county's ground-breaking policies unearthed all the preparation that needs to be done to make these seeds sprout and thrive.

### Putting a face on the food

Penny Fee and the other members of Sustainable Foods for Siouxland are part of that preparation. This committed group of citizens organized the Floyd

Boulevard Market, and with the help of the Humane Society of the United States, developed a colorful tabloid-sized publication that asked the provocative question: "What if Siouxland could feed itself?" ("If Siouxland residents bought just 10 percent of their food from local farmers, 100 million dollars in new activity might be generated," states the publication.) Fee, who is president of Sustainable Foods for Siouxland, says the goal of the group is pretty basic: "To offer people a way to buy food that has not been messed around with." A former French teacher and caterer, Fee says she was drawn to this issue by the love of food.

As a caterer, "I drove all over northwest Iowa and northeast Nebraska looking for food I felt good about serving to my clients," she recalls. "The bottom line to all of this is taste."

Fee feels it's a travesty that a region so rich in soil is dominated mostly by corn and soybeans. And she and other members of Sustainable Foods for Siouxland feel that there is a connection between taste, local food and healthy rural economic development. That's why in 2003 a group of three-dozen farmers, consumers, health care professionals and community leaders got together and discussed the idea of creating a year-round farmers' market.

There is already a seasonal farmers' market in Sioux City. But the Floyd Boulevard Market, which opened in 2004, is unique in that it combines the weekend breakfast meals with the traditional farmers' market, and is connected with a local meats vendor across the parking lot called One Stop Meat Shop. The farmers' market features 20 to 30 vendors and there are plans to expand it in space as well as the number of farmers present. The citizens' group has purchased processing equipment and wants to start creating locally labeled products like salsa.

The Floyd Boulevard Market is also different than the typical farmers' market in that vendors must sign a pledge that they are using environmentally sound methods, treat livestock humanely, use minimal processing, and are either certified organic or are taking significant steps to reduce the use of chemicals in production. The vendors are required to have their pledge with them at the market, and consumers can ask to see the paperwork at any time.

Chuck Hinrichsen is only too glad to



talk to consumers at the farmers' market about his production methods. Hinrichsen's farm is a five-minute drive from Sioux City. This makes it handy for direct marketing of his grass-based beef and chickens, as well as produce. Hinrichsen bought the farm six years ago, a week before it was to begin sprouting housing projects. Ever since, he has been converting the former corn and soybean farm into a grazing operation. He sells his products right off the farm, and says families love to visit the operation and see how their food is being produced. He was one of the original vendors at the Floyd Boulevard Market when it opened in 2004. He still spends his Saturdays there, meeting consumers and selling them food raised within a few miles of the former fire station.

The farmer likes all the excitement Woodbury County's local food policy has created, but he's skeptical whether many conventional producers will convert in order to take advantage of price premiums from certified organic production/local markets for food.

"I think it's a wonderful idea, but the slowest changing farmer in the country is the Midwestern farmer," Hinrichsen says.

### Subsidies aren't enough

Indeed, financial prods such as tax breaks alone can't significantly alter a farm's direction. An analysis of organic conversion subsidies in Sweden found that they tend only to work for farmers who are already on the road to converting. That's because most farmers have limited exposure to organic systems on a daily basis. In addition, the overall marketing and technical information infrastructure supports conventional agriculture, conclude the study's authors, Luanne Lohr and Lennart Salomonsson, of the University of Georgia and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, respectively. In fact, most of the organic Swedish farmers they studied converted for non-economic reasons, and conversion subsidies served as a kind of final push to make the switch.

But Lohr and Salomonsson's paper

points out that the government organic subsidy system also serves an important, non-financial role: moral support.

"The existence of a subsidy demonstrates that government and society recognize the positive externalities associated with organic agriculture and are willing to pay to obtain these benefits," say the authors. "National policies that favor organic agriculture send a strong message about social preferences to non-organic farmers as well, potentially moving conventional agriculture toward more environmentally sound practices."

The paper says that Sweden's experi-

involved in the operation, which includes corn, soybeans, wheat, oats, hay, small grains and beef cattle (the cattle aren't organic, but are hormone-free).

Venner, 79, is pretty much retired from active farming now, but as he sits in his relatively new ranch-style home outside the town of Carroll, it's obvious he's proud of the fact that the farming operation now supports four families. One son's farmstead is right across the road; all are within a mile of Venner.

"They saw what I was doing when they came out of school and they wanted to get involved," he says. "I didn't do any arm-twisting."

But Venner also emphasizes the importance of taking it slow and seeking out information relevant to the area someone is farming in. He says it took him seven or eight years before he "felt comfortable" with his organic system. During those early years, he spent a lot of time calling experts and other farmers—and made a lot of mistakes. In recent years, the farmer has spent a lot of time mentoring others who are interested in switching to organics. Transitioning to organic still takes a lot of information digging, but Venner feels that government institutions such as Iowa State University Extension are becoming a little more friendly to this type of farming.

"When I got started, they not only didn't give you information, they laughed at you," recalls Venner. "That's changed, thank god."

Dennis and Wren Smith say that's why one of the most valuable things to come out of the Woodbury County policies may be just the morale boost it provides farmers like them.

"I think it's great that they recognize something different out there," says Dennis on a recent evening after shipping off a load of organic soybeans.

The Smiths raise corn, soybeans and

## How the policies work

For Woodbury County's organic tax break initiative, \$250,000 has been budgeted by the county over five years. Up to \$50,000 in tax breaks can be given in any given year, and an individual landowner can qualify for up to \$10,000 in abatements annually.

To qualify for the program, a landowner must agree to begin the three-year transition process toward being certified organic, and complete certification in that period. Landowners who don't complete the transition must return any property tax refunds they received through the program. For a typical Woodbury County farm, the tax rebate would be \$20 per organic acre.

The local food buying initiative, which took effect June 1, requires the county to buy organic foods grown and processed within a 100-mile radius of the Woodbury County Courthouse. Organic foods from farther away or non-organic foods may be purchased if a sufficient supply of a particular organic food item is not available locally. Right now, the county is spending \$281,000 annually for meals fed to inmates at the jail and the juvenile detention center.

The local foods initiative will be monitored so that the county can weigh any benefits buying from local producers is having on the local economy against the costs. If the costs get too high, the county can opt out.

*For more on the policies, see [www.woodbury-ia.com/departments/EconomicDevelopment/index.asp](http://www.woodbury-ia.com/departments/EconomicDevelopment/index.asp), or call 712-279-6609.*

ence should serve as a lesson for U.S. agriculture, where the infrastructure supporting alternative farming systems is even less robust. Conversion subsidies can help, but not without a bigger system in place that supports everything from technical know-how to processing to marketing.

### Taking it slow

Northwest Iowa farmer Cyril Venner would agree with that. His organic operation in Carroll County has grown from 160 acres in 1970 to 1,200 acres today (there's roughly 200 additional acres that are in transition to being organic). Three of Venner's sons are now

flax on 221 acres east of Sioux City near the community of Correctionville. They started farming in 1973 and went organic in the 1990s because of environmental concerns. Dennis says he has no regrets about going organic, but it can still be a struggle to deal with weeds without chemicals.

"I'm a fence-looker, I'm always looking over the fence at my conventional neighbors," he says. "It's hard to see them have such a perfect farm with so little effort."

That's why he understands the resistance to converting to organics.

"I see people who are interested but who are really too scared to leave their chemicals," he says. "The weed control scares them. Timing is everything in weed control. If you have a mother nature problem, it's with you all year."

The Smiths and Venner say that getting advice from others was key in their early organic years. And even though there is more information available through conventional channels than there was even 10 years ago, support during the transition period is key. If



Woodbury County's organic transition tax break program is to attain real, long-term results, an information network is critical, say farmers and sustainable agriculture experts.

"When I first met Rob Marqusee and talked to him about it, that was my biggest concern," recalls Roger Lansink, an organic farmer in northwest Iowa's Ida County. "It's a great program to try to entice farmers to go organic. But you need to make sure these farmers go out and get the correct information so that they don't fall flat on their face."

Lansink echoes the concerns of a lot of organic farmers in the region when he expresses concern that the "CRP effect" will repeat itself. In the late 1990s, farmers converted former Conservation

Reserve Program (CRP) acres to certified organic to take advantage of high prices paid for crops like soybeans. The setaside land, which was planted to grasses in long-term contracts, was eligible for organic certification immediately when converted to crop acres.

But many converted CRP land hoping for quick organic price premiums without really knowing what they were doing. That means when problems cropped up with the organic system, they reverted to what they knew—conventional farming. One estimate is that only around 20 percent of the CRP land converted to organic cropping is chemical-free today. Lansink and others don't want the Woodbury County program to suffer the same fate.

"If the people who take part in it do their homework, and know what they are getting into before they do it, I think it will be a good thing," says Lansink. "But if they say, 'Look here's a \$20 an acre advantage every year,' and that's the only reason they get into it, odds are before they get into the fifth year they're going to be done. If that is all that happens it will be looked back on as a failure."

Marqusee has taken such advice to heart, and is working hard to create a supportive environment for organic transition. In November 2005, he and the Organic Grassfed Beef Coalition sponsored the area's first ever organic conference. Attending were local farmers like Lansink, as well as sustainable ag luminaries like Fred Kirschenmann and Gerald Fry. And in March, when the first Woodbury County landowner showed interest in enrolling in the organic tax break program, Marqusee recruited Lansink and grass-fed beef producer Tom German to go and talk to the operation's farm manager (the land is owned by a local businessman). The 630-acre corn and soybean farm is right in the city limits of Sioux City, in the midst of the fragile loess hills. The location makes it ideal for possibly direct marketing to urban consumers. On the downside, the topography makes much of the farm too hilly to be cropped sustainably, and a lot of it "should never had been cropped" in the first place, says Lansink.

To say the farm manager was skeptical about organic agriculture is an understatement. He made it



Northwest Iowa organic farmers Dennis and Wren Smith say transitioning into chemical-free farming is difficult. "I see people who are interested but who are really too scared to leave their chemicals," Dennis says. "The weed control scares them. Timing is everything in weed control. If you have a mother nature problem, it's with you all year." (LSP photo)

Driver's Seat, see page 25...



clear as soon as the farmers arrived that he believed all organic farms were overgrown with weeds and that they produced one-third to half the yields of their conventional counterparts. Roger pointed out that once an organic system gets established, weeds can be controlled. In fact, the farm in question was already experiencing major weed problems, even with the use of chemicals, an indicator, Lansink believes, of worn out soil. Then came the time to deflate the yield myth. It turns out Lansink's organic corn and soybean yields are significantly better when compared to the conventional farm.

Lansink and German's advice was to begin converting parts of the farm to hay and grass-based beef production. They talked about setting up a brood cow herd and finding markets for organic feeder calves. Their basic advice? Go very slow.

"You don't want to go all at once with land as different as that," says Lansink.

It remains to be seen what will become of this advice. The farm owner has decided for now not to enroll in the program. Whatever the outcome, Lansink feels he and German were able to correct some major misconceptions. The experience also renewed Lansink's interest in starting a more formal organic farming mentorship network. The group he's involved with, the Iowa chapter of the Organic Crop Improvement Association, has talked about setting up such networks in the past. With the growing

interest in organics, along with government support such as what Woodbury County is offering, the time might be ripe for such a network, says Lansink (see the sidebar below).

"I think we are getting to a time where it will work," says Lansink. "We're getting past the time where organic farms are the strange ones."

### Entrepreneurial ag goes to college

Western Iowa Tech doesn't think Lansink's type of farming is strange anymore. This fall, Sioux City's community college will begin offering a one-year diploma program in organic agriculture. Awoke Dolisso, an Agrisystems Technology instructor at the college, says there has been talk for sometime about offering coursework that would be unique and would "contribute to the local economy." The tremendous growth rate in the demand for organic products, as well as the increasing amount of information available has gotten college officials excited about offering a degree program in this area. The fact that Woodbury County has put its official seal of approval on organic agriculture helps as well, he says.

"As we discussed it, people got very excited about it," says the professor.

In the areas of agriculture, the college currently offers programs in technology, animal science and food technology. Agribusiness giants Terra Industries and Tyson Foods have a major presence in the region, and many graduates of the

community college's agriculture program go on to work for those firms, or transfer to a four-year degree program at a land grant university.

But the organic agriculture program will be targeting students who want to run their own farming business, rather than be employed in agribusiness.

"This is not a typical approach," says Dolliso, who did research on sustainable agriculture while getting his doctorate in ag education at Iowa State. "This is more entrepreneurial—going back and building their own business."

The machinations of the new organic degree program are still being worked out, but Dolliso hopes to see it cover crops and livestock, and provide training in everything from transitioning out of conventional ag to certification. In addition, Woodbury County has provided 20 acres of land to the college where students can get real world experience doing organic production.

### Bringing them back

Getting the local community college involved in a rural development strategy that's based on entrepreneurial agriculture only makes sense, says Marqusee. It's just one more way for a community to pull itself up by its own bootstraps and maybe keep some young people home in the process.

And yet he realizes the region faces a bit of a "chicken or the egg" quandary: how does a community hinge a development plan on local, organic foods if relatively little of it is being produced in the area? And yet, how does one prime the pump for that kind of production in the first place?

All Marqusee knows is that this activity is creating the kind of excitement that, with a little luck, may build on itself. As of early summer, a national organic processor was considering building a facility in the community. Woodbury County is in the running for the facility precisely because of its policies that promote organic and local foods, say local Chamber of Commerce officials.

And a landowner has applied to put a small farm in the organic transition program. Even better, says Marqusee, is that a Woodbury County resident recently called to say he was returning from Texas to farm family land in the area, and the local/organic food initiatives were part of the reason.

"That's the point of this program—to bring young farmers back to the area. I'm going to take any young farmer I can on any acres I can." □

## The farmer-to-farmer grapevine

As Woodbury County officials have recognized, it has become increasingly clear that farmers cannot successfully transition into alternative systems such as organic production without the help of mentors who are already out there farming. Those mentors can't be in the next state. They have to be familiar with the local climate, soil and marketing challenges a transitioning farmer will face.

The Minnesota Organic Farmers' Information Exchange (MOFIE) is a good example of such a local mentorship network. The program, which is sponsored by the University of Minnesota's Southwest Research and Outreach Center, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the USDA's Risk Management Agency, consists of 22 certified organic producers from across Minnesota. Their expertise covers, among other things, crops, grazing, beef, goats, dairy, poultry, vegetables, fruit, grain milling, maple syrup and flower production.

By being on the list, each mentor has agreed to answer questions via telephone calls or e-mails. The MOFIE list provides background on each farmer's operation, as well as what time of the day they prefer to field queries.

Carmen Fernholz, a western Minnesota organic crop farmer who serves as a MOFIE mentor as well as its manager, says he gets three or four calls/e-mails a week during the spring and early summer from farmers asking about weed control and crop rotations. "The third concern they ask about is marketing," he says.

The mentor list can be downloaded from <http://mofie.coafes.umn.edu>. A paper copy can be obtained by contacting Fernholz at 320-212-3008 or [fernholz@umn.edu](mailto:fernholz@umn.edu).

## Lewotsky directing Food Alliance certification

**Karen Lewotsky** is Food Alliance's new Certification Director. Lewotsky is responsible for the design and delivery of sustainable agriculture certification for farms and ranches, as well as food processors and manufacturers. She will act as the organization's chief technical resource on advances in research, changing industry practices, and emerging consumer concerns related to food and social or environmental responsibility. She will also work closely with Food Alliance's Stewardship Council in creating, evaluating and improving the standards to ensure the credibility of Food Alliance certification program.

Prior to joining Food Alliance, Karen spent eight years as a Program Director for the Oregon Environmental Council



**Karen Lewotsky**

(OEC). She managed OEC's Agricultural and Water Programs and coordinated its IT development. She holds a doctorate in geography and a law degree with a natural resources emphasis, both from the University of Oregon in Eugene.

Lewotsky can be contacted at 503-493-1066 or [karen@foodalliance.org](mailto:karen@foodalliance.org). □

## Food Alliance certifies processors

Food Alliance has certified its first two food processors: Stahlbush Island Farms and Truitt Bros. Both are Oregon-based businesses that source Food Alliance certified foods for their products. Food Alliance certification ensures not only the traceability of products back to the farm, but also environmentally and socially responsible practices at the processing facilities themselves. □

## Grants

Food Alliance Midwest recently received two grants to support its work. First, it obtained funding from the North Central Risk Management Education Center for work with producers in Michigan. Michigan's climate is uniquely suited for production of fruits and vegetables, and producers there are interested in learning more about Food Alliance certification and using the certification to bolster their natural foods marketing.

Second, Food Alliance received funding from the Environmental Protection Agency for reduced-risk integrated pest management (IPM) in North and South Dakota. Dakota graziers, no-till wheat producers, and

vegetable producers are interested in distinguishing their products and adding value through certification. Food Alliance certification helps them do this, while at the same time cutting costs by adopting IPM practices.

## Finding Food Alliance products

If you're not getting all your groceries through farm visits, and you still want Food Alliance certified foods on your plate, don't fret. Ask your grocer, because Food Alliance certified foods are available in every section of the store—fruits, vegetables, grass-fed beef, pasture-raised pork, cheeses, butter and milk. You can find a complete list of Food Alliance certified producers at [www.foodalliance.org](http://www.foodalliance.org).

The website also lists market partners who source Food Alliance certified products. If you don't see your grocer, restaurant, or college cafeteria on the list, ask them to start carrying Food Alliance certified foods. □

## Certification

If you're a producer or processor interested in Food Alliance certification, you can download an application from the website. Alternately, you can give us a call and we'd be glad to talk with you. Contact:

• Ray Kirsch, Midwest Certification Coordinator, 651-653-0618 or [ray@foodalliance.org](mailto:ray@foodalliance.org).

• Bob Olson, Midwest Business Development Manager, 651-265-3682 or [bob@foodalliance.org](mailto:bob@foodalliance.org). □

## Food Alliance at Farmfest

Food Alliance Midwest will be at Farmfest Aug. 1-3 at the Gilfillan Estate in Redwood County, Minn. Stop by the booth and chat. For details, see [www.farmshows.com/farm/ffst/index.po](http://www.farmshows.com/farm/ffst/index.po). □

## Food Alliance Midwest

The Food Alliance seal certifies that a farm is producing food using environmentally friendly and socially responsible practices. Food Alliance certification is available for all crop and livestock products, including fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products and meat products.

Food Alliance Midwest, based in Saint Paul, Minn., was established in 2000 by the Land Stewardship Project and Cooperative Development Services. It is the Midwestern affiliate of the Food

Alliance, which is based in Portland, Ore.

Food Alliance certified products are available for sale throughout the United States and Canada in natural food co-ops and grocery stores, and in select restaurants and food service dining halls.

For more information about Food Alliance Midwest and its certification program, visit [www.foodalliance.org/midwest/partners\\_mw.htm](http://www.foodalliance.org/midwest/partners_mw.htm), or call 651-265-3682.





## Volunteers needed for Minn. Cooks Aug. 29 at Fair

The 4th annual Food Alliance Midwest "Minnesota Cooks" event will be held at the Minnesota State Fair's Carousel Park (near the Grandstand) Tuesday, Aug. 29. This annual event, which is sponsored by Food Alliance Midwest, Renewing the Countryside and Minnesota Farmers Union, brings farmers, consumers and chefs together over great food.

Volunteers are needed to help out at this event. For more information, contact Katie Edwards at [kedwards@foodalliance.org](mailto:kedwards@foodalliance.org), or 651-265-3684. □

## Minnesota Grown Directory available

The 2006 *Minnesota Grown Directory* is now available. Free copies are available at [www.minnesotagrown.com](http://www.minnesotagrown.com), or by calling 1-888-868-7476. There are 18 Food Alliance Midwest certified farms in this year's directory. Look for these farms in the center section of the directory. □



## The farm as natural habitat

Food Alliance has teamed up with five other groups to create "Habitat in Agricultural Landscapes: 10 Ways to protect & enhance biodiversity on your farm." This brochure provides brief step-by-step instructions for getting started on everything from protecting existing habitat to controlling invasive species. It includes numerous resources as well.

It's available at [www.foodalliance.org/biodiversity](http://www.foodalliance.org/biodiversity). For a paper copy, contact Bob Olson at 651-265-3682 or [bob@foodalliance.org](mailto:bob@foodalliance.org). □



More than 5,000 Minnesota State Fair visitors learned about the connections between leading chefs and farmers who grow foods in environmentally and socially responsible ways during the 2005 Minnesota Cooks Event. The 2006 edition of Minnesota Cooks will be Aug. 29. (LSP photo)

## 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 get ahold of them personally to learn more about production methods, availability of products and prices.

For a complete listing, see the Jan./

Feb./March 2006 *Land Stewardship Letter*, or contact our Twin Cities office at 651-653-0618. The list is also at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/foodfarm-main.html](http://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](mailto:cathye@landstewardshipproject.org). Here is the latest addition:

### Missouri

#### □ Sunny Lane Farm

Greg & Nancy Rasmussen  
200 W. Highway 160  
Lockwood, MO 65682  
Phone: 417-637-2991  
E-mail: [gncras@yahoo.com](mailto:gncras@yahoo.com)

► Products: **Grass-fed beef & chickens raised without antibiotics or growth hormones**



## Small grains & hogs

*Feeding Small Grains to Swine* is a new publication available from Iowa State University. It covers barley, oats, rye, triticale and wheat, with separate sections on nutrient composition, use as bedding, and the challenges of using small grains.

To get a copy, visit [www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1994.pdf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1994.pdf), or call Mark Honeyman at 515-294-4621. □

## Market Power for Farmers book

In his latest book, *Market Power for Farmers: What It Is, How to Get It, How to Use It*, agricultural economist Richard Levins describes how farmers can team up with other farmers and create enough market power to benefit financially from their efficiency and ability to add value to their production. Levins argues that the agricultural economy has changed so much that individual farmers can no longer assume all their hard work will pay off when it comes time to market their production.

Levins talked about his book in the Jan./Feb./March 2006 *Land Stewardship Letter* (page 2). To obtain a copy of *Market Power for Farmers: What It Is, How to Get It, How to Use It*, contact the Institute for Rural America at 1-800-858-6636. For information on how to hear a podcast featuring an interview with Levins (*Ear to the Ground* No. 14), see page 30. □

## Chicken that tastes like chicken

*Poultry Your Way: A Guide to Management Alternatives for the Upper Midwest*, describes marketing, processing and production alternatives.

It's available free from the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) by calling 1-800-909-6472, or the Minnesota Department of Agriculture at 651-201-6012.

It's also available online at [www.misa.umn.edu/Misa\\_Publications2.html](http://www.misa.umn.edu/Misa_Publications2.html). □

## Farmers' markets

Talk about a growth industry: in 1994 there were 1,755 farmers' markets in the

U.S. In 2004, that number had grown to 3,706, according to the USDA. Summer and early fall are prime times to visit a farmers' market.

To find the one closest to you, check [www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets](http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets). This website provides a state-by-state listing of markets.

For Minnesota farmers' markets, check out the 2006 *Minnesota Grown Directory* by visiting [www.minnesotagrown.com](http://www.minnesotagrown.com), or calling 1-888-868-7476. □

## From the Farm to the Table book

*From the Farm to the Table: What All Americans Need to Know about Agriculture* is a new book by Land Stewardship Project member Gary Holthaus.

In the book, farm families from America's heartland detail the practices and values that relate to their land, work and communities. Their stories reveal that those who make their living in agriculture—despite stereotypes of provincialism perpetuated by the media—are savvy to the influence of world politics on local issues. Holthaus, who lives in Red Wing, Minn., demonstrates how outside economic, governmental, legal and business developments play an increasingly influential, if not controlling, role in every farmer's life.

*From the Farm to the Table* explores farmers' experiences to offer a deeper understanding of how we can create sustainable and vibrant land-based communities by adhering to fundamental agrarian values.

The book will be available in December, but by ordering now you can receive a 50 percent discount off the cover price. To pre-order, send a check or money order for \$25 payable to the University of Minnesota to: University of Minnesota, Experiment in Rural Cooperation, 68064 240th Ave., Kasson, MN 55944. Before sending money for the book, contact Erin Tegtmeier at the Experiment in Rural Cooperation to find out how much extra to send to cover postage and sales tax.

Tegtmeier can be contacted at 507-536-6313 or [tetgm003@umn.edu](mailto:tetgm003@umn.edu).

For more information on *From the Farm to the Table*, see [www.kentuckypress.com](http://www.kentuckypress.com). □

## Putting on some green miles

Green Routes has launched a new website ([www.GreenRoutes.org](http://www.GreenRoutes.org)) that helps Minnesota travelers plan trips around locally grown food as well as unique cultural attractions and activities.

Green Routes also has pamphlets available on the Tamarack and Upper Minnesota River Valley, as well as Bluff Country, Pine and Lake Country, Agassiz and the North Shore.

For more information, contact Renewing the Countryside at 1-866-378-0587 or [rtc@rtcinfo.org](mailto:rtc@rtcinfo.org). □

## Group gardening

Looking for a community garden in your area, or just want general information on community gardening? The American Community Gardening Association provides resources for finding a local garden, as well as starting one in your community. For more information, see [www.communitygarden.org/faq.php](http://www.communitygarden.org/faq.php), or call 1-877-275-2242.

In the Twin Cities area, there's a new local source of information on community gardens: "GardenWorks." This group can be contacted at 612-278-7123 or [info@gardenworksMN.org](mailto:info@gardenworksMN.org). □

## Dairy options

*Dairy Your Way* profiles a variety of dairy housing and production systems suitable for the Upper Midwest. Dennis Johnson, a University of Minnesota dairy scientist and a member of the Land Stewardship Project's Board of Directors, served as a content specialist for this 100-page book.

Free print copies of *Dairy Your Way* are available by calling the Minnesota Department of Agriculture at 651-201-6012, or the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) at 1-800-909-6472. It's also available online at [www.misa.umn.edu/Misa\\_Publications2.html](http://www.misa.umn.edu/Misa_Publications2.html). □

## Get grounded with

**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 [ispwb1@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:ispwb1@landstewardshipproject.org), and put in the subject line "Subscribe LIVE-WIRE." □





## Chicken

### The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food

By Steve Striffler

2005; 195 pages; \$25 (hardcover)  
Yale University Press  
302 Temple St., New Haven, CT 06511  
<http://yalebooks.com>

Reviewed by Brian DeVore

In northwest Arkansas, in the depths of a Tyson poultry processing plant, while laboring alongside Latinos and southeast Asians in some of the worst working conditions in America, Steve Striffler observes a surprising thing: pride in a job well done. Yes, the production line is being sped up to unsustainable levels. And yes, people who are hanging, cutting and breeding poultry are sustaining lifelong injuries so severe that in some cases they can't even hold their children at the end of a shift. But what really upsets the workers is when a floor manager takes yet one more step to remove the last bit of control over how an individual job is done.

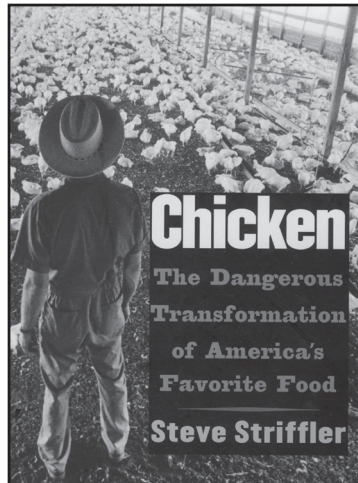
As Striffler documents in his slim but powerful book, *Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food*, since at least the 1950s the industry has methodically taken control of all aspects of the production, processing and even consumption of chicken. As Striffler puts it: "As power within the industry has become increasingly concentrated, workers, farmers, and consumers—those with the greatest stakes in our food system—have been relegated to the margins. We have been on the outside looking in as a handful of corporate giants have transformed the basic terms under which Americans farm, work, and even eat."

Striffler is an anthropologist at the University of Arkansas, and this book could easily have been a dry accounting of all the statistics and documented anecdotes of just how low the poultry industry has sunk. But Striffler combines firsthand experience, interviews and some riveting history with current events to make for a powerful account.

True to his word, the author describes the situation from the perspective of three

groups: workers, farmers and consumers.

It's his account of how the chicken industry treats its workers that's perhaps the strongest and most compelling. That's mostly because Striffler himself worked in a Tyson poultry plant (when he applied, his academic background was less of a surprise to Tyson officials than the fact that he spoke English). A discussion of the working conditions of poultry workers is timely as the U.S. grapples with the issue of immigrant labor in this country. Today, about three-quarters of the labor force in poultry plants are Latin American, with Southeast Asians and people from the Marshall Islands accounting for much of the remaining workers. A huge number—estimates run from one-fourth to one-half—of those workers are undocumented, and the industry takes full advantage of that fact. Plant managers use the threat of deportation to keep workers in line and uncom-



plaining about nightmarish conditions: fast line speeds, few bathroom breaks, safety violations, etc. The U.S. Justice Department has alleged that at one time 15 Tyson Foods plants in nine states had conspired to smuggle undocumented workers across the Mexican border, "to meet production goals, cut costs, and maximize profits," writes Striffler, adding that, "Fear of deportation produced the ideal worker." It makes one wonder why no one in Congress or our various statehouses is vilifying the Tysons of the world with the same vigor that they target "illegals."

Striffler's description of the transition of poultry production as a sideline on family farms into an industrial system where contract producers serve basically as barn janitors for huge operations is also timely. Large agribusiness corporations have learned that it's better to own

the farmer than to own the farm, and the way poultry production has been taken over by contracting is seen as the model. Contracts are written to favor the integrator and, like the line workers in processing plants, take away almost all decision making from the farmers. Farmers, in turn, take on the risk of building one-use facilities. The payoff is supposed to be protection from the vagaries of the open market, and a regular paycheck. But as Striffler documents, being a contract poultry producer can be a volatile way to earn a living. Contracts can be pulled with little notice, making those big barns expensive white elephants.

As the author points out, there was never a "golden age" in chicken farming. It basically went from an afterthought on most farms to a fully integrated factory farmed enterprise controlled by Tyson, Perdue and Holly Farms.

Finally, Striffler gets to the consumer. It's hard to believe that before the introduction of the MacDonal'd's Chicken McNugget in 1983, American's were still consuming chickens, as, well, chickens. And by and large this was a healthy product. But over the years chicken has been breaded, marinated, and in general flavored to the point where it tastes like anything but chicken. The less chicken resembles its original state, the more unhealthy of a food product it has become, reports Striffler.

Unfortunately, *Chicken* loses steam toward the end when it tries to delve into solutions for what ails the poultry industry. His last chapter lays out what he thinks would make a better industry, and a better bird. He touches briefly on a new initiative called "Friendly Chicken," based in the Chesapeake Bay area. The mission of this enterprise is to produce a healthy product that follows principles of "equity, social justice, and environmental sustainability." All good stuff, but it's unclear from the book how all of this is to be accomplished.

I and a growing group of concerned consumers are getting our chicken directly from farmers who have them processed at local, independent plants. It's the best way to get a great tasting, healthy product that isn't damaging lives and the land. It would be great if this kind of chicken were available to everyone, but for now it's not. That's too bad: it's an empowering way of producing, processing and consuming food. In effect, it's putting pride back in a job well done. □

Brian DeVore is editor of the Land Stewardship Letter.

## Ear to the Ground podcast captures the land's vibrations

The Land Stewardship Project's *Ear to the Ground* audio magazine is now available on our website. This podcast features interviews, reviews and special features related to LSP's work.

These shows can be listened to on a computer, an MP3 player or via compact disc (despite the name, you don't need an iPod to listen to podcasts).

To sample some of the podcasts, see [www.thepodlounge.com/listfeed.php?feed=34810](http://www.thepodlounge.com/listfeed.php?feed=34810). For a step-by-step guide on how to subscribe to the free *Ear to the Ground* service, visit [www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html).

### Looking for story ideas

We are looking for story ideas for future *Ear to the Ground* podcasts. Do you know of someone who would make a good interview? Know of any good talks related to LSP's work that should get out to a wider audience?

We'd like to hear from you; contact Brian DeVore at 612-729-6294 or [bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org). □

### Ear to the Ground so far:

- **No. 1:** First of a three-part series on Frances Moore Lappé and living democracy.
- **No. 2:** Second of a three-part series on Frances Moore Lappé and living democracy.
- **No. 3:** Third of a three-part series on Frances Moore Lappé and living democracy.
- **No. 4:** A farm family unearths some



...  
*"All I'm asking is that we figure out ways to work together so that the voice of farmers all around the world can be heard."*

— West African farmer Seydou Ouedraogo, speaking on *Ear to the Ground* No. 20

...

unpleasant environmental history, pushing them even harder to be good stewards of the land.

- **No. 5:** The role of women in agriculture is examined through the "Planting in the Dust" play, and the *Voices of Minnesota Farm Women* documentary film.
- **No. 6:** How Farm Beginnings™ helps new farmers set goals and put tools in their place.
- **No. 7:** Launching a financial plan for a new farming operation.

- **No. 8:** A tribute to the late Dave Serfling, a farmer, leader, husband, father and steward of the land.
- **No. 9:** A research initiative examines how farming can produce multiple benefits for society beyond food and fiber production.
- **No. 10:** A scientist working on the Multiple Benefits of Agriculture project talks about how working farms can help reduce fish-killing water pollution.
- **No. 11:** A dairy farmer talks about how he has used rotational grazing to improve water quality on his land.
- **No. 12:** Fred Kirschenmann talks about the future of agriculture in the first of a two-part series.
- **No. 13:** Second of a two-part series on Fred Kirschenmann and his views on the future of agriculture.
- **No. 14:** Economist Richard Levins describes how farmers can use market power to get paid a fair price for their production.
- **No. 15:** Farmer Audrey Arner talks about her experiences with globalization.
- **No. 16:** How Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) brings farmers and consumers together.
- **No. 17:** A Farm Beginnings™ discussion about planning for profit.
- **No. 18:** An introduction to innovative direct marketing for beginning farmers.
- **No. 19:** Beginning farmers learn how to successfully obtain credit.
- **No. 20:** A West African farmer talks about the negative impacts of unlimited U.S. commodity crop subsidies.
- **No. 21:** A beginning dairy farmer faces the realities of agriculture. □



## Membership Update



## Some exciting news about our database (really)

By Cathy Eberhart

Yay! We have a new database! The Land Stewardship Project's staff has been eagerly making a switch from the old database we purchased back when I started eight years ago (a lifetime in the computer world) to "thedatabank" this past spring. We thought we'd fill you in

on some of the advantages of the change. Why are we excited about the switch? First and foremost, all four of our offices now share access to a live up-to-date database through secure Internet access to thedatabank's online data service. (Yes, you can be assured your membership records are private and very safe. See more details about our privacy policy in the sidebar on page 31.) In the past, LSP's database was located in our White Bear

Lake office and we mailed (yes, by snail mail—it was too big to e-mail) copies to the other three offices every month or so. With four locations, our programming, organizing and fundraising staff are already seeing the benefits of being able to share information efficiently, on a real-time basis.

A second major advantage to using thedatabank is its enhanced e-mail capacity. E-mail has become an increas-

**Membership, see page 31...**



## Your privacy is important to LSP

Even though our database is changing, our commitment to protecting the privacy of your membership information remains the same. The following is excerpted from LSP's privacy policy (for a complete copy, visit [www.landstewardshipproject.org](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org), or call 651-653-0618):

"Your right to privacy is very important to us. We recognize that providing us with personal information is an act of trust. Our privacy policy is meant to protect your personal information.

"LSP never sells or rents its mailing list to other organizations. To reduce the cost of acquiring new members, LSP may exchange member lists with other like-minded nonprofit organizations, generally one or two times per year or less. These exchanges are typically for a one-time mailing only.

"LSP is one of several environmental organizations in Minnesota collaborating on the Minnesota Environmental Action Network—an e-mail action alert system. As a collaborating organization, LSP provides member e-mail addresses to the network so that members can receive action alerts about urgent environmental issues."

If you have any questions or concerns about our Privacy Policy, or if you would prefer that we do not exchange your name or share your e-mail with the Minnesota Environmental Action Network, or if you would like your donation to remain anonymous, please notify us at: LSP, 2200 Fourth Street, White Bear Lake, MN 55110. You can also call us at 651-653-0618, or send an e-mail to [cathye@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:cathye@landstewardshipproject.org).

## ...Membership, from page 30

ingly important tool for communicating with our members. Over 1,500 people get the monthly *LIVE-WIRE* e-mail newsletter and over 600 receive our action alerts. Nearly 300 of our members prefer to have their membership renewal reminders come via e-mail. This database change will allow us to better manage and enhance these important e-mail interactions. In the coming months, you'll notice the change visually, as well, when we start using HTML formatting to improve the look and readability of our e-mails. The online donation form on our website will be changing shortly too.

Finally, we believe we have found a like-minded and forward-looking technology partner in the databank whose mission is "to create positive social change through technology" by working with groups to create "sustainable environments, vital communities, social justice, stronger families, engaged citizens and a better world." Sounds like a good fit with LSP, don't you think? ☐

*Cathy Eberhart is LSP's Membership Coordinator.*

## Thank you

The Land Stewardship Project is grateful and honored to have received a number of memorial gifts over the past few months from the following people:

### In memory of Dave Serfling

- Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America
- Diane Serfling
- Gayle Goetzman
- Barbara Finley-Shea
- Members of Christ Presbyterian Church in Clarksville, Tenn.
- Daniel & Tamara Christianson
- Richard & Donna Rasmussen
- Vance & Bonnie Haugen

### In memory of Kate Seibert

- James Carlson

### In memory of Carol Varilek

- Richard Riemann

### In memory of Phyllis Pladsen

- Karen Bartig

For information on honoring a loved one with a memorial gift to LSP, contact Cathy Eberhart at 651-653-0618 or [cathye@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:cathye@landstewardshipproject.org). ☐

## Plastic payments

The Land Stewardship Project can now accept Discover cards and debit cards, as well as Visa and Mastercard. ☐

## Support LSP in your workplace

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

Together member organizations of the Minnesota Environmental Fund work to

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



You can support LSP in your workplace by giving through the Minnesota Environmental Fund.

Options include giving a designated amount through payroll deduction, or a single gift. You may also choose to give to the entire coalition or specify the organization of your choice within the coalition, such as the Land Stewardship Project. If your employer does not provide this opportunity, ask the person in charge of workplace giving to include it.

For more information, contact LSP's Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or [mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org).

## STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

- **JULY 19**—LSP's Policy Program 5th Annual Open House, 2919 E. 42nd St., Minneapolis, Minn. (see page 11)
- **JULY 21-22**—Farm Beginnings™ public tour of a CSA produce operation (see page 11)
- **JULY 27**—Horticulture Night, featuring local foods served by LSP, West Central Research & Outreach Center, Morris, Minn.; Contact: 320-269-2105 or <http://wcroc.coafes.umn.edu>
- **JULY 27-29**—Windy River Renewable Energy & Sustainable Agriculture Fair, Little Falls, Minn.; Contact: 320-589-1711; <http://wcroc.coafes.umn.edu>
- **JULY 29-30**—Kickapoo Country Fair, featuring LSP, La Farge, Wis. (see page 11)
- **JULY 29**—Field day on grazing & grass-friendly programs, Corydon, Iowa; Contact: 641-872-2657; [jsellers@sirisonline.com](mailto:jsellers@sirisonline.com)
- **AUG. 1-3**—Farmfest, featuring Food Alliance Midwest (see page 26)
- **AUG. 4**—Grazefest Minnesota 2006, Prairie Horizons Farm, Starbuck, Minn.; Contact: 320-760-8732; [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org)
- **AUG. 5**—Annual LSP Celebration of Food, Family & Farming, Bedtke Family Farm, Plainview, Minn. (see page 11)
- **AUG. 5**—Agritourism field day, Atkins, Iowa; Contact: 319-446-7667; [www.bloomsburyfarm.com](http://www.bloomsburyfarm.com)
- **AUG. 9**—LSP's Dana Jackson will present at the Women's Environmental Institute Organic Farm School, Amazon Bookstore, 4755 Chicago Ave. S., Minneapolis, Minn.; Contact: 612-821-9630; [www.amazonfembks.com](http://www.amazonfembks.com)
- **AUG. 10**—Deadline for commenting

- on the USDA's proposed grass-fed meat label (see page 14)
- **AUG. 10**—Field day on grazing & grass-based beef, Glidden, Minn.; Contact: 712-656-2563
- **AUG. 12**—Minnesota Garlic Festival, Wright County Fairgrounds, Howard Lake, Minn.; Contact: Jerry Ford, 320-543-3394; [jerry@marienne.com](mailto:jerry@marienne.com); [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org)
- **AUG. 14**—Voices of Minnesota Farm Women showing & discussion, led by LSP's Dana Jackson, Mississippi Market Community Room, 622 Selby Ave., Saint Paul, Minn.; Contact: 651-310-9465; [www.msmarket.coop](http://www.msmarket.coop)
- **AUG. 14**—Sustainable Agriculture Policy Options for the 2007 Farm Bill—A Sustainable Agriculture Coalition/Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group workshop & rally, Oconomowoc, Wis.; Contact: Mark Schultz, LSP, 612-722-6377; [marks@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:marks@landstewardshipproject.org)
- **AUG. 15-17**—National conference of the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education program, featuring a presentation by LSP member Dan French, Oconomowoc, Wis.; Contact: [www.sare2006.org](http://www.sare2006.org); 402-472-5678
- **AUG. 19**—Field day on farms & energy, Thornton, Iowa; Contact: 515-681-8252
- **AUG. 23-25**—IFOAM Intl. Conf. on Animals in Organic Prod., Saint Paul, Minn.; Contact: Jim Riddle, 507-454-8310; [www.cce.umn.edu/conferencecenter/services](http://www.cce.umn.edu/conferencecenter/services)
- **AUG. 29**—Food Alliance Midwest Minnesota Cooks Event, Minnesota State Fair (see page 27)
- **AUG. 31**—Field day on flame-weeding, organic soybeans & CSP, Creston, Minn.; Contact: 641-782-4327; [dunphyron@iowatelecom.net](mailto:dunphyron@iowatelecom.net)

- **SEPT. 1-OCT. 5**—Voices of American Farm Women Photo Exhibit, Sedalia, Mo.; Contact: 1-800-4733-38772; [cynthia.vagnetti@pressroom.com](mailto:cynthia.vagnetti@pressroom.com)
- **SEPT. 7**—Western Minn. LSP membership appreciation night/hog roast, Granite Falls (see page 11)
- **SEPT. 9**—Farm Beginnings™ public tour featuring winter CSA & solar greenhouse construction, Milan, Minn.; Contact: Amy Bacigalupo, LSP, 320-269-2105; [amyb@landstewardsgipproject.org](mailto:amyb@landstewardsgipproject.org)
- **SEPT. 9**—13th Annual Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Harvest Festival, Bayfront Festival Park, Duluth, Minn.; Contact: 218-393-3276; [farming@charter.net](mailto:farming@charter.net)
- **SEPT. 9**—Field day on getting started in organics & overcoming oat rust, Odebolt, Iowa; Contact: 712-668-4554; [ral@netins.net](mailto:ral@netins.net)
- **SEPT. 16**—LSP fundraising rummage sale (craft items & baked goods accepted), 8 a.m.-1 p.m., 117 1st Ave. NE, Blooming Prairie, Minn.; Contact: Brad Trom, 507-583-7718
- **SEPT. 16**—Field day on cleaning organic flax seed, Cherokee, Iowa; Contact: 712-225-3500
- **SEPT. 19**—Children's Field Day, West Central Research & Outreach Center, Morris, Minn.; Contact: 320-589-1711; <http://wcroc.coafes.umn.edu>
- **OCTOBER**—Dine Fresh Dine Local, Twin Cities, Minn. (date to be announced); Contact: LSP, 651-653-0618;
- **OCT. 10-14**—North American Association for Environmental Education Conference, Saint Paul, Minn.; Contact: [www.naaee.org](http://www.naaee.org)

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



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