Dr. Val Farmer, our Annual Conference keynote speaker, is a rural mental health pioneer

We are delighted to have Dr. Val Farmer as our keynote speaker at our 2012 Annual Conference.

Dr. Farmer is a clinical psychologist who established himself as a pioneer leader in the field of rural mental health. He actively practiced clinical psychology in South Dakota for 22 years and in North Dakota for nine.

Farmer’s writing career began in 1982 when he began writing a monthly column on rural mental health topics for Farm Wife News. In 1984, he began a newspaper column that was syndicated into farm papers in the Midwest and Canada as well as daily and weekly newspapers in agricultural communities and trade centers. Monthly, he writes two columns on rural mental topics and several more on mental health and cultural/social issues.

Dr. Farmer has been a popular speaker and workshop presenter for farm audiences and conventions on topics on rural stress, marriage and family life, parenting, communication skills, retirement, family farm and ranch business relationships, and succession and leadership issues in inter-generational and multi-family farms. He has authored three books and several booklets and was a regular weekly guest for eight years discussing rural mental health topics on AgriTalk, a nationally syndicated rural radio program.

Annual Conference registration now open

Registration is now open for our Annual Conference, and it's just $60 for SFA members (and $85 for nonmembers/ member renewals). Click here to visit our registration page.

New this year is our Leaders Breakfast, sponsored by Organic Valley. Registration for this event, featuring awards and donor recognition, is just $12.50. To sign up or learn more, click here.

Sessions include (more will be added):

- Farm Transitions: Thinking of transitioning into or out of farming? This session will give you some food for thought and show you some creative ways to get more out of that...
Meat Processing Facilities in Minnesota: What needs to happen to increase the number of inspected facilities? How can you be involved?

Farm Bill 2012 Update: Learn about what's new in this very important legislation, and how did the super committee work?

Diet, Stress, and Health: Farming is hard, don't make it harder. Learn how to deal with stress and diet related illness.

Beginning Farmer Curriculum Update: The University of Minnesota has been working with SFA to develop beginning farmer curriculum. See a preview and help shape the project for the future.

Vegetable and meat quality: How to maintain the quality of your product from harvest to the customer.

Notes: There is no "non-meal" option offered at any level. There are no partial registrations. Fee is for the full-day program Sat., Feb. 18. Fee is the same regardless of what time the registrant shows up on the day of the conference or whether the registrant eats lunch.

Also, child daycare will not be available at this year's Annual Conference. Additional lunch meal tickets will be available at the Conference for $10, and well-behaved children are welcome to attend with their parents. Teens and college students receive special registration rates; check the website for details.

A note from Executive Director John Mesko

I was listening to the Public Radio show "The Splendid Table" over the weekend. I know that many of you have heard this program, and if you are into food and cooking as hobbies, you really should check it out.

Anyway, at the very end of this particular show, host Lynne Rossetto Kasper had SFA member Gary Brever of Ploughshare Farm on the show.

Lynne spoke to Gary about Ploughshare's Winter Frozen Share. This innovative offering is a way for Gary's CSA customers to stay in touch with Ploughshare through the winter and to keep the good organic veggies he's growing coming to the kitchens of his customers.

It was a great story, and it was so good to hear one of our own on national radio! Great Job, Gary! You can hear Gary's portion here.

SFA gear store now open for business

Looking for a great Christmas gift for the sustainably minded? Click here to check out our new SFA store. There's a huge selection of officially branded SFA gear for men, women and children, including hats, coats, bags and shirts in a range of sizes and colors. That Carhartt thermal-lined jacket sure would look good under the Christmas tree, wouldn't it?

Farm business workshop planned at Ridgewater

Wonder where your farm business is heading? Want to improve your business skills? Then attend "Putting It All Together," a workshop for small and specialty-crop farms. Presented by Ridgewater College's Farm Business Management Education Program, the event is from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Feb. 4, 2012 at Ridgewater College's Hutchinson campus.

Fee is $50 for your first registrant and $25 for additional registrants. Cost of the program includes all materials, breaks and lunch. For workshop information, contact Steve Zenk at steve.zenk@ridgewater.edu or 320-523-5468. For registration, contact Kim Tensen at kim.tensen@ridgewater.edu or 320-222-7606.
The Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Organic Conference returns to the River's Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud on Jan. 13-14, 2012. Enjoy dozens of practical workshops, a trade show, organic meals and ample opportunities to meet other organic farmers. Featured speakers include:

- Charles Benbrook, chief scientist at The Organic Center
- Jim Goodman, journalist and Wisconsin organic beef/dairy farmer
- Elaine Ingham, president and director of research at Soil Foodweb Inc.
- John Mesko, Executive Director of The Sustainable Farming Association

Also, three preconference workshops are slated for Jan. 12: "Practical GAP's Implementation on Your Diversified Vegetable Farm," "All About Selling Meat – What You Need to Know" and "Introduction to Beekeeping."

To learn more about the conference, call 651.201.6012 or email Meg.Moynihan@state.mn.us.

Mark Your Calendars

SFA Annual Conference - February 18, 2012
College of Saint Benedict, St. Joseph, MN

Also, don't forget to check out the Event Calendar on our Website for more Sustainable Ag Events.

SFA Connect is your bi-weekly link to the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota

The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota 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 of Minnesota (SFA)
Box 192, Princeton, MN 55371
763-260-0209 • info@sfa-mn.org

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