

The Land Stewardship

30 Years of Keeping the Land & People Together



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

Letter

Volume 30

www.landstewardshipproject.org

Number 1, 2012



LSP's Farm Beginnings crosses the border (see page 20).

—Grassroots Health Care Reform—

—LSP's 30th Year, Dana Jackson & The Farm as Natural Habitat—

—It's CSA Time—

—The Crop Insurance Disaster—

—Local Control Under Attack—

—Passing on the Farm to a New Generation—

—Blowing an Urban Ag Opportunity?—

—Made to Stick, Food & Faith—



Vol. 30—Number 1, 2012

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

All inquiries pertaining to the content of the *Land Stewardship Letter* should be addressed to the editor, Brian DeVore, 821 East 35th Street, Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 55407-2102; phone: 612-722-6377; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kim Bartmann, Bonnie Haugen, Tex Hawkins, Alan Hoffman, Loretta Jaus, Dennis Johnson, Sr. Kathleen Mary Kiemen, Lou Anne Kling, Jody Lenz, Sandy Olson-Loy, Florence Minar, Heidi Morlock, Dan Specht, Rhys Williams

STAFF

Southeastern Minnesota

180 E. Main St., P.O. Box 130, Lewiston, MN 55952; phone: 507-523-3366; fax: 2729; e-mail: lspse@landstewardshipproject.org
Karen Benson, Aimee Finley, Parker Forsell, Doug Nopar, Karen Stettler, Caroline van Schaik

Western Minnesota

301 State Rd., Montevideo, MN 56265; phone: 320-269-2105; fax: 2190; e-mail: lspwest@landstewardshipproject.org
Amy Bacigalupo, Julia Ahlers Ness, Richard Ness, Nick Olson, Tom Taylor, Rebecca Terk, Terry Van Der Pol

Twin Cities/Policy

821 East 35th St., Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55407; phone: 612-722-6377; fax: 6474; e-mail: info@landstewardshipproject.org

George Boody—Executive Director

Mark Schultz—Associate Director/

Director of Programs

Megan Buckingham, Anna Cioffi, Brian DeVore, Erik Esse, Bobby King, Abigail Liesch, Mike McMahon, Ron Rengel, Joe Riemann, Megan Smith, Paul Sobocinski, Adam Warthesen



This newsletter printed by Roscoe Printers, Wanamingo, Minn.

Contents

Commentary...3

- Health care from the ground up



30 Years of LSP...4

- Dana Jackson infects a new generation
- A farm as natural habitat

LSP News...6

- 2012 CSA Farm Directory
- New Twin Cities office roof
- LSP podcast
- Members discuss policy priorities
- Farm Beginnings 2012-2013
- Staff & intern updates
- New board members
- Making land connections

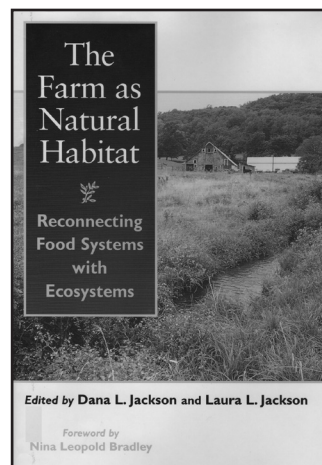
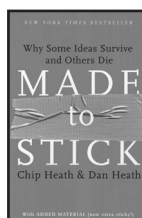
Farm Beginnings...18

- Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land listings
- Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming: Kristianna Gehant & Nick Siddens
- Q & A: Play hits home for one farmer
- Spring-summer workshops



Reviews...28

- *Made to Stick*
- *Scripture, Culture & Agriculture*
- *Food & Faith*



Policy & Organizing...10

- Sand mining's unstable foundation
- Health care reform
- Faces in the (health care) crowd
- 2 paths, 2 visions for an exchange
- Crop insurance's disastrous mission creep
- Why the interim ordinance matters
- Local control under attack
- Gov. Dayton supports local control

Passing It On...24

- Pangracs & Olsons: A farm transition that can weather a rainy day

Community Based Food Systems...26

- Collaborative marketing workshop
- Clinton Kitchen equipment donation
- Urban ag plan advances
- Figuring your transportation costs



Membership Update...30

- New vision for ag 30 years in the making
- LSP on the social media circuit
- Volunteer for LSP
- Wear your support on your back
- In memory & in honor
- Support LSP in your workplace

Stewardship Calendar...32

Health care from the ground up

When rural Canadians organized, they got a top-notch health care system; such a grassroots movement here could accomplish the same thing

By Megan Buckingham & Paul Sobocinski

While big-money insurance corporations rake in the profits and add to their already excessive “reserves,” lack of access to affordable health care is a problem for rural residents—whether they are farmers, small business owners, students or workers. The problem is especially acute in agriculture, where many established farmers depend on a spouse with an off-farm job for coverage, and beginning farmers say health insurance is one of the biggest impediments to getting started.

At LSP we believe that we must move toward a health care system in which everyone is in and no one is left out. Effective, efficient models for this kind of universal care are already in place in other countries and are widely popular. In Canada, for example, a recent national poll found 86 percent of respondents supported keeping the health care system public.

The U.S. spends more per capita on health care than any other nation in the world. Through a single-payer system, in which everyone’s money would be pooled together, we as a nation could better leverage our power to make sure the health care industry is doing what it’s supposed to do: working to keep us healthy at the lowest possible cost. If Canada and other advanced countries can achieve substantial savings—an up to 50 percent cut in administrative costs—because they are all part of one big pool, why can’t we do the same? We can. But we must organize and overcome the lobbying of major corporate interests.

While a single-payer system in the U.S. is a long way off, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) does help us begin to move in the right direction. Under the ACA, individuals can’t be denied insurance because of pre-existing conditions, children can stay on parents’ health insurance until the age of 26, and insurance fully pays the cost of preventative care. The ACA also requires that each state set up a health care “exchange” through which individuals and small businesses can shop for health coverage and compare health plans. The exchanges will help millions of low and middle-income families buy down their premium with public dollars, based

upon their income.

In Minnesota, Governor Mark Dayton is now set to start making decisions about the structure of the state’s exchange. Minnesota has a choice to make. Will our exchange be governed by the insurance industry, which wants to maintain the status quo of a confusing, expensive and inequitable system that prioritizes its profits over our health? Or will we have a democratically governed exchange that can negotiate prices with insurance firms, prioritize racial and geographic equity in health care and make decisions that keep the best interests of people in mind?

Looking north

Organizing to win a democratically controlled exchange is a first step toward what LSP sees as an opportunity to start building change from the ground up. For an example of how such a health care system can work, as well as how a grassroots movement can bring about such a system, we need only to look to our neighbors up north. The reform movement that ultimately won universal access to care in Canada got its beginnings in farm country—Saskatchewan Province, one of the most agrarian provinces in the country. In the first decades of the 20th Century, most rural Canadians had little—if any—access to medical care.

Sparsely populated “rural municipalities” took it upon themselves to address the problem, voting to retain doctors through the use of taxpayer funds. Over the course of the following decades, rural municipalities stayed at the forefront of modern health care improvements in North America: passing

legislation for municipal hospitals, authorizing publicly-funded treatment for tuberculosis and creating health districts, which allowed rural residents more options and flexibility in their health care.

Very much a grassroots movement, Saskatchewan’s progress in health care was mostly the result of rural people taking local action to address health care needs in their communities, and the provincial government responding by authorizing and extending the reforms. In 1946, under the leadership of Premier Tommy Douglas, Saskatchewan became the first province to provide universal coverage of hospitalization and preventative care. A Baptist minister turned politician, Douglas preached the social gospel and dedicated his life to the fight for universal health care for all Canadians.

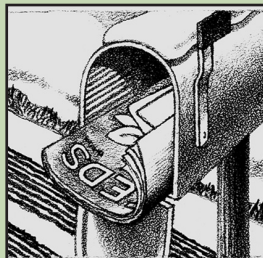
Other provinces adopted reforms similar to those of Saskatchewan, and in 1962 the Canadian federal government passed universal health care legislation. In the years since, Canadians consistently give their public health care system high approval ratings, and in 2004 Tommy Douglas was voted the “Greatest Canadian” of all time by the people of Canada.

We too have the power to change our broken health care system. While the Affordable Care Act is a far cry from perfect, it does provide us the opportunity to improve health care options for Minnesotans in the here and now. Through a democratically controlled exchange we can expect to improve health, reform the bloated, corporate-controlled insurance industry, and increase equity in our health care system.

The key is this: the people of Minnesota need to be a part of the decision-making process for our new health care exchange. An exchange that belongs to us will move us toward a health care system that works for rural and urban people alike. □

Megan Buckingham and Paul Sobocinski are LSP policy organizers. For more on this issue, see pages 11-13.

What’s on your mind?



The *Land Stewardship Letter* believes an open, fair discussion of issues we cover is one of the keys to creating a just, sustainable society. Letters and commentaries can be submitted to: Brian DeVore, 821 East 35th Street, Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 55407; phone: 612-722-6377; fax: 612-722-6474; e-mail: bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

We cannot print all submissions and reserve the right to edit published pieces for length and clarity. Commentaries and letters published in the *Land Stewardship Letter* do not necessarily represent the views of the Land Stewardship Project.

30 Years of LSP: 1982-2012

Preparing the path

Dana Jackson's ability to inoculate the future with ideas, one person at a time

By Brian DeVore

It's been said that sustainable agriculture is a continuum, a constantly evolving method of farming that will never really reach an end point, a final triumphant pedestal bedecked with a "Mission Accomplished" banner. If such a never-quite-finished revolution is to stay, for lack of a better word, "sustainable," then it better continuously churn out people who can keep things moving in the right direction.

Such a mechanism for change requires leaders who know the value of mentorship, of sharing their passion for the cause while encouraging the next generation to figure out their own niche.

For the past quarter-century, the members and staff of the Land Stewardship Project have been fortunate to have a powerful example of such leadership in our presence.

At the end of December, Dana Jackson retired as a senior program associate at LSP, wrapping up a 25-year relationship with the organization. During that time, she served on the board of directors, as an associate director and, most recently, as the coordinator of a *Buy Fresh Buy Local* initiative.

In her various positions at LSP, Dana was responsible for everything from launching the organization's publishing arm to getting us involved with national efforts around agroecology to making sure our board of directors was as vibrant and productive as the organization itself.

It's especially impressive how Dana was able to make her last phase of LSP work so productive at a stage in life when many would be slowing down. Her accomplishments during the past few years in relation to the Saint Croix River Valley *Buy Fresh Buy Local* chapter are astounding.

She is a prolific public speaker and writer (including numerous articles, commentaries and reviews for the *Land Stewardship Letter*), and keynoted several national meetings. (By the way, Dana has confessed to me that although she thinks it is important, she dislikes public speaking because, true to her Kansas Methodist roots, she tends to over-prepare.) Dana's influence has spread well beyond LSP, or even the Midwest. She served on the board of the Rocky Mountain Institute and is now on the board of the increasingly influential Wild Farm Alliance.

But when the history of the sustainable agriculture movement is written, it won't be about which speech was given where or what board was served on when. It will be about pioneers who made sure the movement had life beyond their own. Dana has worked with young people through internships and other capacities for over 35 years. Her first batch of interns came out of her work at the Land Institute in Salina, Kan., which she co-founded in 1976.

Dana's ability to influence young people with her patience, extensive background and passion for a better future continued when she started as an associate director of LSP in 1994. Many of those interns have gone on to work for a more sustainable food and farming system literally the world over. She corresponds with them regularly, following their triumphs, and frustrations, like a proud parent.

And it's not just "young" folks she's influenced. I recently talked to a middle-aged scientist who had undergone a significant change in world view, in large part because of conversations he'd had with Dana during long Saint Croix River Valley bike rides.

It's clear Dana is most proud of the women she's mentored over the years. The sad fact remains that even our most just causes all too often relegate women to the back seat when it comes to driving change, and sustainable agriculture is no exception. Dana has been an important role model for women in the movement.

I count myself as among those lucky enough to be mentored by Dana. She hired me in 1994 as LSP's communications coordinator. A former English teacher, she was editor of the *Land Report* for 16 years and saw early on the *Land Stewardship Letter's* potential for going beyond the typical newsletter format and telling deeper stories.

It's somehow appropriate that I'm writing this as LSP begins its 30th year of existence.



Dana Jackson

But it's also fitting because this marks the 10-year anniversary of the publication of *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems* (see page 5). This book is the embodiment of Dana's belief that clear, well-grounded writing can inoculate society with exciting, game-changing ideas. That's why it's no accident that when in 1998 she brought together farmers, ecologists and writers to discuss the idea for a new book, the meeting took place at the "Shack" where Aldo Leopold formulated so many of his "land ethic" ideas for *A Sand County Almanac*. This gathering laid the groundwork for a book that would describe how stewardship farming could reconnect us not only with our land, but with our food.

The collection of essays—Dana inspired, coerced and co-edited it with her daughter Laura Jackson—that eventually came out of that gathering was guided by one overall theme: sustainable farming could not only protect the environment, it could actually improve it. When it was published in 2002 by Island Press, *Natural Habitat* received rave reviews in a broad spectrum of publications—from the *Journal of Agricultural Economics and Science* to *Sierra* magazine and the *Des Moines Register*. More importantly, over the years it's had an ongoing presence in classrooms and, most gratifying to Dana and Laura, in the hands of farmers. The book is as relevant today as it was when it was published a decade ago.

How relevant? Recently, a 20-something couple approached me at an LSP grazing workshop and said: "*The Farm as Natural Habitat* is why we went into farming."

That's not the first time that's happened, and it won't be the last.

When you "retire" as an influencer of others, you never really punch out. Dana recently brought the Leopold documentary *Green Fire* to her church, and as this *Land Stewardship Letter* went to press, she was attending an Oxfam meeting in Washington, D.C.—she was recently named an Oxfam "Sisters on the Planet" ambassador. And it's exciting to know her relationship with LSP will continue under the title "senior adviser."

On her last day at LSP, Jackson expressed some disappointment at the state of the world. When she participated in the first Earth Day in 1970, Dana and her idealistic colleagues thought we'd be a lot further down the path of sustainability by now.

But Dana, you, better than anyone, should know it's about building the road by walking it. And you've built a considerable stretch. Thank you. □

Brian DeVore is the editor of the Land Stewardship Letter.

A farm as natural habitat

EDITOR'S NOTE: Before *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, there was *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems*. April marks the 10-year anniversary of the publication of this highly influential work, which was edited by the Land Stewardship Project's Dana Jackson (see page 4) along with her daughter Laura Jackson. It includes contributions by LSP staff members George Boody and Brian DeVore, as well as former LSP board members Cheryl Miller and Beth Waterhouse, and current board member Tex Hawkins. LSP farmer-members are featured throughout the book, which was greatly influenced by the work of the Monitoring Project, an initiative led by LSP during the 1990s. Dana and Laura felt strongly that the success of the Monitoring Project proved that we did not need to accept the conventional wisdom that working farms are ecological sacrifice zones. The book also makes the argument that non-farmers—from the policies we support to the food we put on our table—play a key role in developing a truly sustainable farming system. Here are excerpts from Dana's introductory chapter, which sets the tone for the rest of the book.

Sacrificial land

It is no surprise that people passionate about wildlife and the preservation of natural habitats have concentrated on protecting other places, those dramatic expanses of land where more of the original landscape remains, such as the Boundary Waters Canoe area in northern Minnesota, the rugged mountains of Colorado and Montana, and roadless areas in Alaska. Such conservationists have accepted the agricultural Midwest, especially the Corn Belt, as a sacrifice area, like an open pit iron mine, or an oil field, where we mine the rich soil and create toxic wastes to extract basic raw materials. But the environmental impacts of this kind of mining are not confined to farming country. No nature preserves within its watersheds or wildlife area downstream on the Mississippi River can be adequately protected from farming practices that simplify ecosystems to a few manageable species and replace ecosystem services with industrial processes.

Seeing is believing

If conservationists would get to know farmers who are stewards of the soil, water, and the wild and learn about their management philosophy and the farming practices they use, perhaps they would see possibilities for making basic changes in U.S. agriculture that would restore rural landscapes to greater biological diversity and environmental health.

An alternative approach

Farmers themselves don't talk about turning their farms into natural habitats. It happens as a result of the way that they choose to farm. Many farmers became interested in changing their practices in the

1980s, particularly during a period of low prices, high production costs and miniscule profits. A number of newly formed farming organizations around the country helped them lower their use of purchased inputs, such as chemical fertilizer and pesticides, and develop more environmentally friendly practices. For example, the Land Steward-



In 1998, LSP's Dana Jackson gathered farmers, writers, scientists and conservationists at the Aldo Leopold Shack in Wisconsin to discuss the idea for a new book on agriculture. Front row, left to right: Judy Soule, Cheryl Miller, David Andow and Brian DeVore. Middle row: Paul Gruchow, Dana Jackson, Stephanie Mills, Tom Frantzen, Paul Johnson, Dave Minar and Buddy Huffaker. Back row: Tex Hawkins, Nick Jordan, Laura Jackson and George Boody. Not pictured: Rhonda Janke, Nina Leopold Bradley and Charles Bradley. (LSP photo)

ship Project began to hold workshops and field days about the practice of management intensive rotational grazing.

Monitoring the results

A group of farmers wanted to know how they could tell whether the switch to management intensive grazing was making their farms more sustainable. In response, Land Stewardship Project established a biological, social, and financial monitoring project, conducting research on six diversi-

fied livestock and dairy farms that used management intensive rotational grazing. These farms were seen as natural habitats, not as ecological sacrifice areas. The farmers wanted to find out if the soil and the water quality in streams on their farms were improving, just as they wanted to know if their financial bottom lines were improving by cutting production costs. They were not accepting the "inevitable," that they must get big or get out.

Farming's multiple benefits

This vision does not promise that a landscape of such farms will reproduce the ecosystem that existed before white Europeans conquered the land, but neither will it be covered with factories. When farms are factories, they produce commodities and profit for agribusiness and charge external costs to the land and rural communities. When farms are natural habitats for humans, domesticated crops, and livestock, and also for wild plants and animals, they produce food and multiple benefits for society. And such farms can be the sources for further ecological restoration in the landscape.

Pointing the finger

There aren't enough private landowners on farms to rescue the agricultural landscape from ruin, even if those that exist possess a strong land ethic. We would be foolish to depend upon giant producers such as Tyson, IBP, and Smithfield corporations to exercise a land ethic. Whose responsibility is it then? It is a public responsibility. Good farming produces public goods, and the public must support good farming. Instead of accepting industrial agriculture as a necessary evil and counting on regulations to soften its negative environmental and social consequences, the public (particularly conservationists and environmentalists) should use their dollars and their votes and their influence to bring about agroecological restoration.

A fresh look

The perhaps intractable problem is how to influence social evolution so that a land ethic, and not pure utilitarianism, guides land-use decisions. We need all people to look at farming with new eyes, to see the potential of the farm as natural habitat, and to refuse to accept the inevitability of farms becoming rural factories to serve the global economy. We must teach that "the land is one organism." □



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

LSP News

2012 CSA Farm Directory for Twin Cities, Minnesota & Western Wisconsin available

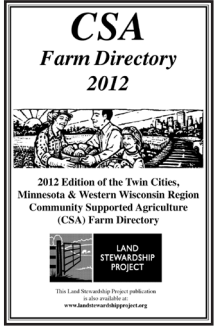
The Land Stewardship Project's 2012 *Directory of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Farms* is now available on LSP's website (www.landstewardshipproject.org/csa.html). Paper copies are available at LSP's offices in South Minneapolis (612-722-6377), Lewis-

ton (507-523-3366) and Montevideo (320-269-2105). Subscriptions are often sold out by early spring and people are encouraged to reserve their CSA shares early.

Community Supported Agriculture is an arrangement where consumers "put a face on their food" by buying shares in a farming

operation on an annual basis. In return, the farmers provide a weekly supply of fresh produce throughout the growing season (approximately June to October). Most of the farms focus exclusively on fresh produce, although a few also offer meat shares and other products.

The *CSA Farm Directory* provides contact information for over 80 farms and details of the share arrangements, such as how much and what kind of produce and other products are offered. □



Generosity puts a new roof on LSP's Twin Cities office

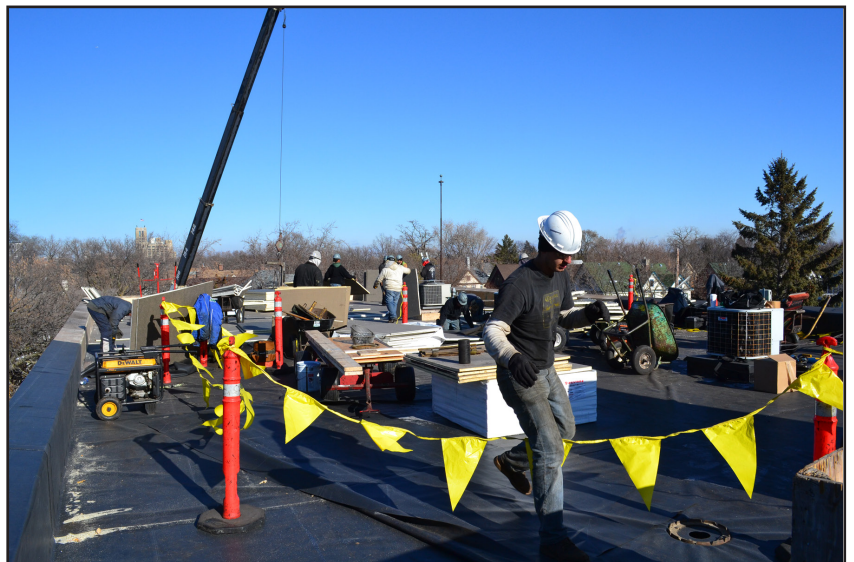
The Land Stewardship Project's Twin Cities office has a new roof, thanks to the efforts of member John Skraba.

The former fire station that houses LSP's offices in the Powderhorn Park neighborhood of South Minneapolis was built in 1941, and the flat roof has been in great disrepair for years. LSP's Twin Cities staff moved into the building in 2008, and the organization purchased it last summer.

Starting in August, Skraba spearheaded an effort to organize several firms around installing a new roof, providing materials and labor at little or no cost. He also procured cash donations to help cover the costs of materials. Skraba is a senior project manager for Inspec, a Minneapolis engineering and architectural firm focusing on roofs, walls, pavements and waterproofing systems.

In November, the new roof was installed. Besides Skraba and Inspec, LSP owes a heartfelt "thank you" to the following firms:

- Palmer West Construction Company, Inc., Rogers, Minn. — roofing labor, roofing materials, crane, trucking and insulation.
- John A. Dalsin and Son, Inc., Minneapolis — roof bal-last and crane time.
- Berwald Roofing and Sheet Metal, Saint Paul — Sheet metal flashing and trim.
- Roofers Mart of Minnesota, Minneapolis — tapered insulation system.
- KR Kline and Associates, Minneapolis — cash dona-tion.
- Seaman Corp., Wooster, Ohio. — cash donation. □



Listen in on the voices of the land

Tune in to the Land Stewardship Project's award-winning *Ear to the Ground* podcast to hear farmers, eaters, scientists and activists talk about creating a more sustainable food and farming system.

To listen in, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html.

LSP members discuss policy priorities

Land Stewardship Project members and staff came together at LSP's south-east Minnesota office in Lewiston in January to discuss LSP's priorities at the Minnesota Legislature and for University of Minnesota agricultural research and education.

For more information on LSP's state legislative work, see pages 16-17, or contact Bobby King at 612-722-6377, bking@landstewardshipproject.org. Updates are also available at www.landstewardshipproject.org and via LSP's *LIVE-WIRE* e-letter. (photo by Caroline van Schaik)



LSP's Farm Beginnings accepting applications for 2012-2013 sessions

The 2011-2012 edition of the Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings course is wrapping up in the Minnesota communities of Rochester and Hutchinson. If you missed out on enrolling in this session, it's not too early to apply for the next class.

LSP is now accepting applications until Aug. 1 for the 2012-2013 course, which will be held in River Falls, Wis., and Morris, Minn. In 2012, LSP's Farm Beginnings program is marking its 15th year of providing firsthand training in low-cost, sustainable methods of farming.

The course is designed for people of all ages just getting started in farming, as well as established farmers looking to make changes in their operations. Farm Beginnings participants learn goal setting, financial planning, enterprise planning, marketing and innovative production techniques.

Classes are led by farmers and other agricultural professionals from the area. The classes, which meet approximately twice a month, run until March 2013, followed by an on-farm education component that includes farm tours and skills sessions.

Over the years, more than 550 people have graduated from the Minnesota-region Farm Beginnings program. Farm Beginnings graduates are involved in

a wide-range of agricultural enterprises, including grass-based livestock, organic vegetables, Community Supported Agriculture and specialty products. (To read a *Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming* profile of Farm Beginnings graduates Kristianna Gehant and Nick

Siddens, see page 20.)

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

For application materials or for more information, see www.farmbeginnings.org, or contact Karen Benson at 507-523-3366; lspe@landstewardshipproject.org. □



A Farm Beginnings class meeting in La Crosse, Wis., this winter posed for a group photo. (LSP photo)



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

LSP News

New LSP staff & interns in 2012

Erik Esse has joined the Land Stewardship Project staff as the organization's new Twin Cities office manager.

Esse has a bachelor's degree in theater, film and television from St. Olaf College. He has worked for the Independent Television Service, U.S. Conference of Democratic Workplaces, North Country Cooperative Grocery and the Local Fair Trade Network. Most recently, he was membership and marketing director at IFP Minnesota Center for Media Arts, a non-profit for filmmakers and photographers.

Esse can be reached at 612-722-6377 or erike@landstewardshipproject.org.

Kia Moua is serving an Organizing Apprenticeship Project apprenticeship with



Kia Moua

LSP this winter and spring. Moua has a bachelor's degree in sociology from Viterbo University and is currently pursuing a master's degree in human development from Saint Mary's University.

She has worked as a service-learning specialist, youth program coordinator and multicultural domestic abuse victims advocate. Moua is currently the co-chair of the Hmong National Development Conference and a consulting associate for Side By Side Associates.

During her LSP apprenticeship, Moua is working with Hmong farmers in southeast Minnesota to help determine their needs and how LSP can assist them. She is working out of LSP's office in the southeast Minnesota community of Lewiston, and can be reached at 507-523-3366 or kmoua@landstewardshipproject.org.

The Organizing Apprenticeship Project (www.oaproject.org) works to advance racial, cultural, social and economic justice in Minnesota through organizer and leadership training, policy research and strategic

convening work.

Simone Skraba served a communications internship in LSP's Twin Cities office this winter. Skraba has a bachelor's degree in environmental studies from the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and is pursuing a master's degree in education from Augsburg College.



Simone Skraba

She has worked as a restaurant server, floor manager and soccer coach. Skraba also served an internship with the Duluth Community Garden Program.

During her LSP internship, Skraba produced the *2012 Community Supported Agriculture Farm Directory* (see page 6).



Deon Haider

Deon Haider served an internship with LSP's Farm Beginnings Program this winter. Haider is pursuing an environmental studies degree from University of Minnesota-Morris. She has worked at EcoGardens and helped design the UMM campus Native American garden. Haider has also served as an AmeriCorps Student in Service at the Center for Small Towns.

During her internship, helped LSP reach out to communities in western Minnesota during the latest run of the *Look Who's Knockin'* play (see page 22).

Madeline Shaw is interning with LSP's Community Based Food Systems Program this spring.

Shaw studied human development and social relations at Kalamazoo College. Besides being a classroom tutor, she has worked at Mill Creek Farm in Philadelphia, Penn., and North Creek Community Farm in Prairie Farm, Wis. Shaw has also worked on farms in Italy, Spain, Israel and Germany through the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms program.

During her LSP internship, Shaw is focusing on outreach and communications around the Minneapolis Urban Agriculture Text Amendments (see page 27). Working with the Corcoran Neighborhood Latino

Women's group *Mujeres en Accion y Poder*, she is also creating new connections in the Twin Cities urban agriculture community. □



Madeline Shaw

Lenz, Jaus join LSP board

Jody Lenz and **Loretta Jaus** have joined the Land Stewardship Project's board of directors.

Lenz, along with her husband Mike, owns and operates Threshing Table Farm near Star Prairie, Wis. They graduated from LSP's Farm Beginnings course in 2007 and soon after launched Threshing Table, which is a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) produce operation. Threshing



Jody Lenz

Table Farm was a partner in the Saint Croix River Valley chapter of *Buy Fresh Buy Local*, an initiative launched by LSP in the region that helped promote production and consumption of local foods. In March 2010, Lenz traveled to Washington, D.C., with LSP staff to help promote public policy that's supportive of beginning farmers.

Lenz grew up on a farm in northeast Wisconsin and has worked as a teacher.

Jaus farms with her husband Martin near Gibbon, in western Minnesota. The Jauses' efforts to balance food production with wildlife habitat restoration on their certified organic dairy farm has been featured in numerous media outlets in recent years. Jaus has also been deeply involved in reaching out to consumers and others on behalf of Organic Valley.

Jaus is a member of LSP's State Policy Committee and has testified before lawmakers over the years about the need for state programs that support sustainable agriculture. She was recently part of an LSP delegation that met with Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton (see page 17). □



Loretta Jaus

What we talk about when we talk about land

LSP's work to increase land access for beginning farmers has its roots in other initiatives

By Doug Nopar & Karen Stettler

A new Land Stewardship Project committee has formed in southeast Minnesota: the Plainview Area Land Access Organizing Committee. Follow-up meetings after *Look Who's Knockin'* play (see page 22) performances indicated interest and passion around the issue of land access for beginning farmers.

This effort marks the third time in our organization's 30-year history that members in southeast Minnesota's Wabasha County area have taken the lead in developing a major new LSP initiative. LSP's first efforts to challenge corporate control of agriculture came in 1984 when local LSP farmers and allies confronted the John Hancock Life Insurance Company. In the midst of the "farm crisis" of the 1980s, Hancock foreclosed on a number of award-winning conservation farms in the Midwest, including the Hauck Farm in Wabasha County. After John Hancock took over the farm, it rented it out to a large cash grain operator in the area who tore out all of the contour strips and terraces and hay fields, and planted everything to corn and soybeans.

A two-year highly publicized "corporate" campaign followed, which ultimately resulted in Hancock putting conservation practices back on the farm and making significant adjustments to its land rental policies. This campaign helped put LSP in the public eye as an organization deeply concerned about the role of corporations in the rural Midwest.

The campaign around the Hauck farm led to other campaigns—all under LSP's Farmland Investor Accountability Program. This included work around the Becker farm in southern Iowa (also Hancock), the Jones farm in northwest Missouri (Mutual Benefit), as well as actions on Travelers Insurance from an organizing base in south-central Minnesota. All led to agreements with these and other insurance companies about their farmland management.

In the early 1990s, Wabasha County LSP farmers and the local extension educator were concerned about the ongoing loss of

dairy farms in the area. They were knowledgeable about the economic and environmental benefits of rotational grazing, and of the potential that dairy grazing had for beginning farmers. Two years of discussion and planning led to the creation of LSP's Farm Beginnings program (see page 7).

In November 2010 the first Community Engagement and Impact Initiative steering committee met. This exceptional group of people, which includes Paula Foreman, Patty Wright, Alison Deutsch, Ryan Batalden, Vicki Poier, Bill McMillin and Dean Harrington, has taken on some groundbreaking actions. One of the first tasks the steering committee faced was to begin to talk over

of ideas about what could be done to help beginning farmers get access to land in this area. In the most recent meeting, four top priorities emerged.

The first priority the committee identified is reaching out to absentee landowners and doing an inventory of farms that might become available in the Plainview area.

A second priority recognizes the need for a third party facilitator/coach to help the beginning and established farmers make initial connections, help with communication, and to be an objective voice in the actual farm business transition. A third priority is to change the narrative to help people realize they can farm a different way, that there are

opportunities in agriculture and people are finding ways to successfully transition land. Included in this would be the importance of building an economic case for small/diversified farms.

The fourth priority focuses on collecting the wisdom of the previous farming generation through stories and developing ways that retiring farmers can share their valuable knowledge.

It's hoped the Plainview Area Land Access Organizing Committee will serve as a launching pad for more such committees in other communities. We are looking for passionate, committed people interested in this topic and willing to work together to gain local traction. □

Doug Nopar and Karen Stettler are organizers in LSP's southeast Minnesota office. For more on forming a local land access committee, contact Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org.



During a recent LSP meeting in Plainview, (left to right) Brad Schrandt, Kevin Ballman and Everett Koenig discussed the challenges both younger and older farmers face when it comes to passing enterprises on to the next generation. (LSP photo)

the dominant narrative about accessing land for beginning farmers. Some common narratives: "You have to get big or get out" and, "Farmers are only white and male."

The committee was challenged with the question about what each person values about land and collectively we came up with a narrative about what we are *for*. Changing the narrative default—not a small task—is part of the systemic change the committee seeks to make through this work. Despite the daunting issues around land access, over the past two years LSP's Community Engagement and Impact Initiative has been working on systemic level change (the narrative and the plays) as well as local and specific change. The introduction of the Plainview Land Access Organizing Committee is a very concrete local and specific effort.

The background for all this has been soaring land prices due to federal commodity and crop insurance programs, ethanol, high crop prices, etc. Sitting around the table at the Plainview Community Center with a multi-generational group passionate about farming and its future, there was no lack

Stories of farm transitions April 14 in Plainview

LSP is sponsoring "Next Steps for Farmers: Beginning with Hope, Retiring with Security" April 14, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., at the Jon Hassler Theater in Plainview, Minn. Established and beginning farmers will share stories of transitioning agricultural operations.

For details, contact LSP's Karen Stettler at 507-523-3366 or stettler@landstewardshipproject.org.

Foundations built of sand

A rush to mine silica prompts calls for a time-out in the bluffslands

By Doug Nopar

It's the kind of land use issue that cries out for local government control of major developments (*see pages 16-17*). Promoters are pushing it at high speed, the consequences are little understood and communities are left with a lot of unanswered questions.

The issue at hand is the mining of silica sand for use in hydraulic fracturing, a type of drilling that's being used increasingly to access natural gas and oil reserves in places like the eastern U.S., Texas and North Dakota.

Southeast Minnesota and western Wisconsin, with their silica-rich bluffslands, are at the center of the "frac" sand mining debate these days. In fact, the community of Winona, which sits on the banks of the Mississippi River and has a major rail yard, is a hub for aggregating and shipping this sand. Some days, the industrial zone near the river can resemble a boomtown: trucks are racing back-and-forth to an area where dozens of open rail cars are lined up next to mountains of sand.

Almost all of the sand being shipped out of Winona is coming from mines across the river in Wisconsin. About 60 silica mines and over 30 processing plants operate in Wisconsin; dozens more have been proposed in the past few years. Nationally, the usage of sand for hydraulic fracturing doubled in one year alone, according to U.S. Geological Survey estimates.

In recent months, firms have attempted to get in on the sand rush by opening mines in southeast Minnesota. On one Friday alone in December, five landowners in a single Winona County township submitted applications for sand mining.

Mining and open quarries are nothing new to this region, which is characterized by a type of geology that makes limestone

and other materials relatively accessible. However, the scale at which sand mining is now taking place dwarfs the type of aggregate mining that's traditionally been seen around here.

There are numerous unanswered issues related to the environmental, health and even economic consequences of excavating so much sand. For example, silicosis is a disease caused by sand particulates in the air. In addition, silica sand formations filter water in the area—what impact will removing that silica have on water quality? Finally,



Sand was prepared for shipping on the Minnesota side of the Mississippi one day this winter. Much of the sand shipped out of the region comes from bluffsland areas in Wisconsin, seen in the background. (LSP photo)

the heavy truck traffic required to haul sand on rural roads is a major concern.

Land Stewardship Project member Linda Griggs recently attended a conference on sand mining in Wisconsin, and she came away alarmed at the rush there to develop mines before townships and counties have a chance to study the issue.

"Many communities in Wisconsin are now scrambling to assess the potential impacts of sand strip mines of 1,000 to 2,000 acres in size," she says. "The Wisconsin Township Association recommended that all communities impose a moratorium that will allow time to study and address the health, safety and economic impacts."

That's why rural residents in southeast Minnesota are looking to put a temporary hold on mining so that the community can learn more about the long-term impacts and develop a plan for how this type of development should move forward. In December, LSP's Winona County Organizing Commit-

tee unanimously passed a resolution supporting a one-year moratorium on frac sand mining in Winona County.

Already Wabasha, Goodhue, Fillmore and Houston counties in southeast Minnesota have passed one-year moratoriums on frac sand mining. In early January, the Winona County Board of Commissioners voted in a moratorium, but surprisingly it is good for only three months. There are strong concerns that this will not be nearly enough time to study the issue thoroughly.

Twice in February LSP members joined together with others to draw public attention to the seriousness of this issue by using their bodies to briefly block trucks from entering or leaving a sand aggregation and cleaning facility in Winona.

In coming months we hope to draw more attention to the fact that rash decisions related to sand mining could end up having serious long-term impacts on the region's land and people. □

Doug Nopar is an LSP organizer in the southeast Minnesota community of Lewiston. For more on LSP's work on this issue, contact Nopar at 507-523-3366 or dnopar@landstewardshipproject.org.

What's the rush?

The Marcellus Shale, a geological formation that underlies large parts of eastern North America, is considered a hot spot for obtaining natural gas via hydraulic fracturing. This has prompted drilling companies to establish numerous rigs in the region in recent years, which has resulted in an increasing demand for silica sand.

However, the U.S. Geological Survey recently expressed concerns that in that region there isn't as much gas available via the expensive hydraulic fracturing process as originally reported. As a result, the Securities and Exchange Commission has urged several gas drillers to revise or alter their statements to investors about how much profit could be made from the process.

In addition, there are concerns that hydraulic fracturing itself poses significant environmental risks, and it could be coming in for some significant regulation in the near future.

In other words, any party connected to the industry, including silica sand miners, may have good reason to get in while the getting's good—and get out quickly as well.

Health care reform: an opportunity to move forward

By Megan Buckingham & Paul Sobocinski

As some provisions of health care reform begin to take effect, it's hard to ignore the increasingly polarized rhetoric surrounding the debate. It's no wonder people are worked up—the stakes are high. Millions of Americans go without coverage every year, while millions more are under-insured or are weighed down by the excessive, and ever-rising, cost of health care. For years, the Land Stewardship Project has been hearing from Farm Beginnings graduates that a major impediment they face in getting started is access to affordable health care. Recognizing that this is a critical issue for our members, LSP has begun to build the base for meaningful, sustainable health care reform that prioritizes our health over profits for the big-money health insurance industry.

History of our work

In 2008, LSP formed a task force in southeast Minnesota to study the problem of health care and begin to figure out what kind of role LSP should play in organizing for reform. From the very beginning it was clear that this is an issue that affects each of us, whether we're farmers or workers, insured or uninsured. Some members came forward to share the stories of their own struggles with health care (*see the Summer 2009 Land Stewardship Letter, "A new Rx for the health care debate,"* www.landstewardship-project.org/lsl/lspv27n2.pdf).

One of the core themes emerging from those early discussions was the importance of working toward a health care system that's accessible and affordable for all—in which everyone is in and no one is left out. For the past couple of years we have been engaged with members and partner organizations such as TakeAction Minnesota about the need for reform.

We came out in support of the Minnesota Health Plan, legislation that would create a single-payer health care system in Minnesota. Single-payer systems have been very effective in pooling the money and power of people, so money is used more efficiently to provide needed care, not pad the bank accounts of the insurance industry. While legislation to implement the Minnesota Health Plan ultimately failed to pass in 2010, one-third of legislators at the Minnesota Capitol signed-on as co-authors and the idea

of saving money through a more efficient single-payer system did gain significant traction in Minnesota.

What we have won

Although we've still got a long way to go in the fight to win good health care for all, LSP has been active in securing some victories that make a difference right now. In 2009, largely as the result of strong organizing by a number of citizens' groups, and with LSP's support, the Minnesota Legislature passed the Minnesota Health Security Act, which makes sure every child in Minnesota has access to affordable health care coverage.

In 2011, LSP joined in the fight led by TakeAction to demand accountability from the huge, corporate-minded "nonprofit" HMOs in Minnesota, which banked half-a-billion dollars in excess reserves while Minnesotans struggled to afford the rising costs of health care and the state underwent a major budget crisis. This organizing resulted in an executive order from Governor Mark Dayton and additional reforms enacted as a part of the shutdown budget agreement. This enabled the state to cut payments to these abusive HMOs by an estimated 13 percent. Key among the reforms are:

- One percent cap on HMO profits for 2011 as it relates to state programs.
- HMOs must now report detailed payment data to the state.
- Comprehensive audits of HMOs.
- HMOs must reduce administrative costs by 6.6 percent to 5.3 percent.

Most importantly, LSP and its allies turned public attention to the abuses of the bloated insurance industry in Minnesota, keeping it from obscuring the truth about its misuse of our taxpayer funds and its failure to prioritize our health over its profits. On May 21, 2011, over 800 Minnesotans participated in a rally at the Capitol to demand a fair budget solution. Along with participants from TakeAction and other organizations, LSP members went from the Capitol to the Calhoun Beach Club to call out Medica CEO David Tilford on his excessive salary of more than \$1.3 million.

At the federal level, Congress passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), and it was signed by President Barack Obama on March 23, 2010. While it's not the comprehensive reform many hoped for, there are a number of smaller

reforms that will put affordable health care within reach for millions of uninsured and under-insured people. Here are a few of the more significant reforms:

- Insurance companies will not be able to refuse someone's insurance, limit their coverage, or charge more because of a past illness or "pre-existing conditions."
- Patients won't pay a "co-pay" or deductible (a fee for visit) for preventive care such as blood pressure or colorectal screenings.
- No lifetime or annual dollar limit on benefits.
- Millions will get tax credits or subsidies to make their insurance more affordable starting January 14, 2014 (*see "Faces in the crowd," page 12*).
- States are required to have health care benefit "exchanges," which allow consumers to shop for health care coverage and compare health plans. Exchanges also guide eligible residents through the process of applying for public subsidies.
- Thirty-two thousand young adults now have insurance because the Affordable Care Act lets them stay on their parents' plan until they are 26-years-old.

Where we go from here

Winning real health care reform—reform that moves us toward a single-payer system—means winning important battles along the way. Right now LSP is organizing for a democratically controlled health care exchange in Minnesota, because we know an exchange governed by people rather than by a self-serving insurance industry will better serve us all.

As we describe on page 3 of this *Land Stewardship Letter*, other countries have long since implemented health care systems that work better than ours—and have done so through grassroots organizing and local action.

At LSP, we know we've got to keep challenging corporate power and its increasing influence over each of our lives. Our broken health care system is one of the most blatant examples of the excessive power corporations have over our lives. In pursuit of profits, HMOs have wrangled from all of us our right to affordable health care.

There are two kinds of power — the power of money and the power of people. In the U.S. we spend more than \$8,000 per-person, per-year on health care, far more per-person than any other country in the world. If you care about good, affordable and efficient health care for your family, your children and your grandchildren, join us in building people power.

Health Care, *see page 12...*

By January 1, 2013, the state of Minnesota will need to be able to demonstrate that it has a process in place to develop a health care benefit exchange that will be ready for implementation on January 1, 2014. The ACA allows the exchange to move forward in one of two ways: either by legislation or by executive authority.

Minnesota is moving its exchange through executive and legislative channels. In the coming months, we need to participate actively in this process to hold up

our vision for a democratically controlled exchange (see “2 visions for an exchange” on page 13). If we want an exchange that works, then we need it governed by the people of Minnesota, not insurance companies. Here are three things you can do to make a difference:

- 1) Join LSP in telling your legislators that Minnesota needs a democratic health care exchange that is governed and put together by and for the people.
- 2) Join LSP and our allies March 25 for a rally and meeting in Saint Paul (2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Macalester College’s

Kagin Commons, 1600 Grand Ave.) to demand a say in the structure of our exchange.

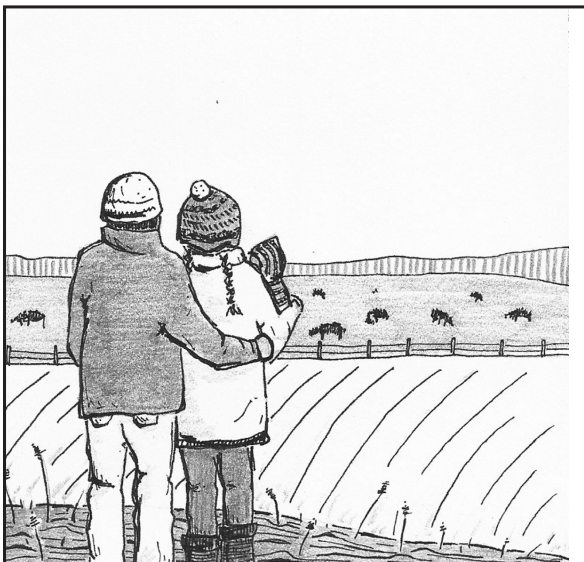
- 3) Contact Paul Sobocinski at 507-342-2323 or sobopaul@redred.com and join our action alert team to help make a difference as we move a more affordable health care system forward. □

Megan Buckingham and Paul Sobocinski are LSP policy organizers.

Faces in the crowd: What health care reform could look like for ordinary Minnesotans

Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), many will have new options for health care coverage, including the ability to purchase lower cost health insurance through state-based benefit exchanges. Depending on an individual or family’s age and income level, many Americans will be eligible for government tax credits that will help make good insurance coverage more affordable. Here are a few examples of the ways in which health care reform may affect costs and purchasing options for those who don’t have coverage through an employer.

These examples are based on the Kaiser Family Foundation’s “Illustrating Health Reform: How Health Insurance Coverage will work,” and were created with the aid of the Health Reform Subsidy Calculator, available on the Kaiser Family Foundation’s website: <http://healthreform.kff.org>.



Illustrations by Anna King

→ Jack & Jill: Beginning farmers
Early 30s, married, \$25,300 combined annual income, both employed part-time off-farm, one child, healthy.

Jack and Jill are still working part-time off-farm jobs while they try to make ends meet, in addition to starting their own dairy herd. Jill had to cut back on her hours both on- and off-farm last year after their daughter was born. Neither Jack nor Jill have employer-provided health insurance, so they purchase their own high-deductible insurance. They’re both healthy and would like not to spend so much of their limited income on insurance, but they’re afraid if they don’t have it they risk losing the farm if one of them were to have a medical emergency.

How health reform affects Jack & Jill

Because the family’s income is below 138 percent of the poverty level (about \$26,800 for a family of three in 2014), Jack and Jill will qualify for Medicaid, along with their daughter. The family will not likely face premiums for coverage and any co-pay will be nominal.

The health reform law effectively expands Medicaid eligibility to 138 percent of the poverty level.

→ Carl & Lois: Established farmers

Late 50s, married, \$76,000 combined annual income, Carl is self-employed full time on the farm and Lois is employed full time off-farm, two children, Lois had a heart attack last year.

Carl and Lois have been married

for 32 years, and they have two kids in college. For most of their marriage they’ve had health insurance through Lois’ employer, but after her heart attack last year she’s had ongoing complications that make it hard for her to work full time. They’re grateful to have coverage through an employer, but the



annual deductible of \$3,500 and hefty co-pays have made it difficult for them to pay the out-of-pocket costs associated with Lois’ health problems.

How health reform affects Carl & Lois

Carl and Lois’ coverage and their financial burden from premiums and out-of-pocket costs will likely not change following reform, unless Lois does elect to go down to part-time or quit her job and, in doing so, lose her employer’s coverage. In that case, they will be eligible to purchase coverage through a state health insurance exchange. Let’s say Lois does move to part-time and

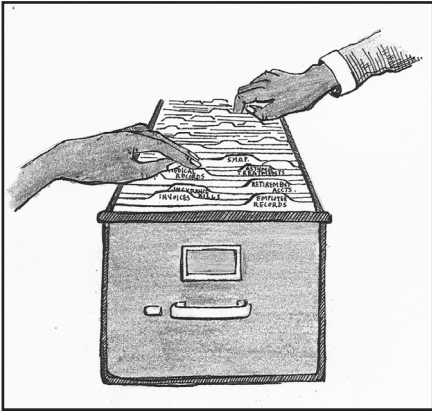
Faces, see page 13...

their combined annual income goes down to \$46,000. In that case, if they choose to purchase coverage through the exchange they will be eligible for premium subsidies, which will lower the cost of their insurance to \$235 per month, or approximately 6 percent of their income.

→ Diane & John: Small business owners

Mid 40s, married, \$88,000 combined annual income, two children, son has asthma.

Diane and John own and manage a local tire shop. They have three teenaged children, one of whom was diagnosed with asthma as



a small child. Diane and John can't afford to offer coverage as an employer, but they do purchase coverage for themselves and their children through the individual market. They were able to find a policy to cover their family despite the fact that their son requires medication and ongoing medical care for his asthma. Still, the premium is costly and is continuing to rise.

How health reform affects

Diane & John

Diane and John will be able to retain their current insurance under health reform, although they may find a better value through the new state health insurance exchange. If they purchase coverage in the exchange, they will be eligible for a subsidy to lower the premium cost, but will still pay around \$697 per month (or 9.5 percent of their income) for coverage. Insurance market changes will ensure that they are guaranteed coverage regardless of their family's health conditions, and they will not be charged more because of their son's health problems.

Diane and John may have another coverage option as well. As a small employer, if they choose to offer coverage to their employees through the SHOP Exchange, a

separate state exchange for small employers, they would be eligible for a two-year tax credit of up to 50 percent of the cost of that coverage, depending on the size of their business and the average wage of their employees. Still, they would have to find a way to afford the full cost of the coverage once the tax credits were no longer available. (Small businesses providing coverage prior to 2014 are also eligible for the tax credit).

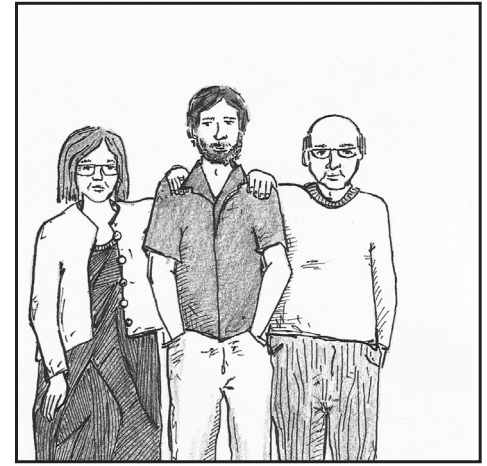
→ Jaime: Worker

24, single, employed full time, \$23,000, no children, healthy.

Jaime has a full time job as a mechanic, but his employer doesn't offer health coverage. He knows he should probably get insured, but he's healthy so it's not a big priority for him right now.

How health reform affects Jaime

If Jaime's parents have health insurance coverage, he can be covered under their plan until he turns 26. This coverage will be available even though he does not live with his parents and is not claimed as a dependent on their taxes. Unfortunately, adding Jamie



to his parents' policy will increase their premium, which they may not be able to afford. Jaime will also be eligible to purchase coverage in the state health insurance exchange. Based on his income, he will be eligible for a premium subsidy to lower the cost of the insurance. He'll have to pay \$120 per month, or a little more than 6 percent of his income for coverage. □

2 different paths, 2 different visions for an exchange

The truth is we need to help decide what our Minnesota exchange will be and what it will mean for Minnesotans, not let insurance companies decide for us.

Option 1: Move our current broken health care system online

- Keep government out: minimal regulations and oversight for insurance companies.
- Keep health care confusing: unlimited poor quality insurance plan "choices" available through the exchange.
- Improve the corporate bottom line: use government subsidies and infrastructure to increase sales and profits.

Option 2: Build a new foundation for better health for everyone

- Keep insurance companies in check: use regulation and oversight to improve insurance industry practices.
- Make health care more affordable: use purchasing power, preventive care and greater access to bring down costs.
- Improve our health: increase preventive care, reduce racial and gender inequities in health.

What can I do about it?

You can help choose which path Minnesota goes down. Here are three ways to make a difference:

- 1) Share your story. Why does health care reform matter to you? What would it take to make health care affordable and accessible for your family? Personal stories are the best way to make our choices clear to elected officials and other decision makers.
- 2) Connect and educate. Find ways to get people together, start the discussion and learn what's in the ACA and the exchange for all of you.
- 3) Take action together. Write a letter to the editor, contact your elected representatives or attend a meeting or action to support health care reforms that benefit our communities.

For timely ideas on how to make a difference, to find out how the Land Stewardship Project and other organizations are working together, or to share your story, contact LSP's Paul Sobocinski at 507-342-2323 or sobopaul@redred.com.

A recipe for disaster

How did crop insurance transform from a basic safety net for farmers to a program that threatens our land and communities?

By Brian DeVore

As far as southwest Minnesota farmer Darwyn Bach is concerned, there's no doubt that in the crop insurance sweepstakes, he's a winner. But he concedes that his good fortune presents a quandary, since the way the program is implemented these days creates significant losers: the soil, beginning farmers and Main Street businesses that suffer when the number of families in a rural community decline.

"Because of crop insurance, there really is less risk for me in grain farming right now," says Bach, who is a member of the Land Stewardship Project's Federal Farm Policy Committee. "But long term for our community, it's definitely not good."

Bach's concern is shared by many across the Corn Belt. A program that started out simply as a way for farmers to ride out the droughts, floods, pest infestations and other curve balls nature tosses their way has quietly transformed into one of the biggest drivers of how crop farming is carried out in this country. And as discussion over the next Farm Bill heats up—it's expected to be passed either later this year or in 2013—it's become clear that commodity groups, agribusiness firms and insurance companies want it to become an even bigger player in American agriculture.

Farm policy experts say that if crop insurance does not undergo some major reforms in the next 12 months, it will have major negative impacts on what our land and communities look like for years to come.

"Here we have a program that got way off track and in the process is threatening to do much more harm than good to the farm economy and the land," says Adam Warthesen, an LSP organizer who specializes in federal farm policy.

A major shift

The crop insurance program is administered by the USDA's Risk Management Agency as a kind of a quasi-private program, with insurance policies sold and serviced through 15 to 16 approved insurance companies.

For decades after it was launched in 1938 by Congress, the crop insurance program

focused almost exclusively on keeping farmers from being financially devastated by weather-related disasters. The philosophy behind crop insurance was simple: it was aimed at helping maintain a base of farmers to grow food and fiber for our country. If crop yields were severely cut or wiped out by bad weather, farmers who had bought an insurance policy would receive a disaster payment, called an indemnity.

In the 1990s, the program's focus underwent a major shift. Following the devastating floods of 1993, Congress sought to increase participation in the crop insurance program by significantly ratcheting up how much of the farmer's premium cost the government would cover (premium subsidies were increased again in 2000). Between 1989 and 1994, federal subsidies covered on average about a quarter of a farmer's insurance premium cost, according to the University of Missouri's Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute. Today, the federal government takes on around 60 percent of the farmer's cost of a premium, depending on the level of coverage.

Even more significantly, it was in the 1990s that "revenue insurance" options were added to the program. For the first time, crop producers were able to insure themselves not just against yield disasters but low prices.

Under the revenue insurance program, each year participating producers are assigned a target level of income based on projected prices and historic yields. Payments after harvest can be triggered by various combinations of low prices and low yields.

Approximately 128 crops can be insured through the program, but in 2011 just three accounted for 70 percent of the farmer payouts that were made: corn, cotton and wheat.

The increased premium subsidy and the ability to insure revenue has produced what the government wanted: more farmers buying crop insurance. This year over 80 percent of all eligible acres will be covered.

Over the past dozen years, revenue insurance has shifted from an add-on to increase participation among farmers to the dominant player in crop insurance—the tail wagging the dog. In 2011 only 17 percent of farmed acres nationwide were covered by yield insurance, while 83 carried revenue insurance, according to the Risk Management Agency.

One farm's experience

Farming is inherently risky, given the vagaries of weather and markets, and that's part of the reason federal programs like crop insurance have been created. But there's a difference between cushioning the blow and fueling endeavors that have negative consequences, says LSP's Warthesen.

Bach agrees. He has been farming since 1986 and now raises corn and soybeans on 520 owned and rented acres in Yellow Medicine County. Since he has a quarter-century of cropping history, Bach can qualify for higher payments than someone who is just getting started farming. If a farmer doesn't have at least 10 years of cropping history, then their insurance payment will be based on the average yield for the county, which can be significantly lower. For example, Bach's actual historical yield for corn is 176 bushels per acre; the county's historical yield is 156 bushels per acre.

The farmer has crunched the numbers and is stunned at how much his guaranteed revenue has climbed under crop insurance in the past 15 years. In 1997 he was guaranteed \$166 per acre; in 2011 it was just over \$900.

"Of course, input costs went up over that time, but I still only spent \$200 more an acre in non-land costs compared to 1997, while my guarantee went up \$734," says Bach. "The pendulum has swung way too far."

And to top it off, this year the government is experimenting with increasing the target yield for farmers like Bach based on what it thinks production "trends" show they can raise in the future. Bach estimates that this will increase his target yield to 194 bushels per acre (a level he's reached once or twice in his farming career, by the way), 38 bushels per acre more than what a farmer with less than 10 years of yield history would qualify for. This could raise Bach's guaranteed revenue above \$1,000 per acre.

A land grab tool

One of the biggest losers as a result of crop insurance's increased emphasis on guaranteeing revenue is the beginning farmer, says Warthesen. If you don't have a long crop history, the current set-up for crop insurance puts you at an obvious disadvantage, and that affects everything from how much you can bid on land rents and purchases, to how much money you can borrow from the bank. To skew things even further, in some cases farmers with high target yields can transfer them to new farms they may be purchasing or renting, even if those farms have an unproven yield history.

With the recent run of skyrocketing com-

Crop Insurance, see page 15...

modity prices, the revenue targets are being set increasingly higher. If you happen to be farming marginal land that doesn't produce good yields, but your overall yield history is quite high, the crop insurance payout can be significant. High commodity prices are being blamed for the recent record bids on land rentals and purchases. But Bach says the guaranteed profits on even marginal land that insurance now provides has also contributed to real estate inflation.

"You could be guaranteed \$1 million to \$2 million in income if you have 5,000 to 10,000 acres," he says. "It's really amped up the land grab mentality. When there's no risk in farming more land, people go out and bid up rental rates and land rates. It's a snow-ball effect."

An erosive force

In an attempt to increase farmer participation even more, the government made another unfortunate change to crop insurance in the mid-1990s. It no longer requires crop producers to have in place basic soil conservation measures in order to qualify for insurance payments. Such requirements, called "conservation compliance," are a part of all the major farm programs, such as direct commodity payments. Surveys conducted over the past three decades show farmers consistently support the idea of controlling erosion in return for taxpayer support.

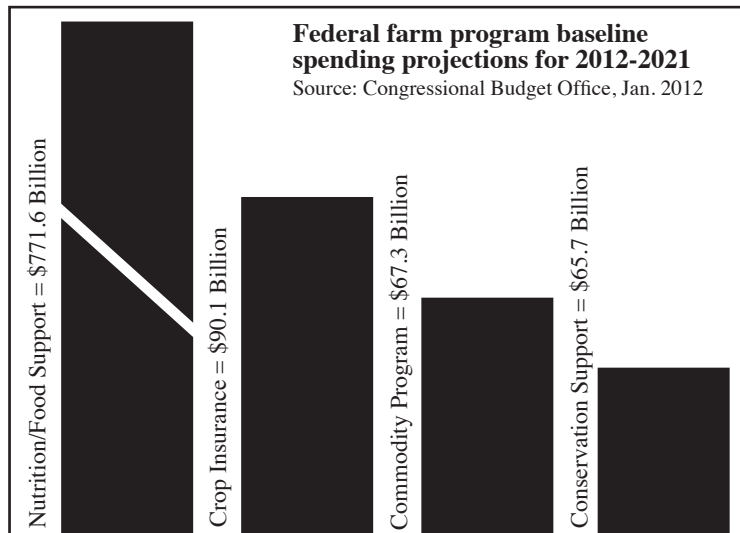
Unlinking conservation compliance from crop insurance is particularly troubling given that, as numerous national studies show, increased insurance subsidies encourage the farming of marginal land—acres too erosive, wet or otherwise fragile to raise a good crop on. By guaranteeing income no matter what those acres yield, there is no longer an economic brake on plowing up those acres.

The USDA's Economic Research Service studied land use changes after the government added revenue assurance and increased premium subsidies for crop insurance in the 1990s. It found insurance program changes increased cropland in production by an estimated 1 percent in 1997 alone, and much of that came on marginal land. While 25 percent of all cultivated cropland was classified as highly erodible in 1997, 33 percent of acreage put into production after crop insurance was changed was highly erodible land, concluded the USDA.

Bach is seeing crop insurance's environmental impact in his own community. The western side of Yellow Medicine County

has hillier, less productive land, and has historically enjoyed high rates of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) enrollment. Depending on soil type, the government pays from \$131 to \$198 per acre to enroll land in CRP in his area. For acres that have never produced a decent crop anyway, that rate may be attractive.

But revenue insurance changes everything: those highly erosive CRP acres can now produce many times the income, even if they can't make a decent corn or soybean crop. This is particularly true when those



acres fall into the hands of a landowner with a long yield history on productive farm ground. Bach says that's what's happening in his area—CRP contracts are expiring and that land is going into corn and soybeans.

"With crop insurance it's a direct impact on marginal lands. As soon as a CRP contract comes up, it's plowed up, and that's directly related to the revenue guaranteed by crop insurance," he says.

Increased ag policy clout

All of this emphasis on revenue assurance has made crop insurance a very expensive endeavor for the taxpayer—the cost of running the program has more than doubled during the past decade. Farmers collected at least \$10 billion in crop insurance indemnities in 2011. This surpasses the previous record: \$8 billion in payouts in 2008. That record, in turn, had doubled the previous high.

Particularly nasty weather in 2011 is partially to blame for the huge indemnities, but floods and drought have always been a part of farming. The bottom line is covering farmers' business income is pricier than simply covering yield losses, especially in times of record high crop prices.

"This has doubled the cost to taxpayers and opened the door for large payments to

producers who suffer only paper losses," says Bruce Babcock, an Iowa State University economist who studies crop insurance.

Congressional budget cutters have focused a lot of attention on reducing the amount of direct payments farmers receive through the USDA's commodity subsidy program. In reality, crop insurance costs the taxpayer much more money. It is now second only to food and nutrition programs in terms of how much of the federal agriculture budget it gobbles up (*see chart*). Over the next decade, federal spending on crop insurance is projected to outpace spending on traditional commodity programs by about one-third, according to the Congressional Research Service. In a politically savvy move, the National Corn Growers Association and other commodity groups have told policymakers they would be willing to give up direct payments as a budget-cutting move in the next Farm Bill. That's because they know they have crop insurance as their ace in the hole, says LSP's Warthesen.

"The major farm groups want to make crop insurance the big player in farm policy," he says. "That way, they can make it look like they are giving up something in the form of direct payments when in reality they are gaining much more, at the taxpayers' expense."

Warthesen says it's important to have a crop insurance program that is true to its roots: as a tool for managing risk, not as one that eliminates the incentive to farm in a way that's good for the land and the community. A strong crop insurance program is particularly important at a time when wild swings in the weather are making farming fraught with even more uncertainty.

"It's a needed tool, but it requires major changes to make it a program that's fair for all farmers," he says.

LSP and other sustainable agriculture groups want a crop insurance program that requires conservation compliance, better targets affordable policies to the farmers who need them, and stops discriminating against beginning farmers and organic producers. The latter group of farmers must pay a 5 percent surcharge to participate in crop insurance, and are given inadequate payments in the event of a crop failure.

Bach agrees that the program is due for a major overhaul, or it will do even more damage on the land and in his community.

"This was set up to be a safety net for real farmers out there producing crops, not a tool for concentrating wealth and emptying our towns," he says. □

Planning the future

The interim ordinance isn't just a planning tool—it can be a key to a community's sustainable future

When a group of investors first proposed building a garbage burner in Lynn Mizner's rural community in 2010, she and her neighbors had plenty of questions. Nothing this large had ever been proposed for the area, which consists of the town of Palisade and Logan Township in northeast Minnesota's Aitkin County. The proposed project was slated to take in refuse from eight counties and use an experimental plasma gasification technology to reduce it to ash. All of this was supposed to take place in a community that's home to some 170 people on the banks of the Mississippi River.

"They were talking 26 semi-loads a day of municipal and tire waste," says Mizner. "This is a town with one street."

In fact, the investors held well-attended public information meetings where residents asked numerous questions. How would all that truck traffic affect the township's farm roads? What impact would it have on the river and wetlands in the area? How much land would be occupied by the facility and the garbage staging area? What about air pollution emissions? Why was it that other plasma burners built around the country tended to close down after just a few years?

It turned out the Q and A sessions were heavy on the questions, and light on the answers.

"I even met with the project's executive director and gave her a list of questions and she said she would get back to me. But she didn't," says Mizner, who raises livestock and vegetables in Logan Township. "They wouldn't put anything in writing — that was a red flag to me."

Such red flags made it clear that some thought needed to be put into what kind of development was appropriate for a community this size. At one point some 800 people from the region signed a petition raising serious concerns about the garbage burner.

The bottom line was that a project of unprecedented scope for the area was being rushed through by a group of investors who had everything to gain from keeping township residents in the dark. Hasty decisions on the garbage burner, or any other major

development for that matter, could have repercussions for the community long after the investors had drawn their profits out of the endeavor. And people like Mizner would end up living with the results.

"We would like to see some jobs. We would like to see economic development," says Mizner. "But the township's job is to protect the area's quality of life. We're a very close-knit community, as you can tell by how we reacted."

How they reacted was to set in motion a series of steps for taking control of the community's future. And like many rural communities before it, Logan Township bought the time needed to execute this process utilizing a key tool of local government in Minnesota: the interim ordinance.

Local democracy mechanism

In a state like Minnesota, townships have extensive rights when it comes to planning and zoning. In the mid-1960s, the Minnesota Legislature passed a statute giving municipalities the powers and a uniform procedure to guide the future development of land. In the mid-1980s, the Legislature included townships in the definition of "municipality," thereby giving them the same zoning authority as cities.

Minnesota statutes also allow a township to adopt an interim ordinance. Also called a land use moratorium, this is a way of temporarily freezing major development while the town board conducts the research needed to prepare a well thought-out comprehensive plan that allows for the kind of development that fits the character of the area.

Over the past few decades numerous townships have used the interim ordinance to create plans that help determine the best places for major developments such as large-scale confinement livestock operations and quarries. Most recently, a form of the land use moratorium has been used on the county level in southeast Minnesota as residents try to figure out how to deal with the large-scale mining of silica sand, which is shipped to

other parts of the country to be used in gas and oil well drilling (see page 10).

Over the years, Minnesota courts have repeatedly upheld the right of local governments to put in place interim ordinances and to manage their own planning and zoning.

Because the interim ordinance is so effective at giving communities time to determine what development best fits with their needs and desires, it has been a perennial target of pro-factory farm forces and developers, as well as firms seeking to put in other major projects such as sand mines. Bills dramatically weakening the right to put in place an interim ordinance as well as other elements of local government control have been introduced repeatedly at the Minnesota Legislature over the past several years. This year has been no exception (see "Interim ordinance under attack," page 17).

So far, thanks to the efforts of the Land Stewardship Project and other pro-local government groups, the interim ordinance and local control in general have been kept intact.

Buying some time

In 2010 Lynn Mizner, the Logan Township farmer, contacted LSP organizer Bobby King about the proposed garbage burner. He recommended the township put in place an interim ordinance and begin developing a comprehensive plan for the community. Using the LSP publication on local control in Minnesota, *When a Factory Farm Comes to Town: Protecting Your Township from Unwanted Development*, as a resource, Logan Township residents set to work.

• • •
"It's helped us take the
bull by the horns as far as
planning the future."
• • •

At the township's annual meeting in October 2010, the board voted to develop an interim ordinance after 68 of 74 residents who attended showed support for such a move. The board also voted to develop a planning and zoning committee that would research what natural resources were in the community, as well as the presence of infrastructure such as roads and power lines. Over the next several months the board consulted with experts, including an attorney and a township government expert. In the fall of 2011, the board signed the interim ordinance, which puts a hold on development for a year, or until a comprehensive plan and related zoning control have been adopted, whichever comes first (the township has the option of extending that moratorium for up to another year).

Mizner, who is on the township's plan-

Interim Ordinance, see page 17...

ning and zoning committee, estimates it cost less than \$1,500 in legal and consultancy fees to develop the interim ordinance. One Minnesota local government expert who has helped numerous townships develop comprehensive plans estimates that an interim ordinance can often be drafted for less than \$2,500, and it costs \$100 to \$150 annually to administer. Implementing zoning rules will cost additional funds, with the amount varying widely depending on the township and how comprehensive the zoning is.

Mizner and the other members of the planning and zoning committee are currently taking stock of the township's water and soil resources, power utilities and roads to determine what type of development would be appropriate for the area. Mizner says the process has been an excellent way to think about what residents would like their community to look like, and what kinds of developments coincide with those desires.

It's also been a good wake-up call about how little control a township has when it doesn't have in place a good comprehensive plan.

"We uncovered some things that were really surprising," says Mizner. "For example, the county zoning was really loose."

Fortunately, townships can put in place planning and zoning ordinances that are just as or more restrictive as a county's rules.

A lasting impact

The backers of the garbage burner project have withdrawn their proposal, but it's left one long-lasting legacy in Mizner's community.

"It's helped us take the bull by the horns as far as planning the future. It has also helped us get together and talk about what we would like to see," she says. "But we wouldn't have had the opportunity to do that without the interim ordinance." □

Interim ordinance guide

When a Factory Farm Comes to Town: Protecting Your Township from Unwanted Development is the Land Stewardship Project's guide on using the Minnesota Interim Ordinance and other tools in the state's Municipal Planning law.

It can be downloaded at www.landstewardshipproject.org/pdf/township_manual06.pdf. Free paper copies are available by contacting LSP's Bobby King at 612-722-6377 or bking@landstewardshipproject.org

Interim ordinance under attack

As a sign of the priority anti-local control forces have put on undermining the right of communities to use the interim ordinance, Minnesota lawmakers considered House File 389 during the very first meeting of the House Government Operations and Elections Committee on Jan. 26.

Under House File 389, merely applying for a permit exempts a proposed development from any future interim ordinance. However, all too often neighbors don't get any information about a project until *after* the permit has been applied for. When that happens, an interim ordinance may be needed to freeze the status quo and create time to assess the situation.

The proposed legislation also requires a two-thirds vote (a super majority) to enact an interim ordinance. For counties, this would mean four of five commissioners, or 80 percent, must vote for the ordinance. Currently, an interim ordinance can be enacted by a simple majority.

In addition, HF 389 (its Senate companion is SF 270) slows the process for enacting an interim ordinance by mandating public notice before such a moratorium can be enacted. In many cases, a local unit

of government — particularly a township — does not get complete information on a proposed development until shortly before approval. In those cases, there can be legitimate concerns that the local government needs to address. When that happens, an interim ordinance must be enacted quickly to be effective. The very nature of an interim ordinance is to address unanticipated situations, and so there are times when it must be enacted quickly as an emergency measure.

As of this writing, HF 389 and SF 270 had passed through the committee process and were headed for votes on the floor of the House and Senate, respectively. The 2012 legislative session is scheduled to adjourn April 30.

For the latest information on this and other anti-local control legislation, see www.landstewardshipproject.org, or contact LSP's Bobby King at 612-722-6377, bking@landstewardshipproject.org.

Future issues of LSP's e-letter, the *LIVE-WIRE*, will also include updates. For details on how to sign up for the *LIVE-WIRE*, see page 31.

Governor pledges support for local control



Members of the Land Stewardship Project's State Policy Committee, along with LSP staff, met Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton in early December at the Capitol. Gov. Dayton agreed to veto any legislation that weakens local control and to stay in close contact with LSP on the issue during the 2012 Legislative session. He also agreed to attend LSP's Family Farm Breakfast at the Capitol March 6 and is considering attending a summer meeting at the farm of an LSP member to discuss a proactive agenda for family farms, sustainable agriculture and food systems. Pictured with Dayton are (left to right): LSP organizer Bobby King, members Loretta Jaus, Lynn Mizner, Ted Winter, Florence Minar, Alan Perish and Jim Falk. Mark Schultz, LSP's associate director, and LSP organizer Paul Sobocinski are also pictured. (LSP photo)

Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse

Are you a beginning farmer looking to rent or purchase farmland? Or are you an established farmer/landowner who is seeking a beginning farmer to purchase or rent your land, or to work with in a partnership/employee situation? Then consider having your information circulated via LSP's *Seeking Farmers-Seeking Land Clearinghouse* (www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/land_clearinghouse.html). To obtain a form and for more information, e-mail LSP's Parker Forsell at parker@landstewardshipproject.org, or call 507-523-3366. You can also download the forms from www.landstewardshipproject.org/fb/resources.html#land. Here are the latest listings:

Seeking land: Twin Cities area

• Michelle Wiltgen and Jake Duncan are seeking to rent at least half-an-acre of tillable land in Minnesota's Twin Cities region, preferably in Ramsey, Washington, Scott, Dakota or Goodhue County. They want to start a small vegetable farming operation in the spring. They require a house. Contact: Michelle Wiltgen, 507-261-4110; wilt0078@umn.edu.

Seeking land: Western WI

• Robin Sander is seeking to purchase 2 to 20 acres of tillable land in western Wisconsin's Vernon, Monroe, Barron or Sawyer County. She would like to use the property for small-scale vegetable production, in addition to growing grasses and shrubs. Sander does not require a house or buildings. She would prefer water for irrigation. Sander is open to various ownership/rental arrangements. Contact Robin Sander, 608-337-4494; walbertson4@aol.com.

Seeking Land: Central & NE WI

• Patrick Beal and Alisa Epstein are seeking to buy or rent 20 to 40 acres of farmland in central or northeast Wisconsin. They would prefer that 5 to 10 acres be tillable, 10 to 15 acres pastured, and approximately 5 acres be forested. Beal and Epstein would prefer land that has not been sprayed for at least a year. They would like a house and barn, as well as a water source for irrigation. Contact: Patrick Beal or Alisa Epstein, 262-914-7187.

Land for rent: Twin Cities area

• Becky and Denny Oehrlein have for rent 7-plus acres of land in Minnesota's Sherburne County, near Elk River. The land is tillable and has not been sprayed in over seven years. A house is not available but there is a well. Price is negotiable. Contact: Becky Oehrlein, 562-964-6518; dennybecyo@yahoo.com.

• Bob and Terre Larsen have for rent 2.25 acres of tillable farmland in Minnesota's Scotty County, near the town of Elko south of the Twin Cities. This ground has not been tilled in over a decade; three years ago it was lightly used as a horse pasture and it has not been sprayed in five years. No house is

available, but there is an 8 x 8 shed and limited water is available. The Larsens would like to find someone willing to farm organically and responsibly. They may be able to provide some assistance and the price is negotiable. Contact: Bob Larsen, 952-491-0404; Bob@FYIBob.com.

Land available: NW WI

• Kathy Wagenbach has for sale 72-80 acres of farmland in northwest Wisconsin's Barron County. Sixty acres is tillable, 8 forested and 5 pastured. There are apple trees, a small raspberry patch, rhubarb plants and a perennial garden. There is a barn, silo, milk house, pole shed and a maple syrup shed. The price range is \$275,000 to \$320,000. Contact: Kathy Wagenbach 715-458-0011.

Land available: NE WI

• Michael Pierquet has for rent 40 acres of tillable and pastured land in northeast Wisconsin's Oconto County, near the community of Abrams. The land has not been sprayed in 10 years, and there is a house and large pole building, along with a pond and creek. The property is on a dead end road. Contact: Michael Pierquet, drmjp@me.com.

Seeking land to rent: SC WI

• Christine Welcher is seeking to rent 5-10 acres of land in south-central Wisconsin's Dane County, near Madison. Welcher would prefer that at least 5 acres be tillable, and that it either be certified organic or not sprayed for at least two years. A house is required and out-buildings would be nice. She would be ready to move in May. Contact: Christine Welcher, Christine.welcher@gmail.com.

Seeking land: SC MN

• Rory Groves is seeking to buy 20 to 40 acres of farmland in south-central Minnesota's Sibley, Carver or Scott County. He is looking for tillable, pastured and forested acres, and does not require a house. Groves prefers that the land have a creek or pond for irrigation. Contact: Rory Groves, 612-801-2969; rgroves@swiftweather.com.

Seeking Land: WI

• Harold and Ed Hilton are seeking to buy 10 to 40 acres of farmland in Wisconsin's

Grant, Iowa, Green, Buffalo, Pierce, Dunn, Crawford, Richland, Sauk, Vernon, Monroe or La Crosse counties. They would like at least 5 to 15 tillable acres and would prefer certified organic land, or at least land that has not been sprayed in two years. They would like a house and an outbuilding such as a barn and workshop. A water source such as a perennial stream would be good. They would be ready to move in spring or early summer. Contact: Harold Hilton, 773-213-4652; hdhilton@aol.com.

Seeking land: WI, CO, MD, VA, IA VT

• Robert Schubert is seeking to purchase or rent 10-50 acres of land in the states of Wisconsin, Colorado, Maryland, Virginia, Iowa or Vermont. He would like at least 5 to 10 acres to be tillable and would prefer land that's certified organic or has not been sprayed in several years. Schubert would like a house on the property. Contact Robert Schubert, 202-487-6493; rschubert2000@yahoo.com.

Land available: Southern KY

• Lane and Ricki Linnenkohl have for sale 40 acres of farmland in southern Kentucky's Monroe County. It consists of tillable, forested and pastured land, which has not been sprayed in at least 10 years. The 20-acre pasture is fenced with three-strand electric fence for rotational grazing. There are garden beds totaling approximately 1,800 square feet, as well as another quarter-acre garden. Biodynamic preparations have been used sporadically on the farm. There are also orchards, a house, two utility sheds, a livestock shelter, a root cellar and a cold frame. The asking price is \$85,000. Contact: Ricki Linnenkohl, 815-679-7596, or Lane Linnenkohl, 815-679-7595.

Seeking land: NC CO

• Stephen Bures is seeking to purchase or rent approximately 1 acre of land in north-central Colorado's Boulder County for an aquaponics operation. The plan is to eventually have a market farm focused on veg-

Clearinghouse, see page 19...

etables, micro-greens and medicinal herbs grown using biological nutrient-intensive methods. He does not need a house. Contact Stephen Bures, 970-980-3882; stephen@waterhousegardens.com.

Seeking land: VA

• Kevin Scott Postlewait is seeking to rent 15 or more acres in the state of Virginia. He is looking for a property where he can raise organic food and free-range livestock. Postlewait would like the property to have a house and barn. Contact: Kevin Scott Postlewait, mbsflorida@bellsouth.net.

Seeking land: Pacific Northwest

• Joe Warnick is seeking to purchase farmland in the Pacific Northwest, preferably Washington. He does not require a house and is willing to consider a wide range of farming opportunities. Ideally, Warnick would like to find a farmer who wants to share expertise and eventually transfer a farming enterprise to him. Warnick has worked on organic vegetable farms and alfalfa farms. Contact: Joe Warnick, joepaulwarnick@yahoo.com.

Organic dairy for rent: W WI

• Mark Eslinger has available for rent a 158-acre certified organic dairy operation in western Wisconsin's Chippewa County. Eslinger has a 60-cow seasonal herd, barn/parlor and full line of field equipment, along with rotationally-grazed pastures. A house is available. Eslinger is willing to work with potential renters on various options. Renters can either bring their own cow herd onto the farm or purchase Eslinger's. Various options are also available for utilizing the machinery, including hiring Eslinger to do the field work. Eslinger also has access to an additional 200 acres of certified organic land next to his farm. Contact: Mark Eslinger, 715-644-5368 (home); 715-828-9298 (cell); loramarfarm@gmail.com.

Seeking farmer, dairy processing partnership: NC Iowa

• Tim Koester is seeking a beginning or established farmer to join him as a partner in a small dairy processing operation in north-central Iowa's Wright County, near Eagle Grove. He has ownership of farm equipment and dairy cattle, as well as access to land currently enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. Koester is looking for a partner to help establish the dairy processing portion of the business. He is willing to relocate or expand, depending on circumstances. Con-

tact: Tim Koester, 515-570-5418.

Land for rent: SW WI

• Robert Waters has for rent 40 acres of tillable farmland in southwest Wisconsin's Sauk County, near the Ironton/La Valle area. The land has not been sprayed in over 20 years and was certified organic by the last tenant. No house is available. Depending on the crop raised, he is willing to work out a year-to-year contract, or a longer term deal if appropriate. The asking price is \$200 per acre, but is negotiable. Contact: Robert Waters, 608-617-4817.

Seeking land: Southern WI

• Emmet Fisher and Cella Langer are seeking to rent 5 to 30 acres of farmland in southern Wisconsin's Dane, Sauk, Iowa or Richland Counties. They would like tillable, forested and pastured land, as well as a house. Hills and surface water are a plus; close proximity to Madison would be ideal. Contact: Cella Langer, langer.cella@gmail.com, 978-257-5153; or Emmet Fisher, emmetbfisher@gmail.com, 651-380-6988.

Seeking land: Eastern WI

• Linda Strickland is seeking to rent or buy 1-2 acres of farmland for a community garden in eastern Wisconsin's Brown County, near Green Bay. She would like tillable and pastured land, and would prefer that it be certified organic, although she will consider other land use histories. She would like to have access to water and a garage. Contact: Linda Strickland, 1111 Velp Ave., Apt. 4, Green Bay, WI 54303.

Seeking organic vegetable farmers: Midwest

• Organic Valley's Produce Program is seeking certified organic vegetable farmers for the upcoming season. The farmers must have experience as vegetable growers and be able to arrange trucking to the Wisconsin communities of Cashton or Hillsboro. Organic Valley will provide the marketing, on-farm testing and bi-weekly payments. Contact: Adam Varney, adam.varney@organicvalley.coop; 608-632-0685.

Seeking dairy farm: Twin Cities

• Elinor Opitz is looking for a dairy farm to rent or purchase within a one-hour drive of downtown Minneapolis. She currently owns approximately 10 milking cows and 10 heifers. She would prefer an operation that is currently in operation, or at least has working milking equipment. Some heifer facilities would be helpful. She would also be open to anything with a workable barn, and would be willing

to buy and install her own equipment if necessary. Opitz would be open to partnering into an operation or any other situation that would allow her to milk her cows. She does not require a house. Contact: Elinor Opitz, 320-266-0315 or opitz037@umn.edu.

Seeking Farmer: Northern ID

• Cascade Creek Farm in northern Idaho's Boundary County is looking for someone to take advantage of its "Farm Incubator" opportunity. The 97-acre farm currently raises grass-fed and grass-finished beef cattle, pastured hogs and pastured poultry. There is a large prepped market garden space available. Cascade is especially interested in someone who would be open to managing the pastured hog operation. A mobile home with high speed internet is available. Contact: Mimi Feuling or Bob Fredericks, mimi@cascadecreekfarm.com; 208-267-1325.

Farm for rent: NE PA

• Gina Taylor has for rent a 26-acre farm in northeast Pennsylvania's Bradford County. The farm consists of 10 tillable, 10 forested and 4 pastured acres. It has not been sprayed in more than seven years. There is an apartment over a former country store with potential to turn store area into a commercial kitchen, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) pick-up, etc. Farming equipment is available. The price is negotiable — would consider a cash payment of approximately \$500 a month or products from farm. Contact: Gina Taylor, karma_anais@hotmail.com.

Seeking Land: NC or E Ill.

• Sandra Zarembski is seeking to rent 1 to 2 acres in north-central or eastern Illinois. Zarembski would like to grow pumpkins and she will consider land that has been conventionally farmed or is certified organic. She does not require a house or outbuildings. Contact: Sandra Zarembski, szarembski2001@yahoo.com.

Seeking land/farmer: IL, WI, IA, MI

• Tom DeBates is seeking to purchase a small farm and would like to find a farmer to operate it organically. He is looking for around 20 acres of farmland in northwest Illinois, southwest Wisconsin, northeast Iowa or southwest Michigan, and would like it to have not been sprayed for approximately five years. DeBates is open to various farming enterprises. Contact: Tom DeBates, tdebates@sbcglobal.net; 630-373-3831; 630-262-8193.

Farm Beginnings

Kristianna Gehant & Nick Siddens

A little horse sense

When a new food and farming model is introduced to a region, it can be slow to catch on—if at all. On the other hand, sometimes a new concept takes off like a galloping horse, challenging its practitioners to hang on for the ride. One Saturday last October, Kristianna Gehant and Nick Siddens were on their knees, pressing garlic bulbs into the rich glacial till soil of their northeastern South Dakota farm. Five years ago, they jumped off a bucking bronco, and this is where they landed.

“We may have been heading towards burnout if we hadn’t of changed,” says Kristianna, 36. “We just needed to pull on the reins a little bit.”

The frisky pony in question was Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), a system where farmers sell shares in their farm before the growing season, and in return make a weekly delivery of produce to the “members” of their operation. When the couple launched a CSA produce enterprise on Prairie Coteau Farm in 2004, the concept was so new in the region that “people thought we had invented the concept,” recalls Kristianna.

That first season for Prairie Coteau started out in relatively humble fashion: they sold 12 subscriptions, mostly as half-shares. Then, as the word got out, things moved from a trot to a gallop. The next year they more than doubled their shareholders. By 2007 they had 42. Nick’s full-time job with a wind energy company kept him on the road for days at a time. So when they were doing the CSA enterprise, Kristianna was doing most of the farm work during the week. On the weekends they drove to Sioux Falls 90 miles away to sell produce at a farmers’ market. Kristianna and Nick began looking at the numbers and realized that they would need 100 to 120 CSA members to make the farm a full-time endeavor for both of them.

They were concerned that such growth at that time would throw a roadblock in front of some major life goals, number one being starting a family.

“We were going with the flow and I think we could have gotten up to those numbers, but it would have required risking being unhappy about sacrificing things like

starting a family,” says Nick, 33. “We wanted to re-evaluate where we were at so we could redirect and make it work together.”

What they needed, the couple decided, were the tools to execute the kind of planning they’d neglected to do before jumping into CSA farming. So after the 2007 season they ended the CSA enterprise, and that fall and winter Kristianna took the Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings course (*see page 7*). Twice a month she traveled to Marshall in southwest Minnesota to participate in classes taught by farmers and other ag professionals from the community. The course focused on goal setting, business planning and innovative marketing.

Farm Beginnings Dakota style

Kristianna had ulterior motives for taking the class. She serves on the leadership team



Gehant and Siddens are focusing on keeping their farming enterprises modest until their daughters, Georgia and Luna, are older. (LSP photo)



Fresh Faces-Fresh Farming

of Dakota Rural Action, a nonprofit family farm organization based in Brookings. A few years ago, DRA’s staff and members began discussing the possibility of teaching the Farm Beginnings course in South Dakota. Kristianna wanted to get a first-hand look at the course to see if it could be adapted for use across the border.

Her time in the program was well spent. Kristianna reported back to DRA that the course’s emphasis on whole farm planning and financial management would be a good fit for South Dakotans seeking to start farming or make changes in their current operations. Dakota Rural Action is now in the midst of its third year of offering the Farm Beginnings course to people representing a variety of ages, agricultural experiences and goals.

“I think what Farm Beginnings has done in South Dakota is unearth all the people who are interested in small scale and sustainable agriculture and put them in touch with each other,” says Kristianna, who has led class sessions.

The course paid off personally as well.

Kristianna didn’t grow up on a farm and has a degree in history and women’s studies from St. Olaf College. She worked on agroforestry projects as a Peace Corps volunteer in Mauritania and was introduced to CSA farming while interning on an operation in northern Illinois. Kristianna concedes that experience prompted her to “fall in love” with the whole concept of raising a family on a small working farm.

“I think there was a great deal of idealism involved—feeling like this was something very positive to do for the earth, for our family, for myself and other people,” she says.

Farm Beginnings provided the opportunity to step back and take a look at how to proceed with a farming career from a more practical point of view.

“Farm Beginnings helped us figure out what we want out of farming and our quality of life in general,” Kristianna says, adding that one of the most valuable outcomes of the course is that she and Nick were prompted to write down their long term plans. “It made us consider what the other was thinking and

Fresh Faces, *see page 21...*

see where we agreed and where we didn't. We were actually pretty much on the same page."

One doesn't have time for that sort of reflection while seated on a galloping horse. One thing the couple agreed upon was that running a CSA given their current situation and goals was probably not the best fit.



Garlic production has allowed the couple to focus on managing the farm as a whole and make plans for the future. (LSP photo)

Nick grew up on an Illinois dairy farm and concedes he "was not a model farm child in any way."

"I think I spent my entire high school career trying to learn as little as possible about farming," he says with a laugh.

He eventually got a degree in natural resource and environmental science from the University of Illinois and sees himself continuing in his current position with a wind energy company for several years to

come. However, Nick would like to eventually build their farm into an operation that can provide a full-time income for both he and Kristianna.

The couple has developed an overall goal of managing the 40 acres as a whole and integrating income-generating crop fields with habitat such as prairie and trees. They would also like to eventually bring livestock onto the farm to help cycle nutrients into the soil while controlling weeds and adding

economic value to grass and hay.

"Vegetable farming is all-consuming and you get stuck on those two acres," says Nick. "It's tough to look up and manage the rest of the farm."

Narrower focus = wider view

After ending the CSA operation, Kristianna and Nick decided to focus on raising garlic, a crop that had always done well on their farm. They grow anywhere from eight to 12 varieties of garlic, mostly as seed stock that's shipped all over the country. They acquired organic certification in 2010, and their customers come mostly through their website (www.prairiegarlic.com) and contacts through the Garlic Seed Foundation.

During the fall, Kristianna and Nick spend a lot of time making shipments containing anywhere from a pound to 200 pounds of seed garlic. In 2011 they grew a little less than an acre of garlic, which produced around 1,300 pounds.

Give it a listen

To listen to a Land Stewardship Project podcast featuring Kristianna Gehant and Nick Siddens talking about their farm, see www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html. It's episode 113.

As they plant a Russian Giant variety of garlic on this particular October day with the help of a friend, Clark Young, Kristianna and Nick discuss the advantages of focusing on one enterprise for now. Unlike vegetables, garlic can be stored and shipped relatively easily using services like UPS, which is particularly important given the distance between their farm and major markets. And during the growing season it doesn't require the daily, intensive management that produce does.

"We can do it as a team," says Kristianna. "There are some labor-intensive times, but not every week. You plant it in October, then mulch it, remove the scapes in June and harvest it in July."

But focusing on one enterprise isn't getting in the way of moving forward with other plans for managing the farm as a whole. The couple has established native prairie grass on a small hillock to control erosion, and are working with a friend who is a permaculture expert to revitalize a grove.

Once their young daughters—Georgia, 1; and Luna, 3—are old enough to attend school, Kristianna and Nick will consider expanding the garlic enterprise and perhaps getting back into vegetable production.

In a sense, the fact that Farm Beginnings has helped nurture a growing local foods/sustainable agriculture movement in South Dakota takes a bit of the pressure off the couple. Kristianna says part of the reason things got a little out of hand half-a-dozen years ago was that there was the feeling Prairie Coteau offered one of very few options in the area as far as local, sustainable food. Now that it's become clear there are other farms in the region doing this sort of thing, Nick and Kristianna don't feel they have to do it all—they can pick their niche.

"We can step back a little," says Kristianna as night falls and she and Nick walk the kids from the garlic patch to the house. "We can say, 'Okay, it's great there's all this interest in local foods and CSAs, but our place in all this can be a little bit different.'" □

Farm Beginnings elsewhere

For more information on Dakota Rural Action's Farm Beginnings program, contact Heidi Kolbeck-Urlacher at 605-697-5204 (ext. 220) or heidiku@dakotarural.org. More information is also at <http://dakotarural.org/grow/farmbeginnings>.

Besides Minnesota and South Dakota, LSP has licensed community groups to offer Farm Beginnings in Illinois, Nebraska, North Dakota, the Hudson Valley of New York and the Lake Superior region of northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin. For more on those programs, see www.farmbeginnings.org or contact LSP's Parker Forsell at 507-523-3366; parker@landstewardshipproject.org.

More Fresh Faces- Fresh Farming profiles

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

Farm Beginnings

Q & A: Attached to the land, but wanting to pass it on *LSP's play on the future of farming hits home for one farm family*

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Look Who's Knockin'*, a one-act play developed by the Land Stewardship Project, was presented in several western Minnesota community venues this winter. The play raises questions around land ethics and the moral dilemma posed by wanting to get top dollar for selling one's land while desiring to help the next generation of farmers get started farming.

Created out of numerous interviews and real-world stories of both beginning and retiring farmers in recent years, the play uses humor, story-telling, and the common everyday tension in an elderly farm couple's relationship to prompt personal reflection and community discussion in the audience. The play features Gerald and Nettie Dietrich, who over the past 50 years have built up an award-winning conservation farm. They are now struggling with whether to sell it to a large cash-cropper in the neighborhood for top dollar, or to give a young couple an opportunity to launch a new, diverse farming enterprise.

After each performance, LSP organizers have led audience discussions about the issues brought up by Gerald and Nettie. Audience members also talk about what steps can be taken to help the next generation of farmers get access to farmland.

The author of the play is LSP organizer Doug Nopar, who helped present the drama throughout southeast Minnesota in 2011. The director of the western Minnesota performances was Carmen Fernholz, a local farmer who has long been involved in theater in the region. *Look Who's Knockin'* hits close to home for Fernholz, who is 68. He and his wife Sally began farming in the Madison area in 1972, and over the years they have emerged as pioneers in organic crop production.

Continuing the farm's legacy is important to Carmen and Sally, and in recent years they've begun discussing the future of the operation with their four adult children. After a recent performance of *Look Who's Knockin'*, Carmen talked to the *Land Stewardship Letter* about some of the issues the play brings up, and how the Fernholz family is preparing for the future.

LSL: Tell us about your farming career.

Fernholz: Sally and I started out with about 80 acres in 1972 and then over the years accumulated additional acreage that today is right at about 450 acres, including owned and rented.

LSL: There are often these transition gaps where the kids of farmers don't want to farm, but the retiring farmers want to keep the option open of passing the land on to someone in the future who might want to farm it.

Fernholz: What you described is exactly what my wife Sally and I have really gone through over the last three to four years. We

were carrying on a discussion very similar to the dialogue in this play, and over that time we did talk to planners, we did talk to lawyers, we read a lot of things. I have to say a lot of the farm magazines have a lot of good information in them today dealing with this.

How can we build a bridge to the next generation to allow those people to have more readily accessible opportunities on the land? That's what we really thought about.

So we did a limited partnership, and what we're in the process of doing is gifting the land to our children. That will in a sense put the responsibility onto them

of figuring out how to make sure the next generation has access to land. But for now Sally and I maintain all the decision-making responsibilities on that land.

The other thing is we're hopeful that maybe the whole idea of who should own the land, what size operations farms should be, maybe that mindset will start shifting. And I'd like to really parallel it to organic agricul-

ture. In the early 70s organics wasn't even talked about to speak of. It was somewhere out there. But today, it has become a very acceptable movement—the mindset has changed. And that was sort of in the back of our minds – maybe the mindset of more people making decisions on the land will

• • •

“...if you're a good farmer you can't help but become attached to the land. And when you become attached to the land, you really want to take care of it. That's the legacy many of us want to convey to the next generation.”

• • •

come back again in the next generation.

If we sell the land today, the decision is done—we haven't thought out to the next generation. Whereas if we can sort of together build a bridge that allows us to keep that land as a family farm and think about what future generations could do with it, then we've at least maintained the opportunity to do different things with it.

What I think we should be open to is the possibility that, for example, two or three years from now I decide I'd really like to just walk away from the land. I have an opportunity then to try and mentor someone



Look Who's Knockin' director Carmen Fernholz (center) discusses the play with actors Kurt Schulz and Nadine Schmidt after a recent performance in Madison, Minn. (LSP photo)

Legacy, see page 23...

other than my direct family to operate that land, with the understanding that should my children's children, my grandchildren, want to come back to the land, it would be there.

LSL: *It's interesting to see that pioneers in sustainable agriculture are now established enough to consider transitioning to the next generation.*

Fernholz: It's so gratifying. Ten years ago is when the first local farmer came to me to talk about organics and it's so beautiful to see how that has mushroomed in the last few years, and I'm really optimistic that will happen in local foods. Once we start appreciating local foods, we'll start appreciating local production and everything that goes with it, including more farmers on the land.

One of the people at the play today talked about the idea of farmers having to be business people. Farming is a business so you can't become attached to the land, goes this way of thinking.

His *but* on that statement was *but* if you're a good farmer you can't *help* but become attached to the land. And when you become attached to the land, you really want to take care of it. In the recent past, I'm talking the last two or three years, I've had several people come up to me and ask me, very pleadingly, if I would rent their land so they could keep it organic.

I think that's the thing that many of us want to make sure we pass on to the next generation is that they in fact take care of it. That's the legacy many of us want to convey to the next generation. □

Look Who's Knockin' in your community?

Are you interested in hosting a performance of *Look Who's Knockin'* in your community? Contact LSP's Lewiston office at 507-523-3366 or settler@landstewardshipproject.org to learn how you can bring the play to your area. □

Give it a listen

To listen to an LSP *Ear to the Ground* podcast featuring an interview with Carmen Fernholz, go to www.landstewardshipproject.org/podcast.html. It's episode 112.

Episode 94 features an interview with *Look Who's Knockin'* author, Doug Nopar; episode 95 features an audio performance of the play.



Nettie (Nadine Schmidt) and Gerald (Kurt Schulz) engage in a heated discussion over the future of their farm during a *Look Who's Knockin'* performance. "Now we have a chance to help someone else—young people that were just like we were in so many ways," says Nettie. "Wouldn't that be something to be truly proud of?" (LSP photo)

LSP's 2012 spring-summer workshops

The Land Stewardship Project has scheduled a set of farm skills workshops and field days for this spring and summer. This is a preliminary schedule. See www.landstewardshipproject.org for the latest on workshops and field days. Here's what's available thus far:

- March 24—**Making a living with grass-based dairy**, St. Charles, Minn.; Contact: Aimee Finley, 507-523-3366; aimee@landstewardshipproject.org.
- March 27—**Workshop on selling farm products in SE Minn. using online tools**, Winona, Minn.; Contact: Caroline van Schaik, 507-523-3366; caroline@landstewardshipproject.org.
- March 28—**Farmer/food buyer "Got Local" workshop**, St. Charles (Minn.) Community Center, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; Contact: Caroline van Schaik, 507-523-3366; caroline@landstewardshipproject.org.
- April—**Transportation costs workshop**, Ill. or NE Iowa (*details to be announced*); Contact: Caroline van Schaik, 507-523-3366; caroline@landstewardshipproject.org.
- April 15—**Farm Dreams class**, Eastside Food Co-op, Minneapolis, 1 p.m.-5 p.m.; Contact: Aimee Finley, 507-523-3366; aimee@landstewardshipproject.org.
- Mid-May—**Farmer-food distributor roundtable**, SE Minn. (*details to be announced*); Contact: Caroline van Schaik, 507-523-3366; caroline@landstewardshipproject.org.
- June 2—**Introduction to grazing class & field day with Howard Moechnig**, Jaus Farm, Gibbon, Minn.; Contact: Richard Ness, 320-269-2105; or Aimee Finley, 507-523-3366.
- July—**Soils workshop**, SE Minnesota (*details to be announced*); Contact: Caroline van Schaik, LSP, 507-523-3366; caroline@landstewardshipproject.org.
- July 21—**Field day on producing high quality grass-finished beef**, Jepsen farm, Dorchester, Iowa; Contact: Richard Ness, 320-269-2105; or Aimee Finley, 507-523-3366.
- July 21—**Skills session on raspberries & currants**, Natura Farm, Marine on St. Croix, Minn.; Contact: Parker Forsell, 507-523-3366; parker@landstewardshipproject.org.
- August 3—**Beginning farmer troubleshooting field day with David Van Eeckhout of Hog's Back Farm**, Seven Songs Farm, Kenyon, Minn.; Contact: Parker Forsell, 507-523-3366; parker@landstewardshipproject.org.
- August 10—**Skills session on value-added processing**, Backyard Grocery, Bayport, Minn.; Contact: Parker Forsell, 507-523-3366; parker@landstewardshipproject.org.
- September 5—**Beginning farmer troubleshooting field day with Laura Frerichs & Adam Cullip of Loon Organics**, Bossy Acres, Dayton, Minn.; Contact: Parker Forsell, 507-523-3366; parker@landstewardshipproject.org.

Flexing in the new generation

The Pangracs and Olsons have created a transition plan for their dairy operation that can weather those inevitable rain days

With this article, the *Land Stewardship Letter* is launching an occasional series on passing farms on to the next generation. If you have story ideas for this series, contact Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377 or bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org.

When Kim Olson was in her second year of studying elementary education in college, she started talking seriously about returning to her family's dairy farm near the southeast Minnesota community of Lewiston. Her parents' first reaction? "We won't employ anyone on the farm without a four-year degree," Olson recalls them saying.

At a time when many young people are leaving the farm and not returning, that response from Dale and Carmene Pangrac may come as a bit of a surprise. When your only child shows an interest in farming, it's tempting to jump at the opportunity, before other life choices get in the way. But over the past three decades, the Pangracs have learned the benefits of being open to opportunities while making sure there's always a Plan B waiting in the wings.

"Change is constant," says Dale on a recent winter morning while taking a break from barn cleaning chores. "And you need to adapt."

That attitude has paid off. Kim went on to finish her degree, got married to Andy Olson, and in 2005 the couple returned to the Pangrac farm as employees. (Andy didn't grow up on a farm, but had worked on dairies in the area before getting a sociology degree.)

The two families eventually developed a plan for transitioning the farm to the Olsons. By the end of this year, the young couple—they're both 29—will own half of the cattle, feed and machinery.

That's particularly impressive given that the Pangracs—Carmene is 67, Dale, 62—and the Olsons have had to negotiate that age-old tension between the older and younger generation.

"We're go, go, go and they're,

"Wait a minute, just hold on—do you really want to do that?," Andy says.

A fast start

The Pangracs could be forgiven for taking a second and third look before jumping in with both feet. When they left middle school teaching in 1979 to buy a farm, a "go, go, go" atmosphere permeated agriculture.

"Everything was high," Carmene recalls. "They actually told us within a few years land would triple in value and milk would be \$25 a hundredweight."

The Pangracs dumped all their savings from teaching into a down payment on the farm and began producing as much milk as possible using a high-input model: raising crops like corn and hay and hauling it into the cows. By the early 1980s, the ag boom

was a bomb. The Pangracs' farm was worth a third of what they paid for it—a major blow to their borrowing power—and milk prices were not keeping pace with the cost of production.

"We could see the high input way wasn't going to pay," says Carmene. "It just wasn't making money. Something had to change or we would have to quit."

In 1991, the Pangracs, like many dairy farmers in southeast Minnesota at the time, converted from relying exclusively on feed produced in crop fields to managed rotational grazing of pastures. It reduced their per-cow production but was more profitable in the end because of the significantly lower input costs. It also increased the Pangrac family's quality of life.

"After we switched to grazing, we started going on more vacations because chores were simpler," says Kim. "That gave me a positive view of farming."

When it looked like Kim and Andy were serious about returning to the farm, the Pangracs considered their options: grow their herd significantly, or transition to organic so

they could qualify for higher milk prices. Since organic fit well with their use of grazing and the farm had never used many chemicals anyway, they went that route. By the time the Olsons joined the farm in 2005, the operation was certified organic.

A team transition

After the Olsons had their successful one-year trial run as employees of Prime Pastures Organic Dairy ("Kim grew up with it, and Andy's a fast learner," says Dale), the family worked with a local agricultural finance adviser to develop a long-term working agreement for eventually passing the farm on to the younger couple.

The working agreement was adapted from a transition plan developed by the University of Minnesota in the 1970s. When developing the agreement, both families sat down and penciled out what they needed as far as an income from the farm. Dale also ran cash flows and projections for what the farm could produce under various scenarios.

Both families are now drawing salaries from the operation, and the Olsons make regular payments to the Pangracs as they buy into the farm.



The Pangracs and Olsons like the flexibility a working agreement has given their transition. (photo by Aimee Finley)

Passing It On, see page 25...

When, at the end of this year, the Olsons are at the half-way mark as far as enterprise ownership goes, then some decisions will need to be made about next steps. The young couple could either stay at the 50 percent mark for awhile, providing them with more money for living expenses, or they could start buying out more of the operation as the Pangracs begin the process of bowing out.

For now, it looks like the Olsons will place any further buy-in on a holding pattern for a couple of years. Carmene and Dale both say they aren't interested in quitting farming anytime soon, although they would like more time away from the daily grind.

"Carmene loves the milking and I love the field work. If you could just turn us loose out there we'd both work 'til we die," says Dale. "But one of our goals is to be able to get away for a week or two weeks at a time."

By next year the Prime Pastures milking herd will be up to 175 cows, and Carmene is considering her physical limitations.

"I can't milk that many cows twice a day," she says. "I love feeding the calves and managing them, but I can't carry all that milk and stuff — there are things I just can't do."

"That's where we come in," says Andy with a smile.

A key part of the working agreement is estate planning—looking ahead to the time when the Pangracs are no longer owners of the farm or are forced out of the daily management of the operation by medical infirmities. For example, they have taken out long-term care insurance, in case one or both of them ends up in a nursing home. Such a step helps prevent Prime Pastures from being taken over by a health care facility in order to pay long-term care costs. The Pangracs are also allowed to gift a portion of the farm annually to the Olsons—current law allows gifting of up to around \$13,000 worth each year without paying estate taxes.

"Eventually we want to have them buy out everything so that when we are gone they don't have to worry about the estate taxes," says Dale.

A major source of tension in a transition can be who gets to occupy the farmstead itself. For good reason, retiring farmers are attached to the home place and are often hesitant to move. On the other hand, the farmers taking over an operation, especially one involving livestock, usually don't want to commute even a short distance.

As luck would have it, about the time the Olsons joined the farm, a neighboring place with a house came up for sale. In one fell swoop, Prime Pastures was able to gain more grazing and crop ground, and the

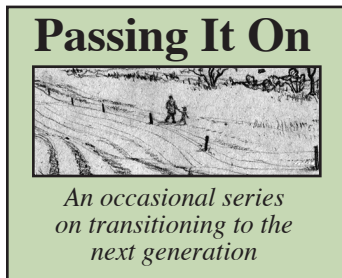
Olsons got a home about a half-mile from the dairy barn.

Rainy day adjustments

The families say the advantage to the working agreement is that it provides a structure and timeline for transitioning the farm to the next generation, but is flexible enough that it can be modified on-the-go as the situation demands.

"It's a good way for us to build equity fast. That's kind of what we were looking for was an opportunity for Kim and I to get into it and get up to a level where we can take over, or just hold," says Andy. "If you have a hard year and milk prices dip or all of a sudden Kim and I have some unforeseen expenses, we put it on pause."

Which is exactly what happened a few years ago when the farm lost the contract it had with an organic processor, and had to scramble to find a market that paid well. While searching for a new organic contract, both families stopped drawing a salary



from the farm, and the Olsons put on hold their payments into the buy-out. After a few months, they had a new organic buyer and were able to continue where they left off. In the end, the Olsons will only be four months off schedule in gaining 50 percent control of the cattle, feed and machinery.

To take advantage of the flexibility built into a working agreement requires willingness to compromise, open communication lines and a consistent monitoring of the financial state of the farm. Andy says he knows of farm transition situations—within families and outside of them—where both sides have unrealistic goals.

"You're not going to win the lottery and neither am I, so it's not like either of us is going to get über-wealthy out of the deal," he says. "It's not a give and take—it's a give on both sides. Everybody gives in order to be able to pass it on to the next generation."

Communication isn't always easy on a farm. Even though everyone is on the same piece of real estate day-in and day-out, it can be surprisingly difficult to find the time to talk about the big picture, especially when two families are involved. Throw into the mix the fact that the Olsons are raising three young children—Mallory, 5; Gavin, 2; and

Amelia, 9 months—and it can be quite difficult to find time to sit down and discuss where you're at and where you're going.

The Pangracs and Olsons have breakfast together on a regular basis to check in. In addition, Dale produces a quarterly projection of how they are doing financially, and then they meet to decide if there needs to be adjustments to how much each family is drawing out of the budget, etc.

"You have to do the paperwork. There's no way around it," says Dale. "I've got to admit I enjoy it. I enjoy doing what-ifs. I enjoy doing cash flows, and analyzing what we've done during the year."

Which brings up another important point in a farm transition involving multiple parties: allowing each participant to focus on his or her strengths. Dale's willingness to work on the financials dovetails nicely with Carmene and Kim's desire to milk and work with the cattle. Andy likes doing field work and making sure the farm keeps its equipment up-to-date.

And getting along also requires spending time with peers. The Olsons are part of an informal group of around a dozen beginning farm families from the area. They do everything from discuss farming techniques and share ideas for cutting costs to go out to eat together. In turn, the Pangracs network with a group of older farmers, many of whom are involved with grazing as well.

"My parents have their older farmers group and we have a young farmers group," says Kim. "It's nice to talk to someone who is going through the same things you are. We talk farming for 25 percent of the time, and the rest is just social hour."

"When they get together they complain, and then when we get together with our friends we complain too," says Carmene with a laugh.

The next, next generation

A frequent topic of discussion during these informal get-togethers is passing on the farm. For the younger crowd, the question is how to get established; for the older, how to ease out. The Pangracs says that for farmers who have built up pasture-based, organic operations, there's a particularly strong desire to see that stewardship continue, particularly at a time when high land prices are tempting many farmers to simply sell to the highest bidder. Kim and Andy, for their part, may only be half-way through their own transition process, but they are already thinking about who will take care of Prime Pastures decades down the road.

"We've tossed around some ideas," says Kim. "We figure with three kids, at least one might want to farm, but you never know." □

LSP collaborative marketing workshop makes connections

Johanna Rupprecht & Rebecca Terk

On Jan. 21, the Land Stewardship Project held a workshop in Milan, Minn., on Profitable Collaborative Marketing for Farmers. It was designed as an opportunity for food producers in the western Minnesota region to begin building networks and identifying routes and strategies for the efficient, collaborative distribution of their products to key local markets. Producers from throughout southwestern and west-central Minnesota attended, along with some representatives of area food co-ops and other organizations.

In the morning, representatives from producer networks and farms in the wider region were invited to speak about their marketing and distribution models. Keynote speaker Johnice Cross, coordinator of the Decorah, Iowa-based producer cooperative GROWN Locally, spoke about her organization's history and structure and described its successful model for providing local foods to institutional markets.

Three panelists also gave short presentations. Holly Tilton-Byrne, Dakota Rural Action staff member and coordinator of the South Dakota Local Food Cooperative, explained her cooperative's online model of connecting producers and consumers. Connie Karstens of the Lamb Shoppe in Hutchinson, Minn., spoke about selling her farm's meats and other local products in its on-farm store, along with other elements of her farm's marketing strategy. Angela Jackson described her work with the recently-launched Upper Missouri Local Foods Project in Vermillion, S. Dak., including the purchase and expansion of a storefront local food market. She also discussed her experience marketing meats from her own farm and other local operations under her Prairie Sun Organics label. Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions of the presenters during a lunch featuring local ingredients prepared by Java River Cafe of Montevideo, Minn.

In the afternoon, workshop attendees split into two smaller

groups—one representing the northern part of the region and one representing the southern part—to work on building their own networks. Because the perspectives of both producers and food co-ops and other markets were represented, and because some producers in attendance are already involved in cooperative marketing efforts in their immediate areas—such as Little Sioux Cooperative Growers centered around Spirit Lake, Iowa, and the Marshall Area Food Co-op producers near Marshall, Minn.—the idea of cooperation among cooperatives emerged as a key strategy. Connections were begun between parts of the region where there are currently too few markets for the amount of local food produced and parts where the reverse is true, and potential distribution routes and loops were identified.

Attendees left with a commitment to continue working together and to bring more key producers and contacts to the table. In the days following the workshop, some participants have already begun a more detailed assessment of routes, markets, producers and infrastructure needs within their regions in preparation for implementing a local food distribution system in western Minnesota. □

Johanna Rupprecht was a recent intern working in LSP's Community Based Food Systems Program. Rebecca Terk is an LSP organizer working on community food systems in western Minnesota's Big Stone County region. Terk can be contacted at 320-305-9685 or rebeccat@landstewardshipproject.org.



Participants in the workshop discussed ways of creating a distribution network. (photo by Rebecca Terk)

Commercial equipment donation helps Clinton Kitchen renovation

Johanna Rupprecht & Rebecca Terk

In December, Land Stewardship Project staff coordinated the donation of several pieces of commercial kitchen equipment from the former Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley (CGB) Middle School in western Minnesota. Keith Anderson, who owns the former school building, donated the equipment from the school's kitchen to assist in renovation efforts at the Clinton Kitchen by the Big Stone Local Foods Group and other community members.

The Beardsley school closed in 1988, when the middle school was incorporated into CGB High School in Graceville. Anderson wanted the commercial kitchen equipment—a 10-burner range, stainless backsplash panel, range hood, 40-cubic foot refrigerator and commercial dishwasher—to stay in Big Stone County and provide further



A 10-burner commercial range was one of the pieces of equipment donated to Clinton Kitchen. (photo by Rebecca Terk)

benefit to its citizens.

Moving the heavy equipment over 20 miles from Beardsley to Clinton required planning, strong backs, dollies and a pallet jack. Clinton Community Service Club members Jim Teske and Bruce and Gene Moberg volunteered for the task. The equipment is now property of the City of Clinton, and is in storage for the winter, awaiting clean-up and further remodeling of the Clinton Kitchen before it is installed. Two more pieces of equipment remain at the school awaiting transfer to Clinton—a 14-foot stainless steel prep sink and second range hood.

This equipment will help bring the Kitchen back up to current health code standards for food preparation, and is essential in the development of the facility as a regional food hub. □

For more on Clinton Kitchen, see the No. 4, 2011, Land Stewardship Letter.

Will Minneapolis miss out on an urban ag opportunity?

By Anna Cioffi

On Jan. 23, the Minneapolis Planning Commission passed proposed draft changes to the zoning code as it pertains to urban agriculture.

During the past two years, LSP staff and members have been focusing on making urban agriculture a critical player in the community life of Minneapolis. In 2009 the City of Minneapolis decided through recommendations put forth by Homegrown Minneapolis to pursue the development of “a city-wide topical plan on community gardens and urban agriculture.” This plan, which became known as the Urban Agriculture Policy Plan, was passed by the Minneapolis City Council in April 2011. It provides a number of recommendations for Minneapolis to amend current zoning ordinances, which would effectively lift current restrictions on urban farming, provide concrete definitions of agricultural terms, and create operational standards for new and existing urban farming operations in the city.

Working with urban farmers, community leaders and others interested in what urban agriculture can do for our neighborhoods, LSP has played a key role in making sure the public has been able to provide input on the final zoning amendments related to farming. Rules that take into consideration this input would spur entrepreneurship, convert empty lots to urban agriculture, and re-shape local food systems to include small urban farms or market gardens in each neighborhood. The rules are scheduled to be finalized by the City of Minneapolis in late March.

As they stand, these amendments make it possible to grow food for market in Minneapolis, which previously was illegal under the city’s zoning code. In reality, urban agriculture has been practiced “under the radar” in Minneapolis for decades. These recent changes would now make all that activity legal.

Ban market gardening?

However, as of this writing there were concerns that the city council was considering the removal of language that allows market gardening on vacant lots in residential areas while classifying it as a home occupation. Market gardening could flourish in neighborhoods like Phillips and North Minneapolis, which, with their high concentrations of empty lots, would benefit from more green space. It is also a great economic revitalization tool and could generate more small businesses and jobs in these neighborhoods.

Urban agriculture policy plans have been implemented in dozens of cities across the country to foster urban food production, create greater access to fresh foods, and provide city residents with the opportunity to make a living by farming in the city.

Organizations like Milwaukee-based Growing Power popularized this approach to re-inventing vacant city land and turning it into highly productive, biodiverse, dense urban farms. Farms like Growing Power are providing fresh produce in food deserts and low-income neighborhoods in inner cities and employing dozens of workers. And their model of entrepreneurship, with low start-up costs, is growing.

Urban farms have been partnering with neighborhoods for years around mutual interests of creating a sense of place and revitalizing communities in cities all across the United States. Our School at Blair Grocery, an urban farm rooted in the 9th Ward of New Orleans, is another amazing example of functional use of abandoned land. There’s also Added Value in Red Hook, Brooklyn. Cleveland’s urban agriculture policy plan requires that there be growing space within ¼ of a mile of every residence in the entire city, earning the Rust Belt city the 2012 American Planning Association’s National Planning Excellence Award for Innovation in Sustaining Places.

And then there are all the businesses that have sprung up in support of these urban farms—and we’re not just talking compost and seeds. Take Victory Chicken in New York City for example—they’ll build and install a chicken coop, provide three hens, two months of supplies, and a “Chickens 101” training for those who are ready to take on a few egg-laying friends, but just need

a little guidance. Or Community Bees on Bikes in Minneapolis, an urban beekeeping program with the goal of setting up and caring for hives on urban farms, at community gardens, and in backyards all over the Twin Cities. These creative business models are capitalizing on people’s desire to learn more about their own local food system, and bring the supply chain closer to home—often, their own backyards.

Creating a standard

Back in Minneapolis, city council members who are opposed to allowing market gardening in residential areas cite hypothetical troubles with neighbors, and disturbance of the “character” of residential neighborhoods. These worries could be addressed easily by giving neighbors and neighborhoods the right to decide what standards urban farms, market gardens and community gardens need to meet. Proposed urban agriculture zoning language already protects citizens from disturbances such as noisy machinery during off-hours.

This spring and summer LSP will continue working to promote city policies that allow the urban farming community to live up to its great potential. □

Anna Cioffi is an organizer for LSP’s Community Based Food Program. As this Land Stewardship Letter went to press, the Minneapolis City Council was considering finalizing the Urban Agriculture Policy Plan by late March. For more on the plan and how to help make Minneapolis friendlier to urban agriculture, contact Cioffi at 612-722-6377 or annac@landstewardshipproject.org.

What is it costing you to transport food to market?

During the past few years, the Land Stewardship Project has been working with farmers who are seeking more efficient ways of transporting to market the food they produce. LSP has recently posted on its website transportation worksheets, online calculators and other resources related to smoothing the road between field and fork.

More information is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/cbfd/food-transportation-costs.htm, or by contacting LSP’s Caroline van Schaik at 507-523-3366; caroline@landstewardshipproject.org.

CALCULATING YOUR TRANSPORTATION COSTS:

Direct Delivery by Farmer-owned Vehicle

B General Information

4	Commodity to be delivered	
5	Commodity unit (case, pound, carton, etc.)	
6	Selling price per unit	
7	Delivery size, in units	
8	Labor rate (\$/hr)	
9	Unloading time per delivery (minutes)	
10	Number of deliveries per trip	
11	Delivery route (miles, round trip)	
12	Fuel cost (gas or diesel, \$/gal)	

Vehicle Information

15	Farm truck fuel economy (mpg)	
16	Vehicle tire costs (set of tires)	
17	Vehicle tire life (thousand miles)	
18	Expected maint./repair expenses this year	
19	Expected depreciation this year	
20	Expected miles driven this year	
21	Avg speed when making deliveries (mph)	

E

Enter “1” if using the IRS standard mileage rate (otherwise leave blank)

6 NOTE: Current IRS standard mileage rate (\$/mile) \$ 0.55

Operating Costs per Mile (don’t use IRS rate)

9	Fuel costs B12/B15 =	
10	Maintenance/Repair B18/B20 =	
11	Tires B16/B17 =	
12	Depreciation B19/B20 =	
13	Labor (((B10 x B9)/60) + B11/B21) x B8/B11 =	

Total Operating Costs per Mile

14	Total Operating Costs per Mile	
15	E9+E10+E11+E12+E13 =	

Total Operating Costs per Trip

16	Total Operating Costs per Trip	
17	E14 x B11 =	

Distribution Cost per Unit of Produce

18	Distribution Cost per Unit of Produce	
19	E16/B7 =	

“Farm Gate” Margin per Unit

20	“Farm Gate” Margin per Unit	
21	B6-E18 =	



This form is adapted by Land Stewardship Project for hard copy use from the on-line calculator developed by the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry. The original on-line calculator can be found at <http://www.okfarmstoschool.com/resources/its-distro-foodsafetymanual/index.htm>.



Made to Stick

Why Some Ideas Survive & Others Die

By Chip & Dan Heath

2007; 291 pages

Random House

www.heathbrothers.com

Reviewed by Julia Ahlers Ness

Before reading *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* by brothers Chip and Dan Heath, I would have never thought of knowledge as a curse. Now, having read the *New York Times* best seller, I see what they mean.

Let me illustrate: I've read the book—studied it actually—taking notes, pondering its message, mentally applying it to my work and my personal passions. I've got a pretty good idea of what it's about. Here's the curse: unless you've read the book too, I have knowledge about the book that you as the reader of this review do not. That puts me at a disadvantage.

My challenge then, based on the process outlined in *Made to Stick*, is not only to share what the book is about in clear, concrete terms, but to persuade you to care enough about what it has to say and ultimately move you to read it for yourself and incorporate the book's ideas and message into your communication know-how.

To do this, say the Heath brothers, I need to make sure I clearly and with simplicity convey my core message: this is a book worth reading and applying in our work to promote an ethic of land stewardship.

I also need to get your attention. Hopefully I already did that by posing the counter-intuitive notion that knowledge can be a curse and with my illustration introduced enough curiosity to keep you reading.

Further, I need to be concrete in my description of the value I see in this book's ideas. I need to paint a mental picture for you. I need to tap into our shared experiences of what it's like to try to share with others something you really care about only to have them stare back at you blankly, with a "what's the big deal about that?" look on their face.

Fortunately, stories go a long way in helping us make our messages concrete. They can also give our message credibility and touch people at an emotional level.

Both are needed in order to move people to action.

When I first started as coordinator for the Chippewa 10% Project, one of my tasks was to put together a "farmer advisory group" for the Project. This was a first step in "engaging" farmers and agricultural landowners of the Chippewa River watershed in the idea that more perennials on productive, agricultural land is good for the health of the watershed, for their bottom line and for the local and regional food economy.

At this point, I was still trying to get a handle on the scope and meaning of the multifaceted Project and its ambitious, long-term goals. On top of that, although I grew up on a diversified crop and livestock family farm in northwest Iowa and had lived in farm country my whole life, I was new to western Minnesota. I had virtually no social capital with the farmers with whom I was supposed to visit and enlist as advisers. In some cases, being a Land Stewardship Project employee was a mark against me.

"What does somebody from an 'environmental organization' know about farming?" was the kind of response I ran into more than once.

Among all the visits I did to put together the Project's farmer advisory committee, one stands out. For the first 15 minutes of the visit, I could tell I was on shaky ground with this particular farmer. He politely listened to my labored attempts to describe the 10% Project, but was obviously suspicious of me. Nervously, I shifted the focus and asked him about his farming operation.

At some point he was describing his cropping system, saying that he always sees a phenomenal yield response in his soybeans when they follow two years of hay and three years of rotationally grazed pasture in his rotation.

In a spontaneous response, I said something like, "That makes perfect sense to me because that soil's going to be so biologically alive after having been in perennial cover for so long and from rotationally grazing the livestock."

The look of pleasant surprise on the farmer's face is something I'll never forget. And it was that response that moved this skeptical farmer to agree to be on the Project's advisory committee.

Now, having read *Made to Stick*, I understand why that experience so powerfully

illustrates the keys to effective communication.

First, my response to his story had surprised him. That got his attention to a degree that hadn't been there before. I proved to him I had concrete knowledge of the subject we were talking about and that gained me credibility in his eyes. Even more, it touched him enough at an emotional level that he said "Yes" to something to which, prior to that point, he'd planned to say "No."

According to the Heath brothers, who are educators and motivational speakers, "Getting a message across has two stages: the Answer stage (figuring out our core message) and the Telling Others stage." This isn't as easy as it sounds for two reasons.

First is our nemesis, the Curse of Knowledge. To be able to do the Answer stage, we usually spend a lot of time and energy in developing expertise in the subject we want to share or on the ideas we want to promote.

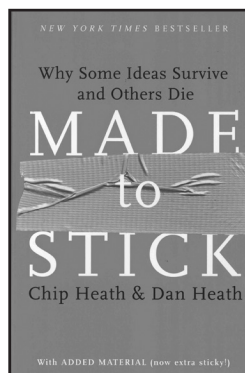
I have spent three decades studying what ethical stewardship of the land means and what it looks like when put into practice. The challenge for me in the Answer Stage is to find a simple, but richly meaningful way to describe the core of a land stewardship ethic that resonates with my intended audience.

Second obstacle: lack of communications training. How many of us have spent much time learning how to do the Telling Others stage of the process in a truly effective way? How many of us have even realized that we needed to do so? Yet, think of how appreciative you'd be if your doctor had been required to take even just one class in interpersonal communication during her medical training.

Because the Chippewa 10% Project aims to engage farmers and landowners who might not have the same understanding of land stewardship or operate from the same paradigm as a typical LSP member, I feel a particular urgency to get up to speed on learning how to better communicate our message in ways that stick with those farmers and landowners and motivate them to make land use changes that benefit us all.

Made to Stick has given me plenty of material to work with to achieve that goal. □

Julia Ahlers Ness is the coordinator of the Chippewa 10% Project (<http://chippewa10.org>), which is a joint initiative of the Land Stewardship Project and the Chippewa River Watershed Project. She can be contacted at LSP's office in Montevideo, Minn., at 320-269-2105 or janess@landstewardshipproject.org.



Scripture, Culture, & Agriculture

An Agrarian Reading of the Bible

By Ellen F. Davis

Foreword by Wendell Berry

2009; 234 pages

Food & Faith

A Theology of Eating

By Norman Wirzba

Foreword by Stanley Hauerwas

2011; 244 pages

Cambridge University Press

www.cambridge.org

Reviewed by Dale Hadler

What are the repercussions of being “exiled” from our food and the land that produces it? That’s a question that pops up in two books on farming, food and faith published by Cambridge University Press.

In *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*, Ellen Davis addresses several ideas, including the argument that land was a major if not preeminent theme of the Old Testament.

Davis, a Duke Divinity School professor of Bible and Practical Theology, argues that land was a covenantal gift to the people of ancient Israel conditional on their adherence to God’s laws describing how the people were to treat their neighbors, the poor and the land itself. Davis notes that when the people of the Old Testament followed dictates such as the law of the “Land Sabbath”—which mandated that a field was to be allowed to rest every seven years with the residual crops being left for animals or to be “gleaned” or picked by the poor—Israel prospered and was secure on the land.

However, when the people turned away from laws such as the Land Sabbath and the affluent stopped helping their poor neighbors, the people suffered. In fact, during the Babylonian conquest, many of the people of

Israel were forced into exile, losing access to the land they had been born and raised on. Davis argues that being on the land and then losing the land only to return to it later is a perennial theme in the Old Testament, which helped the people of Israel understand that the land was theirs to care for and that in reality they were only tenants on God’s land, a relationship that could be broken if the people did not live according to the social contract set down through the laws of God.

The laws of the Old Testament were not only important in the time of the Old Testament, but are relevant today, especially regarding many of our modern “factory farming” practices, writes Davis.

She creates an imaginary dialogue involving the prophets and writers of the Old Testament and modern agrarian writers such as Wendell Berry, Aldo Leopold, Wes Jackson and Norman Wirzba. Davis cites passages from the Old Testament and then compares them with the comments of the “modern” writers.

For example, Davis points out that one of Berry’s *Sabbath* poems “names the essential quality of Creation’s seventh sunrise” as God’s perfect pleasure. Berry writes:

Time when the maker’s radiant sight
Made radiant every thing He saw,
And every thing He saw was filled
With perfect joy and life and light.

Davis compares this passage with the following passage from Psalm 92:5:

For you have given me to rejoice in
your action;
the works of your hands I celebrate.
How great are your doings, YHWH!
Your thoughts are very deep.
A dull person does not know,
and a fool does not comprehend this—
while the wicked grow like plants;
and all workers of iniquity spring forth,
[only] for them to be destroyed forever.

It’s clear the call of the Old Testament prophets regarding care of the land and the importance of proper stewardship influences the ideas of the modern agrarian writers. It should also influence anyone looking for a source of ideas and inspiration as we address many of the issues of the environment, land, agricultural policies and overall social justice facing the modern world.

In his book, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*, Norman Wirzba also talks about the costs of being exiled—in this case from eating itself.

Wirzba, a professor of Theology, Ecology and Rural Life at Duke Divinity School,

argues that because people were banished from the Garden of Eden, modern eating is an exilic experience, and so much of the human and environmental degradation created by eating is theologically the direct result of this separation from God and the rest of creation through the Judeo-Christian concept of original sin.

But there can be a way of returning from exile, a way found through eating in a way that respects God’s creation, understands our role as stewards of creation and calls us to realize that we are a part of, not apart from, the rest of creation, he writes.

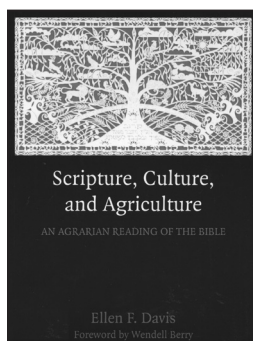
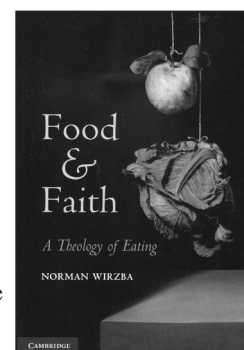
Wirzba notes that eating is vital for life, and yet all eating involves death—the death of an animal, a plant or even soil microbes. But the death involved in eating can also be viewed as a sacrificial event. Wirzba sees the Eucharist as a source of sacrifice, arguing that it is a sacrificial meal, a meal that helps form community, a community based on a life of giving of each of its members.

As a result of our modern lifestyle, we have gotten away from the *Biblical* vision of food and meals. We choose to grab a bite to eat rather than sit down for a meal. We often eat alone. This fast food lifestyle serves to separate us from the sacrifice of life needed for our food, as well as the sense of community that slower eating with others provides. This separation makes it hard to appreciate the environmental damage modern eating often involves.

Eating has become a kind of industrialized “one night stand,” according to Wendell Berry. Wirzba quotes Berry describing the modern consumer’s relationship with the “svelte” industrialized hog that feeds us: “We’ll be together at breakfast. I just don’t want to see you before then, and I won’t care to remember you afterwards.”

When we don’t care to know the effects of our modern eating on the rest of creation, it becomes a continuation of a thought and behavior process that further alienates us from the rest of creation. But when we eat in a way that respects and appreciates the life sacrificed for our food, as well as creation and the creator, then we take an important step toward ending our long, cold exile. □

Land Stewardship Project member and frequent volunteer Dale Hadler has a master’s degree in religion and theology from the United Theological Seminary in the Twin Cities.





LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

Membership Update

A new vision for agriculture, 30 years in the making

By Mike McMahon

In the early 1980s, Minnesota agriculture was in the midst of two converging crises. Soil loss and erosion rates were near all-time highs and thousands of family farmers were being foreclosed on by big banks and insurance companies. In fact, part of the problem was the financial institutions that were taking over farms were ripping out conservation practices that had protected the soil and water for decades.

It was in this environment that the Land Stewardship Project was born. Our approach then, as it is today, was to build the power of farm, rural and urban people through grassroots organizing to hold accountable those responsible for polluting the environment and forcing people off the land. At the same time, LSP was forging ahead with a new vision for agriculture.

Fast forward 30 years: LSP has grown into a state, regional and even national leader in the family farm and sustainable agriculture movement, and we can point to several important accomplishments along the way, including:

- ◆ Stopping the construction of over 30 proposed factory farms in Minnesota and leading the fight to maintain the rights of people to act through their local units of government to stop other forms of unwanted development, like frac sand mines.

- ◆ Developing one of the best new farmer training programs in the country. Farm Beginnings is an initiative that continues to grow and adapt to meet the changing needs of people who want to farm.

- ◆ Leading winning campaigns to reform federal farm policy to support family farms and stewardship of the land. LSP played a critical role in the development, passage and implementation of the Conservation Stewardship Program and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, initiatives that are, respectively, advancing stewardship on

working farmland and helping new farmers get started across the country.

- ◆ Contributing to the explosive growth in sustainable and organic food production and sales through a combination of education, research, outreach and action.

Despite these advances, we face the same problems we did 30 years ago: more and more of the land is owned or controlled by fewer people and agricultural pollution is a growing threat to our communities, our country and the world.

What is different today is that we have worked together to build an organization that knows how to create positive change, and that people, perhaps more than ever before, are standing up and fighting back against a corporate power structure that threatens our very democracy.

As we look to the future, your support and engagement is critical. As a membership organization, LSP's power to create positive change for people and the land comes from its membership — the more members we have the more we can accomplish.

Just flip through this edition of the *Land Stewardship Letter* and you'll see that 2012 is off to a quick start at the Land Steward-

ship Project. There are fly-ins to Washington, D.C., with LSP leaders to work on the Farm Bill; Farm Beginnings classes are underway; a slate of winter workshops and field days are in the works; LSP's play, *Look Who's Knockin'* has wrapped up a successful western Minnesota tour; the annual Family Farm Breakfast and Lobby Day at the Capitol has yet again brought citizens and lawmakers together; the latest edition of LSP's *Community Supported Agriculture Directory* is out; and more.

Whether it's helping new farmers get started, stopping the spread of factory farms or building local and regional food systems, LSP members are the source of our creativity and strength to do this work.

To everyone who renewed their membership, made an extra donation or joined for the first time in 2011, thank you. Your contributions are making a difference for people and the land today and for years to come.

If you aren't a member, I invite you to join today using the envelope located

• • •
*LSP members are the
source of our creativity and
strength to do this work.*
• • •

in the center of the *Land Stewardship Letter*. Basic annual membership dues are \$35 and are fully tax-deductible. As a member you'll receive

a one-year subscription to the *LSL*, timely action alerts and the latest news on the food and farming issues you care about. You'll also have the opportunity to take action by participating in LSP meetings, workshops, training sessions, lobby days and events.

Join today and be a part of changing our food and farming system from the ground up. ☐

Mike McMahon, LSP's membership coordinator, can be reached at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org.

Show off your support for LSP

The new limited edition Land Stewardship Project t-shirts are now available. The LSP logo is easily recognizable on the front with "Land Stewardship Project" on the back. They are USA Union Made, 100 percent-preshrunk cotton and available in adult sizes: medium, large and extra large. The fit is true to size. The shirts are \$15 each.

To order a t-shirt, contact LSP's Megan Smith at 612-722-6377 or megans@landstewardshipproject.org.



In memory & in honor...

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

In honor of Anne Sawyer Aitch & Jamie Aitch

◆ Sally & Tim Sawyer & Judith Delaittre

In honor of Tex Hawkins, recognizing his work as he retires

◆ Sister Kathleen Mary Kieman

In honor of Dana Jackson, recognizing 25 years of service to LSP

◆ Brian DeVore

In honor of Leander & Dolores Wermerskirchen

◆ Hans Peterson & Heidi Morlock

In honor of Luvern Weber

◆ Morgan G. Willow

In memory of James Briest

◆ Vicki and Keith Poier

In memory of Morgan Hamann

◆ Brian T. Purrington

In memory of William Swoboda

◆ Anonymous

In memory of Margaret & Gerald Redig

◆ Steve & Nancy Bachler

Dedicated to Dave & Sharon

◆ Adam L. Oien

Dedicated to Nancy G. Johnson

◆ Paula Johnson

Dedicated to Edward & Alma Severson

◆ Suzanne & Mark Teragawa

In memory of Edith Finley

◆ Barbara Finley-Shea

In honor of Bryan Simon & his bride-to-be Jessie

◆ Jason & Natalie Bjerketvedt

For details on donating to the Land Stewardship Project in the name of someone, contact Mike McMahon at 612-722-6377 or mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org.

Volunteer for LSP

Donating your time to the Land Stewardship Project is a very valuable gift. There is a lot going on in the coming months, and we could use your help. Volunteering is a great way to stay connected to the work LSP is doing to build community based food systems, help new farmers get started and shape policies that support family farms and a healthy environment.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact:

→ **Lewiston, Minn.** — Karen Benson, 507-523-3366, lpse@landstewardshipproject.org.

→ **Montevideo, Minn.** — Terry Van Der Pol, 320-269-2105, tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org.

→ **Twin Cities** — Abby Liesch, 612-722-6377, aliesch@landstewardshipproject.org. □

LSP on the social media circuit



LSP is now in more places online. Connect with LSP through Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

Direct any questions

about LSP's social media initiatives to Megan Smith at 612-722-6377 or megans@landstewardshipproject.org. □



Get current with **LIVE** **WIRE**

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

Support LSP in your workplace

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

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



MINNESOTA Environmental Fund


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



LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT
821 E 35TH ST STE 200
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55407-2102

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ROCHESTER, MN
PERMIT NO. 289

Address Service Requested

 Printed on 50% recycled - 30%
post consumer waste paper

The date above your name on the address label is your membership anniversary. Your timely renewal saves paper and reduces the expense of sending out renewal notices. To renew, use the envelope inside or visit www.landstewardshipproject.org.

STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

→ **MARCH 20—LSP Local Food Happy Hour, featuring LSP's Adam Warthesen discussing the Farm Bill**, Black Dog Café, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: Anna Cioffi, LSP, 612-722-6377; annac@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **MARCH 20—LSP meeting: Taking Back Our Economy & Our Democracy**, 7 p.m.-8:45 p.m., Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Lonsdale, Minn.; Contact: Megan Buckingham, LSP, 612-722-6377; meganb@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **MARCH 24—LSP workshop on making a living with grass-based dairy**, St. Charles, Minn. (see page 23)

→ **MARCH 25—Rally on creating a fair health care exchange system**, Macalester College, Saint Paul, Minn. (see page 12)

→ **MARCH 26-30—National Farm Worker Awareness Week**; Contact: <http://saf-unite.org>; 919-660-3693

→ **MARCH 27—LSP workshop on selling farm products in SE Minn. using online tools**, Winona, Minn. (see page 23)

→ **MARCH 27—LSP co-sponsored screening of *The Greenhorns* film**, NE Minneapolis; Contact: www.thegreenhorns.net; Nick Olson, LSP, 320-269-2105; nicko@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **MARCH 27—Free Enterprises in Small-Scale Sust. Ag Conf.**, Stillwater, Minn.; Contact: <http://fessa.org>; mail@fessa.org

→ **MARCH 28—LSP farmer/food buyer "Got Local" workshop**, St. Charles, Minn. (see page 23)

→ **LATE MARCH—Performance of *Look Who's Knockin'***, Willmar, Minn.; Contact: Terry Van Der Pol, LSP, 320-269-2105; tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **MARCH 31—Chickens in your backyard workshop**, Gale Woods Farm, Minnetrista, Minn.; Contact: www.threeriversparks.org/

parks/gale-woods-farm.aspx; 763-694-2001

→ **MARCH 31—Twin Cities Comm. Garden Resource Fair**, St. Paul, Minn.; Contact: www.gardeningmatters.org; 612-821-2358

→ **MARCH 31-APRIL 1—Student Initiatives in Sustainable Ag.**, Appleton, Wis.; Contact: 920-931-2660; www.sisaconference.org

→ **MARCH/APRIL—Farm transition & estate planning workshop**, Browerville, Minn.; Northfield, Minn.; Contact: 612-605-9269; jason@sfa-mn.org

→ **APRIL—LSP transportation costs workshop**, Ill. or NE Iowa (see page 23)

→ **APRIL 2—3rd crop workshop on bioenergy from perennials**, Fairmont, Minn.; Contact: www.ruraladvantage.org; 507-238-5449

→ **APRIL 5—Our Daily Bread screening**, Bell Museum, U of M; Contact: www.bellmuseum.umn.edu; 612-624-7083

→ **APRIL 14—LSP "stories of farm transition" event**, Plainview, Minn. (see page 9)

→ **APRIL 15—LSP Farm Dreams class**, Minneapolis (see page 23)

→ **APRIL 20—Pre-Earth Day Breakfast Benefit for LSP**, 7 a.m.-11 a.m., Red Stag, Minneapolis; Contact: Anna Cioffi, LSP, 612-722-6377; annac@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **APRIL 21—Beekeeping workshop**, Gale Woods Farm, Minnetrista, Minn.; Contact: www.galewoodsfarm.org; 763-694-2001

→ **APRIL 21—Twin Cities CSA Fair**, Seward Co-op, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Minneapolis; Contact: www.seward.coop; 612-338-2465

→ **APRIL 21—Environmental Education Workshop for Christian Educators of Children**, United Theological Seminary, New Brighton, Minn.; Contact: Dale Hadler, 763-218-3265; dale_hadler@hotmail.com

→ **APRIL 30—2012 Minn. Legislature adjourns** (see page 17)

→ **MAY 5-6—Living Green Expo**, St. Paul; Contact: www.livinggreenexpo.mn; 651-290-0154

→ **MAY 7—Wild foods workshop**, Moon-

stone Farm, Montevideo, Minn.; Contact: 320-269-8971; audrey@moonstonefarm.net

→ **MAY 12—Backyard chickens**, Minnetrista, Minn.; Contact: www.threeriversparks.org/parks/gale-woods-farm.aspx; 763-694-2001

→ **MID-MAY—LSP farmer-food distributor roundtable**, SE Minn. (see page 23)

→ **JUNE 2—Farm Beginnings intro to grazing**, Gibbon, Minn. (see page 23)

→ **JULY—LSP Twin Cities summer potluck/celebration**, Minneapolis (details to be announced); Contact: Mike McMahon, 612-722-6377; mcmahon@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JULY or AUG.—LSP SE Minn. summer celebration** (details to be announced); Contact: 507-523-3366; lsps@landstewardshipproject.org

→ **JULY—LSP soils workshop**, SE Minnesota (see page 23)

→ **JULY 14—SFA Festival of Farms**, various Minn. locations; Contact: www.sfa-mn.org; 320-543-3394

→ **JULY 21—LSP field day on producing quality grass-finished beef**, Dorchester, Iowa (see page 23)

→ **JULY 21—LSP skills session on raspberries & currants**, Marine on St. Croix, Minn. (see page 23)

→ **AUG. 1—Deadline for 2012-2013 LSP Farm Beginnings course** (see page 7)

→ **AUG. 3—LSP beginning farmer troubleshooting**, Kenyon, Minn. (see page 23)

→ **AUG. 10—Farm Beginnings skills session on value-added processing**, Bayport, Minn. (see page 23)

→ **AUG. 11—Minn. Garlic Festival**, McLeod County Fairgrounds, Hutchinson, Minn.; Contact: www.mngarlicfest.com; 320-543-3394

→ **SEPT. 5—Farm Beginnings beginning farmer troubleshooting field day**, Dayton, Minn. (see page 23)

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