Meet Mary Hanks

I serve on the board of the Cannon River/Hawatha Valley Chapter as secretary and state board representative. I have also been serving as the state board secretary since November of 1998. My involvement in what was soon to become the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota began back in 1990 when I first started working at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Kathy Zacofosse, who worked for the Land Stewardship Project in the Cannon River area, invited me to a house meeting where we discussed starting the Cannon River SFA chapter. I continued as part of the group as the chapter started holding field days and meetings in the area. I grew up as a city girl in Kansas City, MO and currently reside on a small acreage with my family in rural Dakota County near Northfield, MN. I am married to husband Steve, who works for a small locally owned bank. We have three sons – Ben, 22; John, 18; and Mike, 15.

When I’m not diligently working away on projects for the SFA of MN, I work as the manager of the Sustainable Agriculture and Integrated Pest Management Programs at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), where I have been for almost 15 years. I hold a PhD in Plant Pathology from Iowa State University. Prior to working for the MDA, I worked in the seed industry for 10 years in a traditional breeding program to incorporate disease resistance into corn, soybeans, alfalfa, sweet corn, and green beans. At MDA, my crew is responsible for sustainable ag grant and loan programs, publishing the Greenbook each year, the organic program, fruit and vegetable pest surveys and IPM info and training, field crop pest surveys, weed biological control programs for leafy spurge and spotted knapweed, outreach and education on biological control. In my spare time I like to engage in light reading to relax, watch on crossword puzzles, dabble in quilting, eat good food at restaurants that serve local foods, and stay actively involved at church with youth education and fundraising. I also serve on the board of the Minnesota Project and on the Archdiocese of Minneapolis and St. Paul’s Rural Life Advisory Board.

A final note I have is, as many other SFA members have said, SFA’s strength comes from our diversity. I hope that we continue to value and respect that diversity. Our vision and that respect will attract more farmers and non-farm consumers to us.

Mission:

We support the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through farmer-to-farmer networking, innovation, demonstration, and education.

Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota

29731 302nd Street
Starbuck, MN 56381

Return Service Requested

It’s a Plateful…but it’s all Minnesota Grown!

by Mary Jo Fortbrod

Spring on the farm signals a time when plates fill to overflowing…with work that is! It’s joyous, exuberant, hopeful, exhausting work from sun-up to sundown. Fortunately, there’s a seasonally dependable motivation and energy that seems to waft in on the spring air. So when your bones ache at the end of one of those endless days, I recommend that you take a handful of your rich, healthy soil and breathe deep, really deep. Ahhh! Now that’s aromatherapy!

HERE’S WHAT’S ON SFA’S PLATE…PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE:

SFA Across the State - SFA’s 14th Annual Conference, “Success and Succession on the Land: Sustainable Farming’s Next Generation”, was a resounding success. We are very grateful to all presenters, sponsors, exhibitors, volunteers, attendees, food producers, musicians and the University of Minnesota, Morris for being such great activists for sustainable agriculture. You’re awesome! The Elder’s Circle, food and music on the eve of the conference was most memorable, and the three generation families in attendance were indeed inspirational. The First Annual Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award was presented to Ralph Lenz. What a moment! Lifetime Service Awards were presented posthumously to Dick Broeker, Ron Desens, and Paul Homme, as we reflected on the qualities and generous gifts these men bestowed to all of us. I was fortunate to attend Annual Meetings in the Crow River, Northeast, Southeast, Cannon River/Hawatha, Coteau Ridge and Central Chapters. Each chapter reflects the energy, vision, and the farming challenges and successes unique to the chapter and locale. Volunteers are stepping forward to organize and to lead with enthusiasm and vision. It’s going to be a great year, and the field days are already underway.

CornerPost Transitions - This issue marks Anne Borgendale’s inauguration as CornerPost Editor. Anne is continuing our effort to improve the CornerPost for our members, while saving on costs and delivering value. Be sure to send her your ideas.

Minnesota Dairy Initiative - SFA continues to assist grass-based and organic dairies through our work with the Minnesota Dairy Initiative (MDI). Jeremy Lantcot is SFA’s MDI Statewide Coordinator. He is superb at connecting aspiring and existing dairy farmers with the best resources. Interest in organic and grazing dairies appears to be exploding, and Jeremy knows how to apply the substantial resources available to a farmer’s individual situation and goals. See the MDI article inside this edition and give him a call.

Creating a Bright Future for Livestock Farmers in Minnesota - SFA is a member of the Citizens Task Force on Livestock Farming and Rural Communities. Together with Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota National Farmers Organization and the Land Stewardship Project, we have agreed upon a set of guiding principles and recommendations that will benefit beginning and existing livestock farmers, promote environmentally friendly and socially responsible farming systems, and help move profits in livestock to farm families and rural communities. Many of our recommendations are working their way through the legislature now. Visit our website to read the entire Citizens Task Force Report and view updates.

SFA Website—New and Improved! One way to virtually travel the state, hear about and participate at the cutting edge of sustainable farming is to get on board our website. Go to www.sfa-mn.org for the latest in news and events. Two of the functions that we are most excited about are highly interactive. The Trading Post is designed for the unique needs of sustainable farmers and resembles classified ads, but it’s customized with lots of “beefed up” features and functions. Jump on the Discussion Board and put in your 2 cents. It’s a place to meet with the best minds in agriculture without leaving your home.

Global Emergence of Sustainable Agriculture - We were treated to a vision of hope delivered by the Minnesotans who attended the Terre Madre (Mother Earth) gathering in Italy. The Minars, the Arner/Handeens, the Ohlsen-Reads were there, along with nearly 5000 more food producers from around the world. We are indeed part of a global movement toward sustainable agriculture and celebrating the foods of our region.

In the era that birthed SFA, the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defined sustainability as “…meeting the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.” As you plant and welcome new life on your farm, I hope that you will reflect on SFA as your community of support. We rest together on the “three legged stool” of sustainability, connecting economic systems with social and ecological systems to produce food, fiber and energy. Here’s to you, SFA, and here’s to Spring!
Become a CornerPost Sponsor!

Are you interested in strengthening the development of sustainable agriculture in Minnesota? Supporting the Sustainable Farming Association’s quarterly newsletter is a way for you, your business or organization to become active in the cause. We will acknowledge your sponsorship in the CornerPost by providing your relationship with your personal, business or organization description and contact information, unless you prefer that your sponsorship remain anonymous—we will honor your wishes. Please call Mary Jo Forbord at 320-760-8732 to discuss your sponsorship opportunities. Thank you!

More Mileage per CornerPost

Before recycling the CornerPost, please leave your copy at your church, in a doctor’s waiting room, your workplace, your co-op, a place of business, or with a friend or relative. Be a part of spreading the good news about sustainable agriculture while helping to conserve our resources. Thank you!

SFA Board Finalizes Mission and 2005 Goals

The Sustainable Farming Association Board of Directors announces the Association’s recently revised mission statement and 2005 goals. The SFA invites your participation toward advancing sustainable farming systems in Minnesota.

Mission of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota: We support the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through farmer-to-farmer networking, innovation, demonstration, and education.

2005 Goals of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota: Promote sustainable farming systems through innovation and demonstration of profitable and environmentally sound farming methods that benefit rural families and communities.

- Enhance and expand our information network among SFA members, SFA Chapters, and the public through on-farm learning experiences, online communications, seminars, research projects, and the media.
- Mentor and encourage farmers, especially the next farming generation.
- Research, market, and promote sustainable agriculture practices and products by working with governmental and non-profit agencies, colleges and universities, faith communities and other organizations.
- Increase farmer participation and profitability in developing and expanding community-based food systems.
- Inform and educate consumers about healthy food and farming practices and products by working with governmental and non-profit agencies, colleges and universities, faith communities and other organizations.
- Maintain and take advantage of opportunities with governmental organizations, colleges, and universities.

Where can you...

- Find out about upcoming sustainable farming events.
- Discuss your concerns and ask questions about sustainable farming topics.
- Buy and sell a wide range of equipment, products, seed, etc. specialized to sustainable farming.
- There's just one place -- the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota web site. Explore the Discussion Board, Trading Post, Calendar and more today!

www.sfa-mn.org

On-Farm Dairy Processing: Bringing a Deeper Purpose and Connection to Farming

By Jeremy Lancot

Over the last few years, I have been working with the Minnesota Dairy Initiative providing assistance to farms that desire to become more sustainable. Of all the activities these farmers consider when looking at making changes to their enterprise, the most considered vision is adding some sort of dairy processing to their farm.

Yes, they want to improve their herd health or their grazing practices. Yes, they would like to lower their somatic cell count (SCC) or produce more milk per cow. These changes do not have enough purpose behind them to be an ultimate goal. What dairy farmer reaches a 50,000 SCC and says, “Now, we’ve reached dairy nirvana! I can die in peace and know I’ve done all I can do in life.” Or, “We’ve reached 20,000 pounds of production while grazing tumbleweed. What further horizon could we possibly attain?”

Instead, I that suspect many of these farmers miss the fellowship of a direct relationship with the consumer. There’s an element missing when they fill a bulk tank and it’s emptied into a tanker truck to go...where? There’s something meaningless in this. “Who’s benefiting from all the work I put into my operation,” they might say? I’ve heard of dairy farmers developing very close ties with the person driving the milk hauling truck over several years or decades and wanting to quit, change processors, or retire when the driver changes.

On-farm processing provides a deeper purpose and connection with the consumer. There is something satisfying about producing eggs for friends and family that everyone is proud of and likes to eat. We as farmers have an emotional connection with food. Both the production and the consumption of it are appealing to many an aspiring farmer. It is a form of sharing our heart with someone else that large agribusiness can never attain.

As a result of the plethora of inquiries into on-farm dairy processing, I have started compiling resources for those bent in this direction. And, according to my ‘finger in the wind’, there are plenty of you. The problem is there are not a lot of options for those who want to do ‘a little’ processing. Many goat and sheep graziers have this problem. “I have five goats and six sheep. How can I make some cheese and soap with my $200 budget?”

Historically, this has kept many out of this growing market because, for many years, there hasn’t been a good way to get started on a shoestring. Who wants to invest thousands of dollars only to find out they don’t really like doing this after all? Where does an interested farmer find small-scale equipment? Enter the web site www.smalldairy.com.

In the last year, I have found a resource, which may revolutionize the growth of small scale on-farm dairy processing. This site didn’t show up in the first several pages of my internet searches. I had to dig to finally discover it. Most internet searches yield sites for larger operations and/or advanced processing knowledge. Most farmers do not have the time and background to jump into on-farm processing on this scale, so it can be quite intimidating.

The Small Dairy site is built with small homestead and artisan processors in mind. There are links to suppliers of all sorts of processing equipment, all sizes and prices, cheese, yogurt, kefir and ice cream making supplies, etc. If you’re interested in classes and workshops, there is information about when and where they are offered. One of the most useful references on this site is for publications that will aid in the education of beginning dairy processors. This will be the place for most producers to start. If you do not have an internet connection, I’ll provide contact info at the end of the article.

Through the Small Dairy site, I purchased two subscriptions to periodicals for on-farm processors. “The Home Dairy News” targets those who have a few dairy animals and just want to value-add for themselves and maybe a few friends. For $20 per year you get ten issues covering the basics of production. It is well worth the investment to purchase all of the back-issues. These will give a baseline of knowledge that would be very difficult to obtain otherwise. The Home Dairy News has only been published since 2002, so it hasn’t been available for very long.

“The Creamline” is the next step in dairy artisan reading. This periodical focuses on supporting the revival of the local creamery. In this publication, one will find in-depth information with the assumption that you are already doing some processing right now. A subscription to “Creamline” costs $25 per year for four issues. If you call, ask about a package deal where you get all of the back-issues of both publications and an annual subscription. I purchased this for just over $200. These are not throwaway publications. You will want them on a shelf for reference as you pursue your dreams of dairy processing on your farm.

For more information about my search for low-cost dairy processing solutions, see the www.sfa-mn.org website and discussion board. Please, add yourself as a member to the discussion board and take part in the forums of your interest. Ask questions or answer someone else’s.

My goal has been to find solutions for beginning processors that cost no more than $1,000 for a complete package. A subscription to one, or both, of these Small Dairy publications is a good first step for those wanting to do something extraordinary with their dairy farm.

For further internet access: “Creamline/Home Dairy News”, PO Box 186-W, Willis, VA 24380. 540-789-7877. If necessary, you can contact me, also. Jeremy Lancot, 1773 335th St., Sunburg, MN 56289, 320-980-2333 (cell).
The keynote speaker for this year’s meeting was Chuck Hassebrook, Executive Director for the Center for Rural Affairs in Lyon, NE. His optimistic presentation, entitled “Creating Opportunities for Successful Family Farms and Rural Communities,” started the day. Hassebrook stressed that small family farms need to be innovative to survive in today’s farm economy. However, he emphasized that independent rural businesses also need to be part of the equation to ensure rural society’s continuity and growth. Hassebrook addressed the need for state and national legislation that supports this model.

The breakout sessions in the morning were: Organic and Grazing Dairy Innovations and Opportunities; Renewable Energy; Minnesota's Community Based Food Systems, and the Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginning’s program. This evening was a real extravaganza by Arner, Handeen, Borgerding, and Rosen singing “Chiapas Connection.” The evening ended in song as Audrey Arner, Richard Handeen, Glen Borgerding, and Joel Rosen sang and played their instruments, along with leading the group in song.

The SFA members of all ages are now looking for to the 15th annual meeting on February 12 in Northfield, MN. We started with a potluck supper—great food! Then we had the business meeting and elected a board and officers. The officers are: Mike Noble, president; Rae Rusnak, vice president; Mary Hanks, secretary; and Sheri Breen, treasurer. Other board members are: Mary Ellen Frame, Lyle Gunderson, Laurie Hougen-Ettman, Ralph Lenz, Thuy Ngo, Kathy and Nick Zeman. Mary Jo Forbord also joined us, and gave us some words of encouragement, saying that she sees a renewed interest in sustainable farming all over the state; she said we’re the keepers of the fire.

The first item on our program was Reginaldo Hazlett-Marroquin from Belle Plaine, MN recounted his experiences in developing the seed stock of black beans such as he remembered from growing up in Guatemala. It was quite a process to develop a strain that produces well, is stable, predictable, uniform, and above all, has a good taste. He started with a few seeds in 1992, selecting for the desirable traits, and last year planted a little over an acre. He also talked about his involvement with Fair Trade organizations in Guatemala and Minnesota, and about international Fair Trade organizations. In order for farmers in developing countries to obtain a livable income, international awareness and cooperation are required. Reginaldo has worked with many farming and handicraft co-operatives, as well as organizations in Guatemala. The second event on our program was slides and commentary on the Terre Madre Slow Food conference in Turin, Italy last October. Steve and Jody Bolisch found it inspiring to learn about how people practice both sustainability and food, and the continued success of small farms.

Less than a month prior to the chapter annual meeting, Steve and Jody went through the horrendous experience of a fire that destroyed their home, and the continued success of small farms. The Cannon River/Hiawatha Valley chapter held our annual meeting on February 12 in Northfield, MN. We started with a potluck supper—great food! Then we had the business meeting and elected a board and officers. The officers are: Mike Noble, president; Rae Rusnak, vice president; Mary Hanks, secretary; and Sheri Breen, treasurer. Other board members are: Mary Ellen Frame, Lyle Gunderson, Laurie Hougen-Ettman, Ralph Lenz, Thuy Ngo, Kathy and Nick Zeman. Mary Jo Forbord also joined us, and gave us some words of encouragement, saying that she sees a renewed interest in sustainable farming all over the state; she said we’re the keepers of the fire.

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Food Alliance producers – Food Alliance certification is change, to become more about the farmers, and to become to run for the office after Connie Lahr asked me. Several of thing! Actually, I spent a lot of time debating whether or not Crow River Chapter. After all, with a given name like I feel very honored to have been elected president of the 5405 Calder Ave. SE, Delano, 55328. let Greg Reynolds know at riverbend@usinternet.com or musicians and performers. Connie Lahr resigned her posi- Lake, MN, and have an “off-farm” career as professional tive; Laura Mack, Alternate State Board members as well. We've formed a great board of directors, and as Board Representative; Laura Mack, Alternate State what seems to be the norm in our community at large. We've planned to continue their participation in the chapter, as well as officers and includes: Jerry Ford, President and State Board coordination approaches. The next item on the agenda was Richard Carroll and Al Baarda, Vice-President; Marvin Bibl, Treasurer; Lynn Hackforth, Secretary; Laura Bibl, State Board Representative; Laura Mack, Alternate State Board Representative; Mary Schofield, Farm & Field Postels, Beginning Farmer and University of Minnesota Extension; and President, Gerald Hofer. They are already planning for upcoming chapter activities, including field days this summer. Watch for event dates and locations in upcoming newsletters and on the SFA of MN website calendar, or contact Bill Langlois, (218) 281-6881 for information regarding the Lake Agassiz chapter.

Lake Agassiz Chapter
By Jamie DeBrest

The Lake Agassiz chapter is underway with our ’05 activities, beginning with the 3rd Annual Organic Farming Meeting, held on March 9 in Red Lake Falls, MN. Gerald Wiebe, a farmer from Manitoba, was our keynote presenter. He spoke on “A Biological Approach to Organic Farming.” Also speaking that day were Paul Potter on no-till soybeans into rye and using rye as a cover crop; Hans Kandel on soybean varieties and legume biomass, among other topics; Jim Stordahl on buckwheat trials and alternative land use; and David Baumgartner from UMAC of UND presented on the use of satellite imagery. Lunch was served on site, door prizes were given away, and they displayed representatives from 17 different companies/organizations were available throughout the day. Many of those attending seemed pleased with the variety of resources and depth of information. Thank you to all who participated in any way. A new slate of officers now takes over for the ’05-06 term. Officers were elected as follows: Bill Langlois - president; Richard Schmitz - vice president; Denise Hermreck - secre- tary. This is a very active chapter; they are already planning for upcoming chapter activities, including field days this summer. Watch for event dates and locations in upcoming newsletters and on the SFA of MN website calendar, or contact Bill Langlois, (218) 281-6881 for information regarding the Lake Agassiz chapter.

Managing Risks with Food Alliance Certification
By Ray Kaich

Spring, Spring turning to summer. This is the time of year when things get busy and new opportunities abound. For everyone who farms, this is also a time when plans have to be made and risks have to be assessed. Because though we might be pleased with the prospects that it takes a lot of work and some cooperation from Mother Nature to bring home a crop. Maybe that’s why we plant several, or take other measures to spread the risks. In short, there are lots of risks associated with farming. From squash bugs to hail, there are many risks just getting crops and livestock in the door. Added to these are the risks of marketing – of not being able to get your commodities to the right customers at the right price. And the risks of financing and cash flowing throughout the year. If we talked with our parents and grandparents, it’s likely they would confirm all these wor- ries. They don’t seem to go away. So if there’s little new under the sun with respect to these worries, is there anything new but better deal with them? The answer is – yes. One of the new ways of dealing with farm production risks is third party protection. The basic strategy is to certify what you do on your farm in order to distin- guish your products in the marketplace and add value to them. When consumers connect with your certification, you improve your marketing and you reduce your risk. Some farms - e.g. organically certified farms – having been using this successful strategy for years. One of the ways your third party protection is available to help farms reduce risk is Food Alliance certification. Food Alliance certification tells consumers that your farm is environmentally and socially responsible and that it’s local. And it does this for a wide range of farms. Some farms - e.g. organically certified farms – having been using this successful strategy for years. Food Alliance certification tells consumers that your farm is environmentally and socially responsible and that it’s local. And it does this for a wide range of farms. There are several unique features to Food Alliance certifi- cation:

Reducing Market Risk – Food Alliance certification opens the door to new and growing markets for your prod- ucts. Farmers have traditionally marketed commodity products through conventional channels. Reliance on a few channels for markets creates a high degree of dependence. Food Alliance certification provides you access to important food buyers who understand the integrity of your products. And your products can be differentiated from others in the mar- kets place – and differentiated at a premium price.

Reducing Production Risk – Food Alliance producers make use of sound production practices that buffer farms from some of Mother Nature’s tricks. For example, Food Alliance certified farms that use water-conserving crop rotations are less likely to suffer from drought. Likewise, if you’re using traps and degree-day models in your IPM pro- gram, you’re not only a good fit for Food Alliance certifi- cation, you’re likely avoid pest damage to your crops. Reducing Financial Risk – Food Alliance certification is an excellent component of a sound business plan. If your busi- ness is growing or transitioning, access to credit is essential. Lenders place great importance on a thorough business plan that addresses marketing goals and commitments. Food Alliance certification – and your ability to work with Food Alliance market partners – may be the final piece of the puz- zle that moves your business plan forward. Your marketing plan, coupled with a strong Food Alliance environmental scorecard, forges a compelling story for any lender or investor.

So when you certify with Food Alliance, you get risk man- agement on all sides of the farm fence – certification helps you manage production risks; it also helps you manage mar- keting and financial risks. Food Alliance works for you whether you direct market, you sell to the natural food co-op in town, or you want your kids at the local college to have better dinners. I encourage you to consider Food Alliance certification for your farm or business. A national certification program that works locally to help you reduce production, marketing and financial risks. Now that’s something new under the sun. 

* * * * * * *

Ray Kaich is the Midwest Certification Coordinator for Food Alliance. For an application or more information about Food Alliance, contact Ray at 651-653-0168, ray@foodalliance.org. You can also learn more at the Food Alliance website: www.foodalliance.org.

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Art and Science (cont’d from Page 9)

I attend many conferences and seminars. It always amazes me that a conference on dairy, for example, has almost no dairy products featured during meals and breaks. What is featured is something I normally pass over in the grocery aisle. Where’s the pride? Conversely, I attend events, like our SFA statewide annual meeting, featuring local or sustainable fare and each meal and snack is abounding in homegrown variety. This is a strength that shouldn’t be overlooked. Most people have an emotional connection to the food they eat. Many times this hearkens back to home and upbringing where these connections are made. We should never undervalue the power in knowing how to produce excellent raw ingredients, but don’t stop there; we should be nurturing the art and science of how to prepare our hard-earned harvest into well-prepared food for which people will hunger to taste.
Ralph Lentz: Outstanding in His Field!

By Anne Borgerdalen

The Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award is not about what a farmer did last year, today, or what he says he’ll do tomorrow. Instead, it’s about a lifetime of learning, patience, commitment, stewardship, and passion for the land and farming. If you already know Ralph Lentz, the first recipient of the award, you know why we’re honoring him. But for the few of you who don’t know him, it is only appropriate to tell you his story. Then you’ll know why Ralph is so deserving of this honor.

Ralph always knew on some level that he wanted to be a farmer. He was raised on a small, diversified family farm near Sauk Centre, MN. However, there were several other children in line ahead of him to live on and work that farm. So, instead of becoming a farmer he joined the military and served in the Korean War. He then went to college at the University of Minnesota where he earned a degree in agriculture. He served in the Korean War. He then went to college at the University of Minnesota where he earned a degree in agriculture and then served in the Korean War. He then went to college at the University of Minnesota where he earned a degree in agriculture. He served in the Korean War.

Ralph, about starting a chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association in the southeastern part of the state. Soon, the first organizational meeting was held and the SFA and their activities started to grow.

Today, Ralph is still farming that beautiful piece of rolling land and like many farmers and teachers he is thinking a lot about the future of his farm and the future of farming. Some of his concerns are around what went wrong with conventional agriculture and what hopes does the future hold. “The commodity program started because prices were low. The universities and research supported the growth of the commodity programs and this contributed to increasing specialization in only corn and soybeans. They need to rent and to buy more land and bigger, more expensive machinery. This helped to lead to the elimination of many family farms and the removal of livestock from many farms too. We now have a way of life, a culture that is no more. Farms are great for society because of the people they help to create. However, I see a trend of farms being more and more specialized, this leads to the elimination of many family farms and the removal of livestock from many farms too.

By Vic Ormsby

Southeast Chapter

The Southeast Chapter held their annual meeting on Saturday, February 12th in St. Charles, MN. The meeting was held in the St. Charles Community Center. Unlike the previous year, the weather was beautiful and the attendance was good. Over 50 people came for the full day’s program and nearly 30 additional people showed up for the afternoon session.

Our first presenter was our own Executive Director, Mary Jo Forbord. Mary Jo described her family’s evolution from conventional dairy farmers to sustainable beef graziers and crop producers. She spoke of the activities of the various chapters around the state and the many experiences she has had over the past year and a half. She spoke of our SFA participation in the Minnesota Dairy Initiative through the efforts of Joe Finley. She has also participated with other partners in the Livestock/Rural Communities Task Force.

John Nicholson, the Southeast Minnesota NRCS Regional Conservationist presented a lively discussion of the next Conservation Security Program as well as other federal conservation programs. The Root River Watershed is included in the CSP program this year. This watershed covers a large portion of the SE SFA territory and we very much encourage our sustainable farmers to investigate the program.

Most of the people in the area have a very low income -- about $200.00 per year. The Indian peasants had an uprising in 1820, which coincided with the enactment of the NAFTA Agreement. The peasants fought with the wealthy cattle ranchers and coffee growers. A tentative agreement was reached which promised to redistribute illegal landholdings to poor peasants.

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) was the topic of the final presentation, which was given by Jim Jirik of the Waseca County NRCS. This program is currently available in five watershed districts in Minnesota. In order to be eligible for CSP, producers need to implement proper nutrient management practices, such as, soil testing every four years, analyzing animal nutrients every year, and follow the University of Minnesota fertilizer recommendations. Of the producers that were not eligible for CSP in 2004, the majority of which were applying nutrients above the University of Minnesota recommended rates for nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium or applicants might have lacked current soil test results.

The South Central Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association needs people to send in their annual membership dues. If you would like to support our organization and could not attend the annual meeting please send your $5.00 annual dues to Wes Tennis at 23086 82nd Ave; Hayward, MN 56043.

The “Soil, Time, and Children” panel. From right to left front row: Cindy VanDerPol, Conni (Fernholz) Carlson, Malena Henderson Jacobs, and Amanda Bilek. Back row: Beth Waterhouse, Josh VanDerPol, Janaki Fischer-Merritt, Craig Fernholz, Kate Fernholz, and Mike Jacobs.

Ralph Lentz: recipient of the first annual Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award.
Western Chapter
By Jeremy Lanctot

The Western Chapter had their annual meeting in concert with the SFA Annual Meeting at the University of Minnesota, Morris. At that time, it was decided to go ahead with a workshop on sustainable berry production taught by Paul Otten of Northland Berry News, www.berrynews.com. It was an all day workshop at the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris on Saturday, April 9. You can read more about it in the summer edition of the CornerPost. Paul Otten has agreed to have a field day at Natura Farm north of the Twin Cities this summer. That date will be communicated later.

The Western Chapter is invited to Jim and LeeAnn VanDerPol's farm for a fruit tree grafting on their farm. During the fall, the Western Chapter had their annual meeting in concert with the SFA Annual Meeting at the University of Minnesota, Morris. At that time, it was decided to go ahead with a workshop on sustainable berry production taught by Paul Otten of Northland Berry News, www.berrynews.com. It was an all day workshop at the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris on Saturday, April 9. You can read more about it in the summer edition of the CornerPost. Paul Otten has agreed to have a field day at Natura Farm north of the Twin Cities this summer. That date will be communicated later.

We will have two more field day/workshops this year. In late July, Amy Bacigalupo and Paul Wymar will be demonstrating fruit tree grafting on their farm. During the fall, the Western Chapter is invited to Jim and LeeAnn VanDerPol's farm for a tour/open house. For exact dates, check the official SFA calendar at www.sfa-mn.org/calendar. It is going to be a good year. Come join us and be a part of it!

Membership and Sustaining Contribution Form

Become a member or renew your membership! If you join or renew now, your membership will be current until 2006! Your Sustaining Contribution will accelerate our progress toward a more sustainable food and farming system. Whether or not you choose to join us as a member, you will receive the CornerPost quarterly newsletter to "keep you posted" of interesting events and happenings in sustainable agriculture.

Your Name: ____________________________________________

Farm/Business/Organization Name: ____________________________________________

Address/City/State/Zip Code: ____________________________________________

Phone: __________________________ Email Address: __________________________

☐ Annual Membership $30
☐ Sustaining Membership $ __________

Contributions are tax deductible

Total SFA Support: $ __________

* I designate that my membership fees go to the __________ Chapter.

Please send a check payable to: SFA of MN, 29731 - 302 Street, Starbuck, MN 56381

Thank you for your support!

“Mad Cow” a Hit at the Sustainable Farming Association Annual Meeting

After multiple requests, here are the lyrics for the hit sustainable tune “Mad Cow,” which was performed by Audrey Arner, Glen Borgerding, Richard Handeen, and Joel Rosen at the SFA of MN annual meeting in February. “Mad Cow,” penned by songwriter Bryce Black, won first prize at the Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference in 2004. Black is a great writer and a Quaker who calls Arkansaw, Wisconsin home. He lives way low on the consumption chain and repairs of water-pumper windmills.

MAD COW

Mad cow, it's a dread disease
Somehow it turns your brain to cheese
Right now, I hope we'll all agree
That a ruminating animal turned to a cannibal
gets
spongiform encephalopathy

Well, you are what you eat, but if you eat what
you are
This recycling thing has gone too far
If you're the missing link in your own food chain
You'll be cryin' when you're dyin' as those
microscopic prions
Are eating little holes in your brain

Mad cow
One Canadian bossie came way down south
She was rolling her eyes and foaming at the mouth
Neurotic, psychotic, and paranoid too
With delusions of grandeur, that all across the
land her
Story'd be on the TV news

Mad cow...

(Bridge)
I'm going to leave that feedlot now
They've got no use for an old mad cow
Where cows are all hormone deranged
The people there are also strange

USDA says our food's still safe
No need to put a mad cow test in place
Like across the Atlantic
They did in a panic
Cause we can trust the marketplace

Mad cow....

Musicians (from right to left) Audrey Arner, Richard Handeen, Glen Bordering and Joel Rosen having fun while entertaining at the Elder’s Circle.
Catch of the Day: A book review by Mary Jo Forbord

I received a mystery box in the mail yesterday. The return address held a clue—The Angry Trout Café, Grand Marais, MN. Hey, I've heard of them. I wonder what's inside?

Hmmm. Copies of the Angry Trout Café Notebook: Friends, Recipes, and The Culture of Sustainability by George Wilkes, published in August 2004. Did I order these? I don’t think so. Hey, cool cover. Wow! Great feel, very substantial. Spiral bound hardcover, built to last. Paging through, there’s quotes from Wendell Berry and Aldo Leopold, and funny, clever drawings. There’s pictures of joyful, earthy people, lots of them, all doing things, working, creating stuff, but definitely joyful. There must be recipes in here somewhere—yes, here in the back, but I wonder what makes this Angry Trout crew ‘tick’ anyway…I can see the whole story is here, in living color, arranged in appetizing, tasty tidbits that assemble eventually into the whole meal deal. Three minutes into the book, and this recovering dietitian cookbook junkie is this Angry Trout crew ‘tick’ anyway…I can see the whole story is here, in living color, arranged in appetizing, tasty tidbits that assemble eventually into the whole meal deal. Three minutes into the book, and this recovering dietitian cookbook junkie is hooked. Looks like I’ll have to get comfortable and take a closer look.

The book is funny and captivating. It strikes me as a serious comedy that’s right on the money, not to mention right on the environment and social justice. The trinity of sustainability is fully intact and operational around and about this indigenous eatery perched on the shore of Lake Superior. The weaving of stories of those who impact, or have impacted, the Angry Trout’s life pulse creates a vivid tapestry. I wonder about the number of patrons, townspeople, employees, fishermen, farmers and others who have crossed the walk of this socially conscious, clear thinking, restaurant-operating family, and, seeing their commitment to daily choices for the public good, how many lives have changed?

The Angry Trout Café Notebook is extremely creative and thoughtful, and so very Minnesotan. It makes me proud, it makes me laugh, and as a farmer reviewer living on in the prairie hills of Western Minnesota, oddly enough, it makes me feel connected. Perhaps that’s what living and working our vision for sustainability does. It unites us.

I’ve decided to continue to feed off of the good stuff that comes before the book’s recipes, and when my life slows down a little, I’ll try the Baguette Slices with Artichoke Roasted Red Pepper Spread. When the sweet corn is ripe, I think I’ll try the Chipotle Corn Chowder. If I have the good fortune of coming within striking distance of Grand Marais, you can bet there’s café sign blanking neon in my mind. I’ll be stopping in for some incredibly fresh, local food, grown, prepared and served state-of-the-art sustainably, and I’ll be hoping I’m lucky enough to meet the owners.

The Angry Trout Café Notebook is sold only through independent booksellers (surprised?) or directly from the Angry Trout Café www.angrytroutcafe.com or 218-387-2137

Spring 2005

Suumer Events Calendar

May 2005

May 4 Upper Midwest Organic Tree Fruit Growers Network Field Day. Upper Midwest Organic Tree Fruit Growers Network Field Day at Gardens of Goodness near Madison, Wisconsin from 10:00am - 03:00pm. Hosted by James & Barbara Lindemann. Lunch & education materials included. Registration is required www.mosesorganic.org or contact Deirdre Birmingham at 608-967-2362 or deirdreb@mindspring.com.

May 14 Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings Field Day, Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings Program will have an open to the public Farm Beginnings Field Day at The Lamb Shoppe, Connie Karstens & Doug Rathke, Hutchinson, MN from 1:00pm to 3:00pm. Please RSVP to LSP, Laura Borgendale, 320-269-2105 or laurab@landstewardshipproject.org.

May 15 Land Stewardship Project Garden Tour. Barb Nelson/Master Gardener and LSP St Com member, will be hosting a Garden Tour sponsored by Land Stewardship Project at her home - Arches in rural Winona, MN from 12:00pm to 3:00pm. The tour will consist of a water-garden, bog, landscaped grounds, learn about pruning, planting, growing, herbs, and enjoy a delicious lunch. Space limited to 20 people. Pre-register required through calling LSP at 507-523-3366.

May 27 Conservation Security Program (CSP) Sign-Up Ends, The sign up period for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) begins today. Additional information on CSP, including eligible watersheds, self-assessment work book and the amendment to the interim final rule, is available at www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp

June 2005

June 3-5 Field & Forest Conference, Rural Action’s 7th Annual Landowners Conference in Ohio. Topics include forest management, holistic resource management, sustainable agriculture, herbs and other income opportunities, and many more. For more information visit: www.ruralaction.org/conference.html.

June 7 & 8 The 3rd Annual Symposium on Small Towns: “Shaping our Future”. The Center for Small Towns on the campus of the University of Minnesota, Morris, will be hosting the 3rd Annual Symposium on Small Towns, which will address local and global trends, how rural communities can work to shape their futures, and how the political framework is likely to change and what it means for small towns. For more information visit: www.centerforsmalltowns.org or all (320) 589-6451.

June 8-11 Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) Sustainable Agriculture Camp. This year’s theme, “Around the World in Four Days,” focuses on different cultures around the world and how they interact with their local environments as well as how we interact with ours. Plus swimming, archery, wilderness hikes, creek walks, campfires and much more. Youth Leadership Program is June 6-8 for youth ages 14-18. Camp registration fee is $130 (adults $105). June 8 and under must be accompanied by an adult. Children 5 and under attend free. Teen counselors attend the camp portion free and receive a $20 stipend. The leadership program is $130. Camp scholarships are available. Contact Bradley Meyer for more information and registration forms, 515-230-1439 or pfiffererr@hotmail.com.

June 12-14 North American Agroforestry Conference, Conference will be held in Rochester, MN. For information contact Dean Current at 612-624-4299 or curee002@umn.edu.

June 21 Organic Tree Fruit Growers Field Day, Upper Midwest Organic Tree Fruit Growers Network Field Day at Hoch Orchard, La Crescent, MN from 10:00am - 03:00pm. Hosted by Harry Hoch and family. Guest: Mark Whalon, Ph.D., Michigan State University, “Orchard Ecological Assessment” Additional Sponsor: Minnesota Department of Agriculture, IPM Program. Lunch & education materials included. Registration is required www.mosesorganic.org or contact Deirdre Birmingham at 608-967-2362 or deirdreb@mindspring.com.

(cont’d on Page 8)
The Art and Science of Cooking

By Jeremy Lantz

I can think of a number of disciplines that have changed, and can change the world, but there is nothing like the abil-
ity to throw together a great meal. I firmly believe that any adven-
ture into the rugged wilderness of really raw ingredi-
ents pounding, hacking, and grinding their way to success.

Several times a week; many of these were dumped from a can or emptied
from a safe starting point. There's nothing wrong with this
work, but she's a daring individual. No recipe is safe at her
fingertips. 'What!? I'm not putting THAT in my muffins!'

If I averaged the trend of my wife's cooking, I
favor 1639 vintage.'

'The balance of flavor bouquets is exquisite, but I still
favored 1639 vintage.'

If I were to average the trend of my wife's cooking, I
would say she is on an upward trend. Yes, the meals
that, like some science experiments or work of arts, don't
work, but she's a daring individual. No recipe is safe at her
gfingertips. 'What!? I'm not putting THAT in my muffins!'

You get the idea.

Then, there are the raw materials of a good meal. Some
people pop the box off the shelf and construct a savory meal
from a safe starting point. There's nothing wrong with this
if the end result is pleased a palate. Others, like my wife,
venture into the rugged wilderness of really raw ingredi-
ents pounding, hacking, and grinding their way to success.
This takes courage and diligence. People like this aren't
satisfied with getting a good meal on the table, they want
to know the HOW and the WHY behind what makes it
good. This is what made Julia Childs famous. Surprisingly,
she didn't start learning to cook until she was in her thirties.

I know a large home school family, living on limited
resources that has chosen the hard road of cooking. The
elders daughter has taken the brunt of this path by learning
how to cook without refined anything. Many times the
breads could serve as bricks and the porridge as mortar, but
if she persists, she'll be a formidable and accomplished
artisan. Come famine, its people like her who will feed the
masses. Already, she's doing amazing things with very lit-
tle.

My wife took up the challenge of cooking the hard way
in her adult years. She grew up with her favorite foods to
this day affectionately known as 'a taste of child-
hood'; many of these were dumped from a can or emptied
from a box. Yet, she ventured out of this safe haven after
we were married and has plied the high seas of the world's
culinary treasures ever since.

Everyone has memories of meals that beat them all and,
well...BEAT them all. We have venison meat loaf in our
larder of historic hoots and hoisters, we joke that it followed
us down the wedding aisle, whispering to come along for
our honeymoon. We just couldn't finish all the leftovers,
and over and over and over. We finally had to 'put it to
sleep' in the compost. Or, artichokes with Ragu, now
THAT was memorable! Once, there was collaboration
between my wife and my mother on oyster stew. It would
be putting a whole new twist on this. 'Here kitty, kitty...'Yes, we all have memories
to share, but what does a young adult son remember when
he's hungry and tired of his own cooking?' You guessed it,
mom's cooking. It has been said, 'The man to a woman's
heart is through his stomach.' Hmmmm, this begs the ques-
tion, 'How does one find the way to a woman's heart?' I'll
leave this one to others.

In recent history, the Northeastern Chapter of SFA has
hosted an event named 'Farmer's Take the Stove'. I think
this is a great way to help consumers make the connection
between farming, food, and good health, following the
Wendell Barry statement, "Eating is an agricultural activi-
ty." I've never attended this event, so I hope the farm-
ers doing the cooking represent their raw materials well.
Many an excellent chef is excited to take the challenge of
converting good raw ingredients into fine fare. I believe
this is an excellent way to feature our hard earned harvests.
Many Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) con-
sumers inevitably ask, "What do I do with this?" Or, worse,
yet, "What IS this?" They need our help to effectively use
our food.

(cont’d on Page 13)