Becca Carlson of Northfield Joins Association Board

By Jason Walker • SFA Communications & Membership Coordinator

Our association Board of Directors welcomed a new face at our latest board meeting – Becca Carlson is the new representative from the Cannon River chapter.

Becca is farm manager at Seeds Farm, a diversified vegetable and animal farm near her native Northfield. Becca is a St. Olaf grad who is committed to learning how she can produce healthy food for the community while being a good steward of the land. Becca said she feels lucky to be a part of SFA’s bustling network.

"I wanted to be a SFA state representative to help share with the state what our Cannon River chapter is involved in and vice versa," she said. "Plus, it’s a great opportunity to meet more farmers and soak up new information."

Because of her love for the outdoors, Becca said she has found a way to spend most of her time outside year-round. Besides farming, Becca works winters as a dogsled guide in Northern Minnesota. But her love of food is pretty powerful, too.

"I love everything about food – thinking about it, growing it, harvesting it, cooking with it, eating it, and mostly, sharing it with my community," she said.

To learn more about Becca and Seeds Farm, visit seedsfarmproject.com.

The SFA association Board of Directors meets each October, February and April; the April 2014 meeting is this Friday at the College of Saint Benedict. If you have questions about the Board, contact your chapter's board member or email me at jason@sfa-mn.org.

SFP Farm Skills 101 Now Enrolling for Fall Semester

Our Sustainable Food Production program is a much-needed beginning-farmer curriculum that emphasizes all three tenets of sustainability, plus provides extensive skills training. A unique aspect of SFP is its commitment to community development and mentoring, a perfect fit with SFA's Farmer-to-Farmer Network® organization.
The program is now accepting enrollment for the Fall 2014 semester of Farm Skills 101, which covers the hands-on essential skills necessary for a forage-based livestock producer. The class teaches students the ideal methods to elevate handiness while building community and competence.

Farm Skills 101 consists of around 50 hours of on-farm education in three weekends of fun and fulfilling learning. These are days in the field, not field days. Participants will need pants, closed-toe shoes, gloves and safety glasses.

Topics include Fencing Strategies for Forage-based Livestock Systems, Compassionate Animal Husbandry and Handling, Pasture Management and Grazing Basics, and Farm Equipment and Tools. Instructors are all farmer-educators: Sue Wika, PhD; Tom Prieve, DVM; and Kent Solberg, MS. Each possesses both real-world experience and the educational background to provide comprehensive sustainable food production education.

2013 SFP graduate Nicole Moore said the program’s curriculum directly empowers the student.

“Physical involvement in a process makes a lasting impression, allowing the student the space and time to discover questions or thoughts related to the experience that would otherwise have never been conceived if she or he had only read or heard about the process,” she said. “With this approach, students walk away with tangible, demonstrable skills. What’s more effective a learning tool than, at the end of the session, being able to walk onto your own property and build yourself a reliable fence? Can’t beat that.”

Fall 2014 classes are Oct. 3-4, 10-11 and 17-18 at farms near Alexandria, Minn. Friday classes run from 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Pack sack lunches and breakfasts; a Friday local-foods supper is included. Housing is available at Faith Haven Camp on Eagle Lake for a modest fee. Free primitive camping is available at farm site.

Also, all students receive a free one-year SFA membership.

To enroll, visit this link and view payment information. To learn more or view a more detailed curriculum, visit the SFP Program homepage or contact Dr. Sue Wika at paradoxhomestead@gmail.com.

SFA Sponsors 'Resistance' Premiere; Mesko on Panel

SFA co-sponsored the local premiere of a documentary film about the public health crisis of

SFA EVENTS

July 12, 2014:
FESTIVAL OF FARMS

Aug. 9, 2014:
MINNESOTA GARLIC FESTIVAL, McLeod County Fairgrounds, Hutchinson, Minn.

Sept. 2014: HARVEST FESTIVAL, Bayfront Park, Duluth

From the film description: "Every year, two million American contract antibiotic-resistant infections, and more than 23,000 die. Today, 80 percent of antibiotics – more than 29 million pounds a year – are used on livestock farms. Using microscopic footage, harrowing personal stories and expert insights, 'Resistance' explores antibiotic overuse and asks how we can turn the tide."

After the film, a panel of experts including SFA Executive Director John Mesko, filmmaker Michael Graziano, preventive healthcare advocate Lisa Mesko (all pictured above), Star Tribune columnist and writer Bonnie Blodgett, and Healthy Food Action Director David Wallinga answered audience questions about the epidemic health threat from antibiotic resistance, and discussed local and national efforts to reign in the overuse of antibiotics in meat production. Also, on April 9 the St Paul City Council approved a resolution to put an end to the misuse of antibiotics on factory farms. St. Paul is the fourth city in the nation to pass such a resolution.

Voting Now Open for 2015 Annual Conference Topics

By Jason Walker • SFA Communications & Membership Coordinator

Ten of the session topics at this year's Annual Conference were chosen by you, SFA's members and supporters, using an online application that allowed you to vote for your favorite topics as well as submit your own. The top vote-getting topic, Root Cellaring, was a standing-room-only session led by root cellar builders Jerry Ford and Greg Reynolds as well as the esteemed John Fisher-Merrit, who dazzled the attendees with the details of his affordable yet highly customized root cellar that has significantly enhanced his farm's revenue stream.

With this year's SFA Annual Conference fresh in your minds, it's time to start thinking to our next annual gathering, set for Feb. 14, 2015, again at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph.

We have opened voting for the 2015 Annual Conference session topics – click this link to begin voting. The more votes we tabulate, the more accurately we can tailor the session schedule around your wishes. One thing we hear a lot during an after the Conference is, "there were so many good sessions I had a hard time choosing." If there was a session you missed in 2014 but still are interested in, be sure to input that topic into the website.

Some of the topics already submitted include:
- Cover crops and soil health
- Fencing
- Integrating crops and livestock
- Hogs on pasture
- Root cellaring
- Agroforestry
- New crops
- Season extension
- Seed saving
- Grazing for beginners

Make your voice heard – submit your own ideas and vote early and often.

Also, photo galleries from both the 2014 Annual Conference and inaugural Midwest Soil Health Summit are available on each conference's homepage. Check them out!
Annual Conference Photo Feature

Photographer extraordinaire Crystal Liepa once again documented our 2014 Annual Conference, held Feb. 8, 2014, at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn. To learn more about Crystal, visit her website.

Market, Piloting New Chef-Driven Model, Seeks Vendors

The Minneapolis' Linden Hills Farmers Market (LHFM) season begins on June 1st and continues every Sunday through October. The market is piloting a brand new chef-driven farmers' market model, offering both wholesale and retail sales on the same day and in the same location. This is an innovative coming together, and vendors are being sought for the 2014 season!

Local farmers growing unique varieties and local food entrepreneurs cooking up artisanal foods are encouraged to apply. LHFM is especially interested in those vendors able to price their products for both the wholesale and retail markets, and produce enough to sell to both types of buyers. There is flexibility built into this model. Vendors are able to rent a stall for a day or stay for the entire season. This is an excellent opportunity to meet new wholesale buyers and diversify customer bases.

Contact Libby Wyrum to learn more about this new type of market. She can be reached at 612.867.0854 or by emailing libertywyrum@gmail.com.

RSDP Plans Rural Design Conference in July

The U of M Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships is co-sponsoring its Rural Design Conference, "Thriving by Design 2: Achieving Rural-Urban Economic & Community Health," on July 30-31 at the University of Minnesota-Crookston.

The event, which begins with an evening reception July 30 and then an all-day conference July 31, will focus on three themes: Extension Reconsidered, Nature-Based Recreation/Tourism, and Food Systems. A traveling rural design exhibit will be displayed throughout the conference.

Registration will begin soon. For more information, contact Kathryn Draeger at draeg001@umn.edu or watch for updates on the RSDP homepage.
Morris WMD Set to Rent Four Cropping Locations

The Morris Wetland Management District is currently accepting cash rent bids for three years of cropping on four Waterfowl Production Areas. Deadline for bids is 1 p.m. April 25.

Farming permits are available for seedbed preparation for conversion to native prairie on four locations. The selected permittee(s) will have three years and eight months from the date of issuance to complete three years of no-till cropping. Each site will be bid individually. There are two crop rotation options; bidders may submit a bid for either option or both. Bids will be awarded to the highest bidder for the preferred option. Option 1 is the preferred option of the Morris WMD. If no bids are received for Option 1, then the highest cash bid received for Option 2 will be awarded. The two no-till cropping options are:

Option 1) Year 1 – Oats for hay followed by cover crop mix; Year 2 – Spring Wheat followed by cover crop mix; and Year 3 – Barley (plus baling of straw) followed by cover crop mix. Cover crop mixes used will be specified in the permit. Fall grazing will be permitted during all three cropping years (separate permit required).

Option 2) Year 1 – Soybeans; Year 2 – Corn; Year 3 – Soybeans; (Round-up Ready seed permitted); Please note the following special conditions: No insecticide sprays or seed treatments are allowed, including seed treated with neonicotinoids. Except for the initial tillage of sod prior to planting first year crop, there will be no tillage allowed under either option.

For more information contact J.B. Bright at jb_bright@fws.gov or 320.589.1001.

NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher and Youth Educator Grants

The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) Program is pleased to announce the projects recommended for funding for the Farmer Rancher and Youth Educator competitive grant programs. More than 50 grant projects were selected to receive a total of more than $5 million through these two NCR-SARE grant programs, which offer competitive grants for farmers, ranchers, youth educators, organizations, and others who are exploring sustainable agriculture in America’s Midwest.

From the 2014 Farmer Rancher Grant Program, SFA members Troy and Chris Salzer of Carlton County Extension in Carlton was selected to receive $22,471 for the project, “Adapting Cover Crops to Northern Climate Conventional Cropping Systems.” Congratulations, Troy!

For more information on the grants, click here.

Discover, Elk River, Richfield Markets Seek Vendors

In its second year, the Discover Farmers Market, 1400 81st Ave. N in Brooklyn Park, in the parking lot of Discover Church, is hoping to expand by bringing in quality vendors from the area. The market is seeking a full range of vendors – produce (a wide variety), eggs, meat, dairy/cheese, jams & jellies, cut flowers, etc. The market enjoys easy access and a highly visible location at the intersection of Highway 252 and 81st Ave. The market is held from 3 to 7 p.m. Tuesdays from May 20 to Oct. 14.

There are no vendor fees but vendors are asked to submit a spot deposit. Included in the listed vendor spot deposit is a nonrefundable $10.00 Market Membership charge. If you are interested, or need more information, email discovermarketbp@gmail.com, visit www.discovermarketbp.com or call 763-242-1571 to speak with Dorinda or 763-670-9974 to speak with Sara.

Also seeking vendors is the Elk River Farmers Market, which has had an increased demand for dairy and meat/protein sources at the market as well as organics. If you are interested in becoming a vendor at our market or would like more information about the market please visit www.elkrivermn.gov and fill out the Farmers Market application. You are also welcome to email kwingard@elkrivermn.gov for more information.

Further, the Richfield Farmers Market needs vendors for its Wednesday Market, which runs 2-7 p.m. June 4-Sept. 10. All vendors must be located within 200 miles of the City of Richfield. To apply, fill out the application and additional forms, available at
www.richfieldfarmersmarket.org (click on the "Vendor Information" tab), and submit with booth fee payment to the Richfield Community Center (7000 Nicollet Ave, Richfield, MN 55423). Contact FarmersMarket@cityofrichfield.org or call 612.861.9362 for more information.
The Sustainable Farming Association is a chapter-based, statewide non-profit organization that supports the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education, and farmer-to-farmer networking. If you, your farm or organization has any upcoming events that you would like posted on the SFA Community Calendar, email info@sfa-mn.org.

Sustainable Farming Association (SFA)
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