SFA Profile: Web Designer Laura Borgendale Ensures We Always Look Sharp Online

By Jason Walker • SFA Communications Coordinator

Having a good web designer is essential to an organization’s success, but the person behind the work can often go unnoticed. As editor and typographer John D. Berry said, "Only when the design fails does it draw attention to itself; when it succeeds, it’s invisible."

There’s no doubt SFA’s website design is succeeding, and it’s thanks to the hard work and vision of Laura Borgendale. In our digital, Google-driven world, a nonprofit like SFA must stand out to not just folks locally but nationally, too, and the crucial first step to doing so is having a professional, concise homepage. Laura’s work as SFA web designer ensures that SFA communicates its mission, its goals, and its past, present and future work to not only SFA members but potential members, donors and funders, too.

Borgendale has been working behind-the-scenes as SFA’s web designer since 2006. She grew up on a dairy farm near Montevideo and while developing her digital focus has maintained a connection to agriculture through SFA and her past work at Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings program.

“In the past, much of my life and my family’s revolved around farming, and I know how important it is to have access to the proper resources, especially if you are a beginning farmer or are transitioning to more sustainable practices," she said. "When I was growing up, my dad looked to publications such as SFA’s Cornerpost, the Land Stewardship Letter and Stockman Grass Farmer for information to incorporate rotational grazing into our dairy farm."

Borgendale also builds and maintains websites for other non-profits and small businesses throughout Minnesota, including several sustainable farms.

"I enjoy working with SFA now because they provide that link for so many farmers, and I think the website will continue to evolve as a resource for information and as a means to connect farmers with one another, and with consumers," she said. "Social media will also continue to
Executive Director's Note

By John Mesko

Last week, SFA kicked off our Adjust 2015 project. I first mentioned this project in this column back in April of this year when we were notified that we had received the NCR-SARE grant. Now that the funding is actually available, we can begin our work on this important project. You will be hearing much more about Adjust 2015 in the coming weeks, but I’d like to share a little bit about the project, and its scope.

The full title of the project is: “Adjust 2015, When Farming Reality Doesn’t Match the Business Plan.” Let’s be honest, while some new farms and farming enterprises come together smoothly and are a success from the start, many new farms struggle in the early years to find a successful groove. This struggle is not a reflection of the farmer(s) as much as it is a reflection of how difficult farming can be. With that in mind, the goals of Adjust 2015 are very straightforward:
- Increase the knowledge and awareness beginning farmers have of potential difficulties they may face.
- Build into the beginning farmer educational system an emphasis on realistic, nimble and flexible business plans.
- Develop the skills of beginning farmers to recognize risks looming on the horizon early enough to make adjustments before those risks threaten the business or the farm family.
- Help aspiring farmers develop a proper exit strategy as a part of their original business plan.

SFA will accomplish these goals by engaging our Farmer-to-Farmer Network™ through surveys and interviews. We will summarize the stories of farms and farmers who have had less than desired success, or have had to make changes to their operations and plans in order to survive. These summaries will be the basis for our New Farm Reality Check™ educational materials, which we will make available to beginning farmer training courses throughout the North Central Region, as well as our own workshops in Minnesota and other NCR states.

Adjust 2015 is NOT a new beginning farmer training program. Rather it is designed to support and collaborate with existing beginning farmer training programs throughout the country. In a nutshell: Adjust 2015 will collect real stories from real farms about difficulties they faced getting started, and then help others to avoid some of those difficulties.

If you have a farm start-up story you think would be helpful to this project, please let me know, we are currently collecting the names of people who would like to share their story. You can email me at: john@sfa-mn.org.
Another Pasture Profitability Field Day in the Books; Grazing Education Event for Veterans is This Weekend

Continuing our GrazeFest™ series of events to promote grass-fed livestock production, SFA has held two grazing-focused workshops this fall with another planned this weekend.

The most recent (above) was a Pasture Profitability tour Oct. 6 in Edgerton at the farm of Bob Schelhass (right). Attendees enjoyed a pasture walk and discussion of Bob’s grazing system followed by a producer panel discussion of direct marketing opportunities and challenges. This workshop was similar to one we hosted Sept. 29 near Wadena. See more photos from both workshops on our Facebook page.

Finally, SFA is co-sponsoring a farming workshop for war veterans on the benefits of draft animals from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 20 at Central Lakes College Ag Center, Staples. The event hopes to help returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans get involved in farming, and demonstrations include horse farming methods and other opportunities for working with draft animals. Iraq war veteran Mike Sams will lead a tour of his farm nearby and will deliver a keynote address.

There will also be a hands-on interactive session for the aspiring farmers to assess their goals and dreams, as well as a beginning farmer resource trade show. Lunch is provided, and the event is free for veterans and their families. Click here to register.

For more information on the veterans workshop or our GrazeFest series, contact Kent Solberg at 218.445.7580 or sevenpinesfarmandfence@gmail.com. We have also launched a webpage for our Pasture Profitability workshops as well as any other grass-based seminar or event we have in the pipeline: sfa-mn.org/pasture-profitability/.

Chapter Update: Cannon River

By Mary Ellen Frame
Students from both Carleton and St. Olaf colleges collaborated to organize "A pedal-powered tour of seven Northfield farms" on Sept. 29, most of which farms are members of the Cannon River chapter of SFA, and all within three miles of Northfield. Between 100 and 200 people on bicycles participated. Most of them were students, but community members were also included.

According to Andrew and Betsy, of Spring Wind Farm, in addition to the usual questions about their specific farming practices, the students had a background and context in which to think about the bigger picture and asked about global agricultural issues.

At the end of the tour, SEEDS Farm hosted a festival: "Free food, live music, fun activities," catered by Bon Appetite, the food service for both colleges.

**Annual Conference Photo Feature**

Thanks to *Heavy Table* photographer Crystal Liepa, we have a stockpile of awesome photos from our 2012 Annual Conference, held Feb 18 at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph. Look for a new photo in each SFA Connect, and read *Heavy Table* writer Tricia Cornell's story about the conference [here](#).

**It's a Beautiful Fall: Submit Photos and Win an SFA T-shirt**

Who doesn't want to win a free T-shirt, let alone a cool SFA one? Here's your chance. Send communications coordinator Jason Walker your photos, and the best each month, chosen by a panel of distinguished judges, gets an SFA T-shirt. What kind of photos are we looking for?
Simply anything related to sustainable agriculture or SFA members. At an SFA event, on the farm, in the garden, at a meal, a funny-looking carrot, a beautiful sunset at your farm, your family loading hay, an antique tool ... anything other SFA folks might get a kick out of seeing.

Send your photos to jason@sfa-mn.org, and we'll include the winner in SFA Connect. Note: We don't have unlimited quantities of T-shirts, so certain sizes may not always be available. But we'll try our best. And check out our Facebook page for all the photo submissions.

The first two winners were Ivan Reinke and David Weinand. Readers, send your photos to jason@sfa-mn.org and join the contest!

**Event: The True Value of Local and Organic Food**

Imagine if you had a relationship with something that was absolutely ancient, and so precious, that life — including yours — could not survive without it. What would you do to protect it? How would you care for it? Please join SFA member Atina Diffley, organic farmer and author of "Turn Here Sweet Corn: Organic Farming Works" for an empowering conversation about our food relationship with land and nature and farmers.

The event is at Bachman's Heritage Room, 6010 Lyndale Ave S, Minneapolis. Light appetizers and refreshments will be provided. Doors open at 5:30 p.m.; speakers begin at 6. Cost is $25 or $50 for event and book purchase. Register here.

**Opinions Sought in Farmer Internship Preferences Survey**

A four-question, informal survey is being conducted by researchers at the University of Minnesota to gather preliminary data for a SARE grant proposal. Our goal is to better understand farmers' thoughts and concerns about internships. We welcome a diversity of farm models and sizes (fruits, vegetables, livestock, and grains). All information submitted will remain anonymous; we will not have access to any identifying information. All questions are optional.

To access the survey, click here.

**IATP Seeks Senior Associate, Agriculture Policy**

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy seeks a full-time Senior Program Associate in its Minneapolis office to coordinate IATP’s work on agriculture policy. The Senior Program Associate will be involved with the design and implementation of a multi-year plan, with coworkers and partners, to redefine what agriculture policy should look like regionally, nationally and internationally. This position will require visionary thinking, a background in agriculture and food policy, strong analytical, writing and communication skills, and the ability to coordinate work and people.

Compensation for this position is based on qualifications and experience. IATP offers excellent health insurance, vacation and sick leave benefits and a lively, creative work environment.

Send resume and cover letter to IATP Human Resources at jobs@iatp.org. The deadline for applications is Oct. 29.

**Farm Beginnings Program Party Set at Bryant Lake Bowl**

Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings program is throwing a party from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Nov. 4 at the Bryant Lake Bowl in Minneapolis.

Enjoy great live music featuring Mike Monroe, Brad Frenholz and the Cactus Blossoms as well as the chance to buy creative, beautiful art from local artists at the silent auction. There will be plenty of fun conversation and lots of bowling.

It’s going to be a fun time and all for just $10, which goes to help support Farm Beginnings efforts to get more sustainable farmers started on the land.
Scholarship Created for Sustainable Food Program

Fergus Area College Foundation has established a scholarship to provide financial assistance to a second-semester student in the Sustainable Food Production program at M-State Fergus Falls. Program faculty will recommend eligible candidates, and the final determination of the scholarship recipient will be made each December.

Those interested in helping students pursue study in the sustainable agriculture field may make a tax-deductible donation to the Sustainable Food Production program scholarship fund. Checks should be sent to Fergus Area College Foundation, 1414 College Way, Fergus Falls, MN 56537. Or donate online at www.minnesota.edu/facf; click on "Making Donations" and write "Sustainable Food Production" in the comments section.

For more information, contact Carolyn Glesne at 218.736.1514 or facf@minnesota.edu.

MDA Offers Flood Aid Grants to Farmers in 15 Counties

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for state flood assistance from farmers severely impacted by record rainfall and flooding in June 2012. Grants are available to eligible farmers in Aitkin, Carlton, Cass, Cook, Crow Wing, Dakota, Goodhue, Itasca, Kandiyohi, Lake, Meeker, Pine, Rice, Sibley, and St. Louis Counties.

Gov. Mark Dayton and state legislators agreed to create the grant program as part of the package of disaster aid passed into law during the one-day special legislative session on August 24. The program goal is to provide assistance to farmers recovering from the impacts of the severe storms.

The application form can be found on the MDA website here. Applications must be postmarked by Oct. 24. The applications will be reviewed and audited by MDA staff, with funds expected to be delivered in January. For more information about the program, contact MDA’s Minnesota Farmer Assistance Network at 1-877-898-6326.

Cover Cropping in Urban Agriculture Discussion Set

Join a discussion regarding how Cover Cropping May Improve Soil Fertility In Urban Agriculture from 3-4:30 p.m. Oct. 23 at Peace Coffee, 3262 Minnehaha Ave, Minneapolis. The event is free; coffee and cookies will be provided.

In spring 2012, Stone's Throw Urban Farm received a SARE Farmer-Rancher Grant to explore different ways in which cover-cropping could improve depleted, urban soils while also fitting into the management requirements of a small farm. The workshop will explain Stone's Throw's cover cropping goals, experimental design, and initial ruminations. Then, the farmers hope to enter into a broader discussion regarding soil fertility challenges and potential solutions for urban agriculture and small-scale vegetable production in general.

NCR-SARE Announces Farmer Grant Call for Proposals

The 2013 North Central Region - Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (NCR-SARE) Farmer Rancher Grant Call for Proposals is now available.

Farmers and ranchers in the North Central Region are invited to submit grant proposals to explore sustainable agriculture solutions to problems on the farm or ranch. Proposals should show how farmers and ranchers plan to use their own innovative ideas to explore sustainable agriculture options and how they will share project results. Sustainable agriculture is good for the environment, profitable, and socially responsible.

Interested applicants can find the call for proposals online as well as useful information for completing a proposal here. You can find more information about sustainable agriculture at sare.org or take a free National Continuing Education Program online course about the basic
Proposals are due on Thursday, November 29th at 4:30 p.m. at the NCR-SARE office in St. Paul, MN. Potential applicants with questions can contact Joan Benjamin, Associate Regional Coordinator and Farmer Rancher Grant Program Coordinator, at jbenjami@umn.edu or 573-681-5545 or 800-529-1342.

**Organic Certification Cost Share Accepting Applications**

Minnesota organic farmers and processors can apply for a rebate of up to 75 percent of the cost of their organic certification as the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is accepting applications for the Minnesota Organic Cost Share Program through Oct. 31.

Funds for the cost share program come from a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Operations that received certification (or had ongoing certification) between Oct. 1, 2011 and Sept. 30, 2012 are eligible for reimbursement of up to 75 percent of certification-related costs up to a maximum of $750 per category (crop, livestock, processing/handling, wild harvest). Last year, the MDA disbursed nearly $381,000 to 480 certified organic farmers and processors in the state.

More information: [www.mda.state.mn.us/organic](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/organic) or 651-201-6012.

**MDA Has $1 Million in Funds for State Livestock Farmers**

Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Dave Frederickson has announced that $1 million in grant funding is being made available to livestock producers in the state for on-farm improvements. The Livestock Investment Grant Program was first funded by the Minnesota legislature in 2008. Since then, 89 grant recipients have invested an estimated $31 million in improvements to their operations.

The deadline to apply for the grant program is January 14, 2013. More information on the Minnesota Livestock Investment Program can be found [on the MDA website](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/organic).

**Fall Harvest Event for Women in Sustainable Agriculture**

Come share ideas, conversation and laughter while enjoying the beauty and relaxation of the Root River and surrounding bluff country of the Cedar Valley Resort during the annual Fall Harvest Gathering for Women in Sustainable Agriculture Nov. 9-11 in Whalan.

The weekend will include a presentation and demonstration on proper chainsaw use and safety, virtual farm tours, engaging women farmer speakers, small and large group discussions, songs, and plenty of time to relax and unwind.

For more information, contact [staceyleighbrown@yahoo.com](mailto:staceyleighbrown@yahoo.com).

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**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](mailto:info@sfa-mn.org).

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