Six SFA Families Named 2014 Farm Family of the Year by University of Minnesota, Honored at FarmFest

By Jason Walker • SFA Communications & Membership Coordinator

Six SFA families were among the 74 honored as a 2014 Farm Family of the Year by the University of Minnesota, an encouraging feat that illustrates the positive effects sustainable farmers are having in our food systems and communities.

Representing achievement in diverse farming operations, the farm families were recognized in ceremonies Aug. 7 at the annual Minnesota FarmFest near Redwood Falls and were chosen by local Extension committees based on their demonstrated commitment to enhancing and supporting agriculture.

“It’s kind of a nice example of a shift in understanding about what works in agriculture and what should be recognized. I appreciate it,” said SFA Association Board member Richard Handeen, who with his wife, Audrey Arner, were Chippewa County’s honored farmers as well as 2014 SFA Farmer Emeritus Award winners.

Their farm, Moonstone, has been in the Handeen family since 1872; Richard’s Swedish great-grandparents first purchased farmland here in 1871. Since 1973, Richard and Audrey have transitioned conventional corn and soybeans to organic pastures and hay fields with their grassfed cattle herd. As co-owners and co-managers, Richard and Audrey raise perennials, including a vineyard with cold climate wine grapes, and numerous other species grown for timber, fruits, nuts, ornamentals, and medicinals.

Representing Morrison County were SFA members Jerry and Jackie Januschka (pictured...
at right), who farm 1,140 certified organic acres at [Januschka Family Farm] near Little Falls. They grow hay, corn, soybeans, beans, field peas, barley, and oats, as well as producing grassfed beef, pastured chickens, and pastured pork.

"It is a great privilege for us to be honored with the Morrison County Farm Family of the year award," Jackie said. "That being said, we would like to recognize the hard work of the many generations of the Januschka farm family members that have participated in the agricultural operations here in Morrison County."

According to Jackie, in the late 1920s, Jerry’s grandparents, Adolf and Sophie, emigrated from Austria, and they and their six children worked very hard to raise the animals as well as clear and cultivate the land.

"When the other children went to college, their oldest son, Steve, and his wife Rose, stayed on the farm," Jackie said. "They accepted the challenge to continue, and with the help of their hardworking eight children, were able to expand the family farm. In 1990, we began farming with Steve and Rose. It was with the assistance of our three daughters that we moved forward with transitioning the farmland and the livestock to an organic operation."

Farmers since 2000 on 160 acres near Solway, Paul Conklin and Becky Marty were honorees from Beltrami County. Initially, their land on the farm consisted of cropland, pasture, woodland, bogs, and swamp; today, Paul and Becky’s Northern Light Farm produces two acres of market vegetables distributed through a CSA and a farmers market as well as a small herd of Highland cattle, a few beehives, and a free-range flock of laying hens. Daughters Hannah and Li help out, too.

Says Paul, "We were presented with the county award at the Beltrami County Fair, right before the 4H livestock auction. One of the other honorees was a family receiving a century farm award. Many of the young people showing their animals had their farming parents and grandparents there to cheer them on.

"In my very impromptu remarks while accepting the award, I noted that our farm has 86 years to go before we get a century farm award, and I thanked the Minnesota Extension for honoring a farm family that was fairly new to farming and doing it because we have a passion for feeding the people in of our area in a sustainable way. I think that honoring our family highlights the growing diversity of farming in our state that is part of the path to a more stable and sustainable food system."

Other SFA farms honored:

In Wadena County, SFA members the Connell Family was honored for their 20 years of dedication to their family farm. The Connells produce fruits and vegetables using innovative natural farming techniques such as composting, green manure crops, mulches and ground covers. Kathy Connell, a former organic inspector, is a former SFA Central Chapter board member; her son, Seth, is a current Central board member. The Connells sell at farmers markets in Wadena and New York Mills as well as to local schools.

SFA members Kathy Draeger and Mike Jorgenson were the honorees from Big Stone County, where they are the third generation of Jorgensons to oversee the family farm. Originally a dairy, the farm now features a rotationally grazed grassfed beef operation with a mixed herd of Irish Dexter and Lowline Angus cattle. They also have 40 acres in organic crop production with the remaining acres in a conventional crop rotation. The Jorgenson kids, Alma, Jens, and Lake, are involved with poultry production and raise laying hens, pasture-fed broilers, and turkeys.

Lake Superior SFA stalwart Cree Bradley and her husband, Jason, were honored from Lake County. Cree and Jason produce vegetables, chickens, and fish and forest products in a healthy, organic, and sustainable way at their Chelsea Morning Farm north of Two Harbors. Cree’s father, Joe Holtz, is part of their farm operation as well. Cree, who leads the Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings program with the Lake Superior SFA chapter, is piling up the honors: She also was honored with the 2014 SFA Distinguished Service Award.
Harvest Festival Has Something for Everyone: 
Event Set for Sept. 6 at Bayfront Park in Duluth

By Abby DeVita • Lake Superior Chapter Coordinator

It's food, it's learning, it's growing, it's fun. It's something for everyone, and it's free. Why not make a day of it at Harvest Festival, set for 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sat., Sept. 6, at Bayfront Park in downtown Duluth.

For over two decades, the Lake Superior Chapter of SFA has put on this premier event, connecting producers and consumers. Harvest Festival features one of the best and largest farmers' markets in the region, along with live music, craft village, nonprofit showcase, educational exhibits, family activities and more! The best part is that it's all locally focused, locally grown, and locally sourced. Admission and parking is free to the public from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and by donation after that for the evening entertainment acts.

This year, the LSSFA is working in collaboration with the Twin Ports Bridge Festival to put on one broader event connecting people and celebrating community. Honoring our greatest lake and the communities that it brings together, we are uniting to bring you the best event yet! Fly a kite, pet a goat, meet a piping plover. Listen to music and treat yourself to handmade craft items. Eat something fresh and healthy (or maybe just a little bit indulgent). Learn about backyard composting or backyard chicken-raising or beekeeping. Meet your neighbors and the people who grow your food.

If you’re local, walk on over. If you’re from out of town, make a day of it or stay for the weekend. The 21st Annual Harvest Festival welcomes you!

Executive Director's Note

There isn’t much going on in the news these days that inspire confidence about the future. The news from the Middle East, Ferguson, Missouri and elsewhere leaves us staggered. Sometimes there can be so much bad news that we just zone it out, push it away. Its a normal response.

At the risk of sounding Pollyanna, however, I have to admit I’m optimistic about sustainable agriculture. I really am. As I prepared to write this, I could hardly contain my excitement about the future of our preferred production model in agriculture.

Just take a look at this issue of SFA Connect. We’ve got examples of several SFA member farms being named as University of MN Farm Families of the Year. This is a real validation of the kind of food production espoused by SFA over the past many years. Thank you to all the farms represented in that list and I can’t wait to see next year’s list.

Also, SFA has just come off another very successful Garlic Festival and we are rolling into what looks to be another great Harvest Festival up in Duluth on Sept. 6. The Farm Skills 101 class is booked to capacity, and over 4,000 votes have been cast in our poll for Annual Conference Topics.

There’s a lot going on! SFA’ers are involved, committed and making a difference for sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest. I’m really looking forward to this winter’s meeting season! There’s never been a better time to be a sustainable farmer!

Here’s to a safe and prosperous fall 2014!
SFA Chapters: Comment on New Resource Portal

SFA has created a Chapter Resource Portal for chapter coordinators and leaders: Learn how to properly represent the Association in your communications, read our Chapter Resource Guide, download appropriate logos and templates, view your chapter charter and other official SFA documents, and more.

We hope you find this useful and would love to hear your feedback. Check it out, make suggestions and email them to Jerry Ford by Oct. 1 so we can take your suggestions and improve the Portal before your annual chapter meeting.

SFA Conference Internships Available

SFA is accepting applications for Sustainability Conference Internships. These hands-on internships are for late fall and winter 2014/15 and require attendance at the SFA Annual Conference on Feb. 14 as well as the Midwest Soil Health Summit on Feb. 18-19. Those interested in an application should contact SFA Network Coordinator Jerry Ford at jerry@sfa-mn.org.

Click here to learn more at our internships homepage.

Check This Out

A new SFA Connect feature, “Check This Out” is a section of links to articles and videos chosen by SFA staff that you might enjoy. Consider:

The Wallace Center’s Pasture Project, a longtime SFA collaborator and supporter, has posted a video series that includes an interview with SFA Executive Director John Mesko as well as Dr. Fred Kirschenmann, Paul Brown of Brown’s Ranch, and more. Visit http://www.wallacecenter.org/pastureproject/.

Spring 2015 Farm Skills 101 Dates Announced

By Jason Walker • SFA Communications & Membership Coordinator

SFA's Farm Skills 101 is a popular, intensive skills-training course geared for the forage-based livestock farmer, and the Fall 2014 semester is sold out. Dates for the Spring 2015 semester of Farm Skills 101 have been set: April 17-18 and 24-25 as well as May 1-2. Registration is not yet open but should be soon once lodging options are nailed down; keep watching SFA Connect for updates.

Given the sold-out fall semester, Dr. Sue Wika, Sustainable Food Production Program educator, said she was happy that demand for the practical education contained in Farm Skills 101 continued to be so high. Other farmer-educators in the program include Tom Prieve, DVM; and Kent Solberg, SFA Livestock & Grazing Coordinator.

"We provide the intensive skills training and holistic philosophy that can help beginning farmers have a realistic and well-planned entry into the farming world, and that's exciting," Wika said. "Plus, our low student-teacher ratio ensures all students have ample opportunity to engage in discussion and hands-on activity."

For more information about SFA’s Sustainable Food Production Program, as well as Farm Skills 101, visit our SFP homepage or email Dr. Sue Wika at sue@sfa-mn.org.

Voting Update: 2015 Annual Conference Topics

We are thinking about topics for our next SFA Annual Conference, set for Feb. 14, 2015, again at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph.

Voting closes Oct. 30 for 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.
We're up to 61 topic ideas and over 4,000 votes! The top ten vote-getters as of Aug. 24, 2014:

- Salvaging, Repurposing, Upcycling, and Restoring farm equipment and buildings
- Deep Winter Solar Greenhouses
- How Can Sustainably Produced Fiber Contribute to the Success of Local Food Initiatives
- Integrating Crops & Livestock
- Multi-Species Grazing
- Get a butcher there to discuss what cuts to produce, how to decide when to butcher, proper nutrition (grass based) for best results, etc.
- Cover Crops & Soil Health
- LLC, LC3 and 501c(3) which one is right for me? A conversation about limiting liability and your business.
- Direct Marketing Meat
- Value-Added Processing

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

**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.

![Annual Conference Photo Feature](image)

**British White Cattle Association Conference in Waubun**

Attention cattle folks: A conference featuring speakers Kit Pharo of Pharo Cattle Company as well as Will Winter, DVM, is slated for 8 a.m. Aug. 29 at Waubun High School in Waubun. Hosted by Rolling Hills Traeger Ranch in partnership with British White Cattle Association of America, the conference will feature education and perspective for all types and sizes of beef
Pharo is known for his “Herd Quitter” approach to beef production to produce beef and breeding stock more profitably under all types of conditions. Winter will discuss how ranchers can achieve optimal utilization of any forage as well as maximum rumen efficiency.

Also planned is a tour of a British White Cattle herd, an auction, trade show, and more. Cost is $125 at the door. For more information, contact Christina at 320.293.2995 or britishwhitebeef@gmail.com, or visit the conference homepage.

Organic Certification Cost Share is Back for 2014

Minnesota Department of Agriculture Commissioner Dave Frederickson has signed an agreement with USDA to offer an organic certification cost share program again in 2014. This program offers important regulatory cost relief for organic farmers and handlers who are required by law to hire an accredited certifying agency to verify they are complying with National Organic Standards.

All certified organic operations in MN should receive application materials in the mail in a couple of weeks. The materials will also be available online after that time at www.mda.state.mn.us/organic

The program refunds up to 75 percent of certification costs for operations that are certified (or have continuing certification) by Sept. 30, 2014. Funding for the Organic Certification Cost Share program was included in the Farm Bill passed by Congress earlier this year. Minnesota’s allocation for 2014 is $541,500.

In Minnesota, applications will be due Oct. 31. Information about organic practices, certification requirements, and other related topics is available right now at www.mda.state.mn.us/organic

If you are in transition right now and will not be certified before Sept. 30, 2014, you may qualify for our Minnesota Organic Transition Cost Share program instead. More info here.

Farm to School Grant Program Still Accepting Apps

The Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture’s Farm to School Grant Program supports Minnesota school districts and child care centers in the processing of Minnesota agricultural products. Grants are intended to both create feasibility plan that identifies specific equipment, tools, training or policies needed by school districts and child care centers; and purchase equipment to allow schools and child care centers to purchase, prepare and serve more Minnesota grown and raised food.

Applications for this grant program in 2015 are still being accepted; proposals must be received no later than 4 p.m. Nov. 3, 2014.

Farm to School was established to create new markets for local growers to provide fresh products for the local school cafeteria. The program coordinates at least $10 million in local purchases annually. Although most purchases involve fruits and vegetables, schools are also purchasing fluid milk, meat or poultry, and grains.

Applications can be found on the MDA’s website. For more information, email michael.crusan@state.mn.us.
SFA Connect is your bi-weekly link to the Sustainable Farming Association

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.

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