Aloha ‘Aina: “Love of the Land”

By Mary Jo Forbord

Mid-September might seem like an odd time for a Minnesota farm family to head to Waikiki Beach, but the American Dietetic Association (ADA) Food and Nutrition Conference provided just the incentive I needed. Last spring, I was elected 2007 chairperson of ADA's Hunger and Environmental Nutrition (HEN) dietetic practice group—so, we are talking “business trip” here, well, at least partially. Business or not, my husband and youngest son quickly decided that I shouldn’t make the grueling flight alone. Despite protests of unfairness from his older siblings, we allowed Jaiden to take a short leave from his 8th grade studies to experience the island of Oahu with us.

Hawaii is a land of contrasts. Honolulu mixes up all the beauty of an island paradise—turquoise waves, white sand beaches, majestic mountains, perfectly toned beach combers, excessively-stocked shops, an endless array of fancy food and drink---with the choking odor of diesel fuel, rotting garbage, plastic litter, grid-locked freeways and homeless people. The island of Oahu represents a microcosm of our world, where the problems of excess and imbalance continue to pile up, yet collectively, we fail to understand, or care, or act. Yet, in many small places around the globe, thoughtful, concerted action and caring is providing a glimmer of hope. In Hawaii, that glimmer shines from Aloha ‘Aina.

Aloha ‘Aina, which means “love of the land”, is a central concept of ancient Hawaiian thought and culture that emphasizes the vital connection between the land and its people. During the 1970’s, a strong social movement arose in Hawaii that focused on land use issues, bringing together ecological principles, ancient practices, historical interests, peace concepts, and Hawaiian Sovereignty claims, which include a core concept of “Food Sovereignty”.

According to Food First (www.foodfirst.org), “Food Sovereignty is the RIGHT of peoples, communities, and countries to define their own agricultural, labor, fishing, food and land policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes the true right to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and to food-producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies.”

Taro is a tropical plant with exceptional cultural and nutritional significance. It is a traditional Hawaiian staple, and its leaves are rich in vitamins, minerals, complex carbohydrate, and dietary fiber. For countless generations, the native Hawaiian diet has centered around taro. The decline in traditional Aloha ‘Aina continued on page 2
Aloha ‘Aina continued from page 1
dietary practices is related to the very high rates of diet-related diseases now rampant among native Hawaiian people, including heart disease, diabetes, and many cancers. Today, taro farmers are faced with mounting development pressure and land prices escalating toward a million dollars an acre. Their ancient agricultural practices require plentiful flowing water and the careful exclusion of pollutants. Taro culture is central to the goals of Aloha ‘Aina, which include the harmonization of human health with the health of the land, through the protection and care of the natural resources that sustain it.

Mark Paikuli-Stride is a taro farmer in Maunawili Valley on Oahu. Mark spoke to dietitians at an educational session on “Farm-to-School and Community: How Dietetics Professionals Can Get Involved”, at ADA’s Food and Nutrition Conference, co-sponsored by HEN and the Public Health and Community Nutrition dietetic practice groups. Mark’s non-profit organization, Aloha ‘Aina Health Center, utilizes cultural immersion methods in farm-to-school programs, and he works with other farmers to produce and procure locally-grown, culturally appropriate foods for Hawaiian schools. He hosts many school classes at his farm and works tirelessly for the cause of Aloha ‘Aina. After the conference, HEN members and friends had the distinct honor of touring of Mark’s taro farm for more in-depth “agricultural immersion”.

Luverne and I are thankful that Mark gave Jaiden the opportunity to learn more than just how to surf in Hawaii. If fact, Mark gave all of us more than an eighth grade education in lessons that last a lifetime…powerful teachers, these people who know and love the land. Have you taught a child today?

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!

Become a CornerPost Sponsor

Are you interested in strengthening the development of sustainable agriculture in Minnesota? Supporting the SFA’s quarterly newsletter is a way for you, your business or organization to become active in the cause. We will acknowledge your sponsorship in CornerPost by providing 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!

Do you need to renew?

Membership in the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota entitles you to receive the CornerPost Newsletter and discounts on SFA of MN Events. Use the form on page 4 or go to www.sfa-mn.org and join or renew your membership today!
Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Chapters .... there’s one near you!

Chapters are active in many interesting events year round. Call the chapter contact for more information, or visit our website at www.sfa-mn.org.

cannon river/ hiawatha valley
Kathy Zeman
11539 E. 200th St.
Kenyon, MN 55946
Phone: (507) 789-6375
kzeman@cannon.net

central
Sue Peterson
Box 34
Foley, MN 56329
Phone: (320) 355-2980
azariahsue@yahoo.com

coteau ridge
Bob Schelhaas
358 180th Ave
Edgerton, MN 56128
Phone: (507) 442-8493
bolisch1@frontiernet.net

crow river
Greg Reynolds
5405 Calder Ave SE
Delano, MN 55328
Phone: (763) 972-3295
crowriver@usinternet.com

Lake Agassiz
Denise Olson
22589 300th Ave NW
Warren, MN 56762
Phone: (218) 745-4963
paolson@wiktel.com

Lake Superior
Jean Sramek
PO Box 307
Carlton, MN 55718
Phone: (218) 393-3276
farm@charternet.net

Southeast
Edgar Hansgen
18158 Co Rd 39
St. Charles, MN 55972
Phone: (507) 932-4219
ejhansgen@hotmail.com

Western
Wendy Lange
8095 40th St NW
Milan, MN 56262
Phone: (320) 269-9617
dwcreek@fedteldirect.net

Statewide
Mary Jo Forbord
Executive Director
29731 302nd St
Starbuck, MN 56381
(320) 760-8732
(866) 760-8732 toll-free
sustainablefarming@hcinet.net

Executive State Board:
Chuck Knierim, Chairman
knierim@uslink.net
Phone: (218) 389-3306

Joel Rosen, ViceChairman
PLFarm@aol.com
Phone: (218) 389-3306

Mary Hanks, Secretary
Mary.Hanks@state.mn.us
Phone: (651) 296-1277

Chris Barnier, Treasurer
cbarnier@olm-inc.com
Phone: 320 845-6321

Crow River Chapter

By Greg Reynolds

Our last big event was the First Annual Minnesota Garlic Festival which took place on Saturday, August 12th. It was pretty crazy. A lot of people put in a ton of work and we had no idea what was going to happen.

As it turned out, the Garlic Festival was a huge success. The day of the event, it was hard to tell. I was concerned with organizing the food concession and spent most of my time washing dishes or asking people to do what ever needed doing, so I don’t have a good sense about what went on at the rest of the festival. I did sneak out for a quick walk around, and it looked like an event that I would have liked to attend.

Jerry was the event coordinator. He seemed to spend most of his time saying that he liked it when everyone else took care everything. Marienne Kreitlow arranged a whole day’s worth of great music. Mary Schmidt rounded up a wide range of vendors and exhibitors. Mary Reynolds organized a couple hours of kids’ games. Irene Bender worked untold hours on the event promotion. Laura and Marvin Bihl worked the gate and took care of the money.

A host of volunteers showed up the day of the festival and made the whole thing work. Don and Linda Decker helped with set up and operation of everything. Kelly and Jeremy Lanctot’s whole extended family showed up and helped out in the cafe. Margaret and Jane did a lot of the food prep, wrote tickets, and made sandwiches for just about the whole day.

Many thanks to all the people who made the day a great success! Some of their names are Don, Gina, Marty, Steve, Nancy, Eli, Jeff, Gray.... I’m sorry, I’m bad with names and have forgotten some. And there were all the people who donated goods and services too.

The one person who made the biggest contribution to The Great ‘Scape Café was Mike Phillips, the chef at the Craftsman restaurant. Mike is well known for his culinary skills around the cities and buys local every chance he gets. He has also been at the Farmer’s Union/Food Alliance

Crow River continued on page 4
Crow River continued from page 3

cooking demo at the Minnesota State Fair.

Mike made up some of the food in advance and spent the whole day directing the show and making sandwiches. I had to drag him off the line to do the “Cooking With Garlic” demo. When it was all over, he said “We need more chefs next year! I’ll twist some arms!” If you are in Minneapolis looking for supper, try the Craftsman, 43rd and East Lake. Tell them you’re from the SFA!

As it was, the Great ‘Scape Café had a line out the door and across the street from 11:30 am until around 3:30 pm. We served about 600 people and we couldn’t have served any more. We even had to get more food after getting crushed at lunch. Mercifully, I think the long line discouraged some people from coming in.

Minnesota Sen. Steve Dille said that he would help out in the afternoon, but between Dassel Days, trying to get some hay up before it rained (which it did), and equipment trouble, he didn’t make it. Steve did show up when we were dragging our tails around trying to get psyched for a couple hours of cleaning. Next year, the cleaning crew is the first priority.

Next year, we will be ready to kick some... Let’s just say we know what we are up against, and we will be ready.

Overall the Great ‘Scape Cafe took in about $4400 and kept about $1800. The Garlic Festival had about 1000 paying customers. It was a very successful first time event and a super fundraiser for our chapter. Mark your calendars now for the third Saturday of August 2007. You won’t want to miss it!

Coming up on Saturday, October 14th at Three Crows in Delano, MN is our Fall Social. This time, the speaker will be great fun! Catherine Friend, author of the wonderful new book “Hit By a Farm - How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Barn,” will speak and read from the book, which got a great review by none other than Garrison Keillor. Read more about it all at: www.hitbyafarm.com.

---

**SEA of MN.... Membership & Sustaining Contributions**

Become a member ... or renew your membership! Your sustaining contribution will accelerate our progress toward a more sustainable food and farming system. When you become a member, you will receive the CornerPost quarterly newsletter to “keep you posted” about events and happenings in sustainable agriculture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm/Business/Organization Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/State/Zip Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Membership $30*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustaining Contribution $________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions are tax deductible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total SFA Support: $_______________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*I designate that my membership fees go to the _____________chapter.

Please send a check payable to: SFA of MN, 29731 302nd St, Starbuck, MN  56381
You can also become a member and/or give a sustaining contribution online at the SFA of MN web site: www.sfa-mn.org.

Thank you for your support!
Lake Superior Chapter

By Jean Sramek

Our 13th Annual Harvest Festival, held on Saturday, September 9th in Bayfront Park in Duluth, was our best ever. We say that every year—that it was the best ever—but we always mean it. We had record attendance, and the weather cooperated nicely. The Kiwanis of Friendly Duluth held their annual Family Kite Fly in another area of Bayfront Park, and we partnered with the Lake Superior Energy Fair (LSEF) for the second year in a row. Both the Harvest Festival and the LSEF grew in size, so with a slightly expanded festival layout, visitors to the event had more to see, and more room in which to see it.

Our Farmers Market was full to overflowing, both with products and with vendors. Over at the SFA information booth, we got a couple of comments (not exactly complaints) that the farmers’ market was “too busy.” Nice problem to have—and one has made us think about ways to expand the farmers market portion of Harvest Festival and still make it the center of attention.

Exactly a week after the Harvest Festival, our chapter held the 2nd annual Urban Farm Tour, a look at backyard food production systems in the city of Duluth. A map and written guide allowed participants to visit eight different “farms” on the self-guided tour. Chicken coops, mini-orchards, community gardens, and herb and vegetable operations were featured. Visitors to these homes were surprised at just how much food can be produced in a small space—some of the “farms” were no bigger than a typical city lot. Word about the Urban Farm Tour is starting to spread, as this year we had a few people say, “Can my backyard be on the tour next year?” We plan to vary the map and route each year.

On Monday, December 4th our Third annual “Farmers Take the Stove” winter dinner and silent auction will be held at 6:00 pm at the Peace Church, 1111 E. 11th St in Duluth. The dinner will be open to the public and will highlight meals grown, prepared, and/or cooked by farmers or farm customers. It’s been a great way to introduce people to organic, sustainably grown food, and to our SFA chapter.

Southeast Chapter

By Edgar Hansgen

Our “Grass-fed and Organic Milk Production” meeting was really good and this gives us an incentive to go on (see the following bullets). Thanks Jeremy Lanctot, Jim Riddle, and John Potter for your presentations.

- There is a Pasture Walk for dairy and beef

Southeast continued on page 6

Mark your calendar! The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota’s 16th Annual Conference is going to take place on Saturday, February 17, 2007 at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN. Gustavus is a private liberal arts college in south central Minnesota (about 70-miles southwest of Minneapolis). They have beautiful meeting facilities, delicious food, and are excited about having the SFA on campus. The theme and format of the meeting are still being decided upon. Stay tuned for more information by visiting www.sfa-mn.org and look for full annual conference coverage and registration materials in the Winter 2007 edition of the CornerPost.
South Central Chapter

By Julie Ackland

The South Central of the Sustainable Farming Association met for their annual Fall Potluck Dinner on September 21st at the Wally Dunn home north of Albert Lea, MN. Joe Domeier was our guest speaker. Joe is the coordinator of the Greater Blue Earth River Watershed Initiative. On September 17th there was an article published in the Minneapolis StarTribune about the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico. The article blamed farmers for causing the pollution from agricultural runoff that goes down the Mississippi River and causes a dead zone in the water from excessive levels of nitrates. In this dead zone fish cannot live.

One of Joe’s projects is to work with the Blue Earth River Watershed Initiative. The Greater Blue Earth River watershed contributes a significant pollutant load to the Minnesota River, which in turn has the largest contribution of pollution to the Mississippi River before the Mississippi leaves Minnesota. The goal of the Blue Earth Watershed Initiative is to improve the water quality of the Blue Earth River and the other bodies of water that it impacts.

Joe talked about his farm, Pehling Bay Farm. He raises Icelandic sheep, meat goats and pasture-raised poultry and direct markets his goats and sheep. He tries to raise animals on pasture and use as little grain as possible. He sells the wool from his sheep on E-bay and gets a better price for it. For more information on Pehling Bay Farm you can contact Joe at jadomeier@yahoo.com or 507-351-1008.

Free MDA publications profiles business options for dairy, poultry and hog producers

Dairy Your Way is a free book by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) that profiles a variety of dairy housing and production systems suitable for the Upper Midwest. Each chapter profiles a different aspect of dairy production and includes profiles of farmers from all three states who are all dairy farming successfully in different ways. “Minnesota is a great state for all kinds of dairy farms,” said Dairy Your Way editor Meg Moynihan, an agricultural specialist at the MDA.

Dairy Your Way describes the variety of management alternatives available to today’s dairy producers, including tie stall setups, free stall barns and transitional housing options. The book also discusses confinement, grazing and organic management systems as well as custom heifer-raising and value-added production. There is also a chapter dedicated to milking center design and retrofitting options. For farmers at the beginning or the end of their careers, one chapter is devoted to entry and exit strategies. Print copies of Dairy Your Way are available free of charge from the MDA by calling 651-201-6012 or from the Sustainable Farming Association of MN by calling 866-760-8732 or emailing mforbord@sfa-mn.org. An electronic version of the book is available on the MDA web site at www.mda.state.mn.us/mgo.

There are two other titles in the “Your Way” series. Poultry Your Way is available by calling the MDA. Hogs Your Way is available for purchase from the University of Minnesota Extension Distribution Center at (800) 876-8636 or www.extension.umn.edu (type “Hogs Your Way” into the search box). All three books are available online.
Clarifying Minnesota’s Food Licensing Laws

By Kevin M. Elfering,
Director of the Dairy and Food Inspection Division
Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Since I have been working for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture there have been questions about farmers selling products they produce and whether or not they are exempted from obtaining a food handler license to sell products they raise. There have been hundreds of scenarios of various products and interpretations of when does the producer “crosses the line” and becomes a food handler that needs a license.

Minnesota’s Food Licensing Law, Chapter 28A.15, subdivision 1, and the State Constitution, Article XIII, section 7, exempts persons selling products of the farm or garden occupied and cultivated by them. For many years the Department interpreted that “products of the farm or garden” meant non-processed foods such as raw fruits and vegetables and live animals, but not multi-ingredient products or processed meat products. In a 2005, Minnesota Supreme Court decision, however, the court ruled that “products” did not exclude a further processed product and these products could also be sold under the same licensing exemption.

There are some that believe that since they are exempted from licensing for selling products they produce means they are exempted from other State Statutes and regulations relating to the safe processing of food products. In its ruling, the Supreme Court was clear that this exemption only applies to licensing requirements, not sanitation or other food safety requirements. That is, those selling products of their farm or garden occupied and cultivated by them may not be licensed, but all other laws and rules must be followed.

What does this mean to those of you who sell products that you raise? In a quick summary, if you sell products that you raise, you are exempted from licensing. However, that means that if it is a multi-ingredient product all ingredients must have been raised on a farm or garden occupied and cultivated by the seller. Meat products such as ground meats, steaks or roasts may be exempted, but sausage products or cured and smoked products are not unless all ingredients came from your farm. In addition, meat and poultry products still must be slaughtered and processed in a processing plant under continuous state or federal USDA inspection and not a custom meat processor that slaughters and processes for the owner’s consumption only.

Further, persons who raise apples may be exempted from licensing if they manufacture apple cider, but not if they produce apple pies. Likewise, any processing other than selling the raw unprocessed fruit or vegetable would have to be completed in a plant approved by the department and that facility is still subject to inspections even if they need not be licensed.

License renewal forms have been sent to establishments for next year’s licensing period. If you are exempted from licensing, please return the form to our office stating the reason for exemption so we can remove you from the licensing system. We would still encourage you to register your farm with us so we can still provide you with information relating to food safety and so we have a record of who is selling products in the State.

I have been asked by many who currently sell only products produced from the farm or garden that still want to be licensed. Licensing has always been a certification to your customers that you are an approved source. We will still license anyone selling only products of the farm or garden if they choose to still be licensed.

As always, there will be many questions relating to this subject. If you do have questions, feel free to contact the department at 651-201-6062.

MDI continued from page 8
February for those who want face-to-face interaction with an award-winning cheese maker. (Yes, she is!) To-date, people would have to leave Minnesota to get this type of education and support. We hope this will be a pilot that grows into an ongoing ‘school’ for those who desire to learn the art and science of on-farm processing.

As always, I can be reached by email at mdi@sfa-mn.org and by cell phone at (320) 980-2333. Lately, I’ve noticed that my cell phone has been waiting a day, or so, to tell me I have voice mail messages. I’ve listened to a few messages that ask, ‘Could you call me back by xx hours from now so we can make this mission critical life-changing decision?’ Oops!

Hmmm, it’s been three decades, but wasn’t it “The Bishop” on Monty Python’s Flying Circus that was always a moment too late to save the day. That’s how I feel lately. Please, bear with me on this. Cell phone service isn’t perfect by any stretch. So, I think I’ll go find my “comfy” chair. (Only those who’ve seen the Spanish Inquisition skit will know what I mean.) <grin>
Minnesota Dairy Initiative Fall Update

By Jeremy Lanctot

It’s been my intent to give people a state-of-the-sustainable-dairy-industry update each quarter. Believe me, the pace of change is picking up and most news is old news by the time I get it to print.

Everyone knows that there is a great differential between conventional and organic milk prices lately. That coupled with the new organic grazing and feeding rules implementation has sparked incredible demand for information on how to transition to organic production. Most of the early adopters of organic production have ‘adopted’ and now we’re seeing the next wave of milk producers move into the fray. My anecdotal information network shows as many as 50 new organic dairies in Minnesota in 2007. This is a 50% increase over the existing, approximately, 100 in operation in 2006. SFA is getting asked by more individuals and groups to do more than ever before. This is taxing our resources of time and money. Please, donate to the cause. We don’t have nearly enough money from grant funding to cover all of the needs. Boy wasn’t that bold of me! Shamelessly holding out the SFA hand! www.sfa-mn.org or (866) 760-8732.

Over the next year, look for more workshops and tours in your area. We are working with the University of Minnesota (UM), Minnesota State College System (MnSCU), Farm Business Management (FBM) and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) (the list goes on) to get more help to more producers and their support networks to help alleviate the burden on any one organization. FBM and MDA are working together to collect more organic farms into the FBM business planning system. There is cost share money available to help alleviate the tuition costs associated with having an FBM instructor work with your farm on business planning. I’m taking advantage of this for my organic farm. Visit www.mda.state.mn.us/esap/organic/bizmgmt.htm or call Meg Moynihan at (651) 201-6616 for more information.

There will be a workshop at Central Lakes College in Staples on November 7 (Election Day) on grazing and organic transition. Contact SFA or Bob Rick, (800) 247-6836, at the college for more details.

Look for more peer groups in your area. We’re working on setting up more producer roundtable-style discussion groups for more livestock types in more regions. If you’re interested in starting one, let us know, we’ll be happy to help facilitate that. We can’t run them all, but we can certainly help get the ball rolling. Many producers are too busy to do all the tasks needed to facilitate these discussions among peers. This is where SFA can help.

There is increasing interest in goat dairy production and help related to that production. I feel extremely unqualified to help most farms. Unfortunately, there is a lack of resources in our state infrastructure to accommodate the myriad of questions that come our way. I’m working on finding more resources for goat farms. An excellent person to help with many questions concerning sheep and goats is Wayne Martin of the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), (800) 909-6472. Wayne has been a BIG help lately. Thank you, Wayne! Also, if you have questions related to meat goat production, contact Brenda Postels at (763) 682-7381. If she doesn’t know, she’ll find out. Another “thank you” to Brenda as well.

There’s a need for more processing of goat milk as well. There are several processors in Minnesota and only one that takes milk from other farms. Wisconsin has more processing capability but these processors don’t want any more milk and transportation is difficult even if they did. Hmm, what to do… There are a lot of people who recognize this problem and I hope we can develop the rudimentary infrastructure needed to handle meeting the consumer demand for products like this. There are a number of entrepreneurs who could potentially create something ex nihilo. Hello? Are you out there?

Speaking of entrepreneurs…George Economy of Helios Nutrition has been looking for capital to expand the kefir business and what did he find? Lifeway offered to buy the whole business. So, Helios kefir is now owned by Lifeway. Is this good? I certainly hope so. What doesn’t change is that things always change. Navigating the minefield of business growth is a challenging task. My hat’s off to those who navigate well. I know I’ve had my share of missteps. I think they call that the School of Hard Knocks…my alma mater. My life is papered with degrees from that school.

Speaking of schooling…SFA has signed on Jodi Ohlsen Read of Sheep’s Way Farm to help develop a Minnesota-based cheese making education resource. She is starting work on scope and sequence right now and we hope to have something concrete for people to gain from within a few months. Part of the helps will be internet-based with the ability to “chat” online with Jodi about cheese making questions and another portion will be a hands-on workshop at the SFA annual conference this coming...
Fall Events Calendar

For more details on sustainable farming and living events visit: www.sfa-mn.org/calendar

If you would like to add an event to the SFA of MN Events Calendar contact Anne at communications@sfa-mn.org

Oct 11 SARE Professional Development Workshop – Organic Market Garden Vegetable Production - Wilder Forest Conference Center at Marine on St. Croix. Free. For more info and to register contact Harriet Behar, MOSES organic outreach coordinator, at harriet@mosesorganic.org or 608-872-2164.

Oct 14 Central Chapter of the SFA of MN Harvest Festival – Jim Chamberlin’s Farm, Deerwood, MN. Contact Jim Chamberlin (218) 764-3020 for more info.

Oct 14 Crow River Chapter Fall Social – Three Crows Club, Delano, MN.

Oct 15 Public Forums on Global Warming Solutions – Willmar, MN. Event will also feature polar explorer Will Steger. Free. For more info visit: www.fresh-energy.org/events.htm

Oct 17 Productive Conservation Systems (Alley Cropping and Silvopastoral Systems) - Central Lakes College, Staples, MN. For more info contact Diomy Zamora (218) 828-2332 or zamor015@umn.edu or visit http://cfc.cfans.umn.edu/wa/


Oct 25 Chickens in the City Workshop – Southwest High School, Minneapolis, MN. To register visit: www.mplscommunityed.com or call Southwest High School Community Education at (612) 668-3100.

Oct 26 Public Forums on Global Warming Solutions – Maple Grove, MN. Event will also feature polar explorer Will Steger. Free. For more info visit: www.fresh-energy.org/events.htm.

Oct 28 Practical Farmers of Iowa field day: Corn Picking

Festival – Plainsfield, IA. For more info contact Gary Laydon & Pat Mennenga,(319) 276-4613, gardendrafts@butler-bremer.com.

Nov 1-2 9th Annual Farmer Cooperatives Conference: “Opportunities for Cooperatives: Renewable Energy and Environmental Management” – Bloomington, MN. For more info contact Anne Reynolds, (608) 263-4775 or areynol@wisc.edu or visit www.uwec.wisc.edu/farmercoops06.

Nov 6 Leopold Center Marketing & Food Systems Initiative Workshop – Des Moines, IA. For more info contact Rich Pirog rspirog@iastate.edu.

Nov 10-11 2nd Biennial Conference for Community Supported Agriculture. – Kettunen Center, MI. For more info contact CSA-MI at 231-889-3216 (toll free 877-526-1441) or csafarm@jackpine.net or www.csafarms.org.

Nov 10-12 Women, Food, and Agriculture Networks Annual Fall Gathering. For more info visit www.wfan.org.

Nov 17 Farmers’ Legal Action Group’s Farm Fresh Breakfast! – Minnesota History Center, St. Paul. For more info visit www.flaginc.org.

Nov 18 Do It Green! Gifts Fair 2006 – Uptown, Minneapolis, MN. For more info contact 612-623-7770 or 612-730-1539 or info@doitgreen.org.

Nov 20 6th Annual Iowa Organic Conference - Ames, IA. For more info and to register online visit: www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/organic06/home.html

Dec 4 3rd Annual Farmers Take the Stove: Winter Dinner and Silent Auction – Duluth, MN.

Feb 17 The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota’s 16th Annual Conference – Gustavus Adolphus College – St. Peter, MN. For more info visit: www.sfa-mn.org.

Wanted to buy:

Used potato planting/harvesting equipment in useable condition, especially 1 or 2 row planter, 1 or 2 row digger, baggers, washers, sorters. We will come and pick it up and pay a fair price.

Please contact Rae Rusnak @ L&R Poultry & Produce, 507-649-1405, hoisv001@umn.edu.
By Anne Borgendale

When the average person looks at a herd of cattle, what does he see? Perhaps some big four-legged creatures that are black or brown or spotted and are just kind of hanging out in a pasture. When your typical cattle farmer looks at a herd he may see a field full of low-line Back Angus. He will tell you that cow #22 looks a little sick, etc. But when Gearld Fry sees a herd, he can tell you that you’re not feeding any mineral and that your cattle look short on copper. He will also tell you that bull “A” is not as good as bull “B” because the folds of skin on its neck are too far apart and its chest is not deep enough. He will tell you that this results in lower quality meat and you are ultimately losing money. His observations are validated by science evidence from ultrasounds.

Gearld Fry, a grass-fed genetics consultant and founder of Bovine Engineering and Consulting, was the keynote presenter at Grazefest Minnesota 2006 in August. He has traveled the world to capture the genetics of cattle that evolved on grass, not grain. Gearld has substantial hands-on experience and a keen eye for discerning which grass-fed cattle can most efficiently produce quality meat.

This year’s Grazefest Minnesota was at Prairie Horizons Farm near Starbuck, MN. Prairie Horizons is owned and operated by Luverne and Mary Jo Forbord. Several years ago they transitioned from dairy to beef. They raise low-line Black Angus cattle. Luverne has been farming his entire life and knows a thing or two about cattle. However, even he was impressed by what he gained through spending time with Fry.

Luverne was most impressed by Fry’s power of observation regarding cattle. The example in the first paragraph is actually an observation that Gearld made about the Forbord’s herd. They had never fed mineral before and they were always able to get what they needed from the grass. However, this year’s drought changed that: the cattle’s normally jet-black hides had hints of reddish-brown. This unusual coloring of the hide was also present in the calves. The cause of this was not obvious, even to an experienced farmer like Luverne.

Gearld used the Prairie Horizons herd to demonstrate hands-on observations. He identified many key features of highly productive grass-fed cattle. These features help you decide which cattle to keep, sell, buy, or cull. For instance, cattle should have a tender hide that is silky and shiny rather than coarse and shaggy. The folds of skin on the neck should be narrow and close together instead of wide and far apart. When you grab the hide, it should be elastic, not overly tight and difficult to stretch. A tender hide translates to tender meat.

The escution is the “line” of silky hair running from the udder to the tail. The escution should be as wide as the udder at its base and narrow as it reaches the bottom of the tail. A wide and well-defined escution correlates to a higher butterfat percentage in the milk, which helps calves gain weight.

A bull’s chest should descend all the way to its knees. Its legs should also be wide-set. This ensures that the animal’s heart has enough room to fully grow and function. When an animal walks, its shoulder blades should not rise above its backbone line. If they do, it means the animal does not have proper biomechanics. A wide frame and proper biomechanics indicates that an animal has a better frame to hang muscle from. This equals more meat and more money.

Gearld believes in breeding to maximize the beneficial genetics of the masculine line. He also promotes line breeding. Mainstream thinking on line breeding is that it will magnify negative traits and decrease the vigor associated with crossing breeding. However, Gearld asserts that proper line breeding is the best way achieve the desired masculine genetics in herd. This is done by breeding a bull back to his daughters and granddaughters instead of breeding brothers to sisters. Line breeding may also be a way to build a bull and your herd to your farm’s unique conditions. This exemplifies site-specific agriculture, which is a hallmark of sustainable agriculture.

To grow the grass-fed beef industry there needs to be an increase the number cattle that efficiently produce tender meat on grass. While all cows are meant to eat grass, some cows thrive on it more than others. By raising cattle that possess the genetics for tender meat and sturdy frames, farmers will be able to sell a product that is consistently of a high quality and preferred taste.

To find out more about Gearld Fry’s observations and advice (in his own words) visit his web site: www.bovineengineering.com.

Luverne is now applying Gearld’s advice on his own farm. He appreciated the opportunity to receive advice from an “expert.” However, Luverne also got input from “non-experts” -- the other farmers who attended. He likes field days because they are an opportunity to talk other farmers one on one with out feeling like your asking a “dumb question” in front of the whole group. Events like Grazefest are a great opportunity for farmers to exchange ideas and for you to share your own expert opinion.
How can you become a cheesemaker if you didn’t grow up on a mountain in Norway? That’s a good question for Jodi Ohlsen-Read, the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota’s newly appointed Advisor on Artisan Cheese Making. Jodi is the resident cheesemaker at Sheperd’s Way Farms. Sheperd’s Way is the sheep dairy that she and her husband, Steve, own and operate with their four sons who range in age from 8 to 15 years old. Jodi did not dream of milking sheep and making cheese as a child, but as she can tell you, growing up on a farm is not a prerequisite for being a farmer.

Several years ago when Jodi was working as a writer and Steve was working as a teacher, Steve started to read about sheep dairies. After some investigation they decided this was a creative start of a new and meaningful lifestyle and a great way to raise a family. Thus, they started raising sheep on rented property near where they lived in Chaska, MN. After several years they bought their farm, an 83-acre plot outside Northfield, MN, near Big Woods State Park. In the beginning they were sold their milk to a cooperative. However, the cooperative could not take all of their milk as their farm grew. They needed to figure out another way to sell their milk. This is when they decide on cheesemaking

Shepard’s Way originally planned to hire someone to make cheese, but after Jodi learned the basics, she decided to take on the job. Because there is not a program in Minnesota where you can learn everything you need to about artisan cheesemaking, Jodi had to “design” an independent study program. Her studies included several short courses on cheese making at the University of Wisconsin, River Falls and the University of Vermont, a few intensive workshops along the way, and she enlisted the help of a professor from the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota. She also learned and continues to learn by doing.

There were challenges along every step of the way from inspectors who at the time did not know much about small scale dairies to trying to find information about aging rooms and who could help you install one. As questions and obstacles arose she had to go out and seek their solutions. At the time there was not really one person or source to go to for information. Now experienced cheesemakers have an e-list where they can ask each other questions. However, for beginning cheesemakers this basic resource is not particularly useful. This is where SFA’s new web forum, moderated by Jodi, comes in.

As SFA’s Advisor on Artisan Cheesemaking, Jodi will provide the content and organizational structure for the online cheese making information. She will also moderate the forum on the SFA web site, answering questions and pointing aspiring cheesemakers to the most helpful and appropriate resources. The SFA will complement online services with cheesemaking farm tours and seminars. Jodi doesn’t have all of the answers, but she can help because she’s been there herself. One of her main goals is to increase the awareness about artisan cheesemaking as an option for individuals, cow dairies, and small sustainable farmers. She would also love to have a bigger network of artisan cheesemakers in Minnesota.

SFA’s Executive Director, Mary Jo Forbord, found Jodi to be an ideal candidate for this position because, “Jodi is actively making cheese, and is a well-know, award-winning Minnesota cheesemaker. She is also a writer, and has gone through cheese making start-up without the benefit of organized, readily accessible resources. Jodi has a sincere desire to ‘shorten the learning curve’ for aspiring cheesemakers, and has a vision for a flourishing artisan cheesemaking network in Minnesota.”

One-year of funding for this program is being provided by the Minnesota Legislature via the Minnesota Dairy Initiative’s (MDI) Dairy Profitability and Enhancement Program. SFA has been in collaboration with MDI’s six regional teams since 1998. SFA’s specific charge is to assist grazing and/or organic dairy farming families in reaching their farm goals, and assist farm families in transitioning to grazing and/or organic dairy farming.

For more info visit www.sheperdswayfarms.com and check www.sfa-mn.org for updates on the cheesemaking forum.
Authenticity

By Chris Barnier

“I want to be around people who walk the talk; I’m tired of the ones who just talk”. When one of our Central Chapter SFA members said that recently, I started thinking about why we persist in building our world of sustainable agriculture.

We invest a lot of time and effort in our ventures, often with not much encouragement from our neighbors and communities. The gardening, crops, animals, tree planting, homemade energy, all require the commitment of our imperfect land, troublesome machines, and buildings that need new roofs. These all rely on our money, hard work, phone calls, reading, family, friends, and most of all our belief that this is what we need to be doing. From the outside, it looks like a lot of extra effort for things that really don’t pay or that we could more easily buy at Wal-Mart.

So what are we really after? If the biggest grocery chain promised to stock only organic food, I don’t think we’d be completely satisfied. If KFC promised to buy only free-range chickens, we would still raise our own chickens. If Congress passed laws mandating strict soil conservation on all land, we would still watch over our own ground carefully and to our own standards. If General Electric started to deliver cheap hydrogen power to everyone, we would still cut firewood.

I think what we want is an authentic life. We want to have a genuine connection with the world around us that sustains our daily lives. When we walk in the world every day, we want to put our beliefs and hopes into action. We have no time for phoniness, erroneous ideas, or questionable public relations assurances from huge institutions. We want our inner to match our outer; we try to walk our talk. We remember that when Thoreau walked over to Walden Pond, he said he wanted to live deliberately.

It seems there are many people, uninvolved in our SFA world, who feel the same way. In a recent article in Ode magazine (July/August 2006), Jay Walljasper writes about this emerging awareness of the need for authenticity. He reports on three writers who are documenting the increasing demand for the authentic in our lives:

Paul Ray is a social scientist who uses the term “cultural creatives” to describe a significant group in our population “who share common values about the environment, social justice, creative expression, and personal growth.” And what else do they have in common? As you might guess, they have “a drive for authenticity”, which is defined as “your inner self matches your outer self”.

Ray notes that the urge for authenticity has not reached everyone yet: “After making its mark on psychology and the social movements, authenticity is now hitting business. The one place it hasn’t hit yet is mainstream politics.” Ray notes. “In fact, one reason why Al Gore and John Kerry lost (in U.S. presidential elections) is that people didn’t perceive them as authentic.”

David Boyle is a British journalist who sees “our growing yearning for authenticity as a factor in the recent boom of organic and local food, holistic medicine and socially responsible business.” He has written a book, Authenticity: Brands, Fakes, Spin and the Lust for Real Life, which describes “nine kinds of values that inspire us to seek out what’s genuine in the world: ethical, natural, honest, simple, unspun, sustainable, beautiful, rooted, and human.” Regarding businesses, Boyle says that people “are less willing to work for a company they dislike, or invest their pensions there, or buy that company’s products. Businesses know this, but it’s hard for a company to actually be authentic when it is big, globalized and virtual.”

Neil Crofts is a “corporate strategy specialist” who founded the Authentic Business Web site (www.authenticbusiness.co.uk). He sees the key to authenticity as “knowing that some things matter more than money.” “If you are doing something you believe in passionately and it fits with your talents, you will always do it better and you will attract the support of others,” he asserts. “You will not only make more money, you’ll be happier.” Crofts points out that some smaller companies have had remarkable success by focusing on high quality and value to their customers, with a genuine relationship that includes factors other than mere profit. Patagonia, an outdoor clothing and equipment retailer, is a prime example, as are the Fair Trade coffee and chocolate suppliers.

We know that our rural food processing businesses and farms have had a history of many family-owned, local enterprises. These usually reflected the values and passion of the owner/operators, and were often guided by human values important to the community and beyond the profit motive. Today, they would fit into our vision of “authentic.” Most of these enterprises were forced out by competition from, or even purchased by, today’s largest business enterprises. Our desire in SFA to foster a resurgence of “authentic” farms and businesses would bring us full circle to the best of what we had in rural America in the past.

The motives that have inspired our SFA members to build sustainable farms and businesses over the last 20 years are right in step with like-minded folks everywhere who are also seeking an authentic life.
Wow!
Since January 1, more than 60 Minnesota organic producers have signed up for the new Organic Farm Business Management Program, and we still have room for a few more.

80% tuition cost share for certified Minnesota growers, and a program individually tailored to your farm’s goals and resources.

90 instructors statewide!

These organizations are equal-opportunity providers.

1) Northwest
Ron Dvergsten
Northland Community & Technical College
(218) 681-0797

2) Northeast/East Central
DelRay Lecy
Central Lakes College
(218) 894-5164

3) West Central
Jim Molenaar
Ridgewater Community & Technical College
(320) 231-7671

4) Southwest
Al Brudelie
Minnesota West Community & Technical College
(507) 847-3320 Ext 118
or Jim Kurtz
Southwest Farm Business Management Association
(507) 372-3904

5) South Central
Al Brudelie
South Central College
(507) 389-7264

6) Southeast
Peter Scheffert
Riverland Community College
(507) 433-0614
or Lorin Westman
Southeast Barn Business Management Association
(507) 280-2868

“Finding Home and Creating Community” at WFAN Retreat

Practical skills for the farm and beyond shape the fall gathering by the Women, Food, and Agriculture Network on November 10-12, 2006, and all women are invited. The weekend retreat will take place at the Cedar Valley Resort (www.cedarvalleyresort.com) near Lanesboro, Minn. and costs $99 per person. Space is limited and reservations are required. Please contact Bonnie Haugen at springsidefarm@yahoo.com; Mary Doerr at dancingwinds@lakes.com; or Caroline van Schaik at wolfhill@acegroup.cc; with questions.

“Finding Home and Creating Community” is the theme for the annual meeting, which is open to women of all ages who are involved and/or interested in sustainable agriculture and the larger community. Principle speaker will be Mary Swalla Holmes, Executive Director of the Oberholtzer Foundation and Mallard Island’s Program Director, who will lead an interactive workshop on dealing with world and cultural views that threaten peace but don’t need to.

Holmes will base the session on a book by Jesse Sutherland entitled, “Worldview Skills: Transforming Conflict from the Inside Out.” Participants will take away insights, language, and practical actions designed to ease conflict and/or misunderstandings between people, cultures, and individual situations. In addition, writer and teacher, Beth Waterhouse, will open up the idea of the “schempa” or the inner hook to conflict. (from Pema Chodron) We can explore ways to offset this hook, to shield (i.e.: protect) ourselves from getting caught in conflicting situations.

Set amongst the hills of the Root River Valley, this year’s gathering is designed to offer a degree of intellectual stimulation as well as time to enjoy hiking, birding, peaceful reflection, and building/nurturing community with other like-minded women. Planned activities include practical farm skills, a “current topics” Round Table, the annual Virtual Farm Tour, setting up an electronic message board for our use, and massage tips for the weary.

Each cabin has a fireplace, deck, and fully equipped kitchen. The cost includes lodging for two nights, speakers, workshops, handouts, and some food. In the spirit of community-building and to encourage use of local foods or to showcase your own farm products, please bring a special dish to share during Saturday’s mid-day meal Potluck, your own snacks and a breakfast offering. For Saturday supper (evening), hearty soups and artisan breads will be provided plus any goodies leftover from the mid-day cornucopia! Hot beverages will be available throughout the weekend.
A Leader by Example: Will Hedquist Sr. Honored with Farmers’ Voice Award

By Anne Borgendale

The Farmers’ Voice Award is given for “ongoing and tireless dedication to farming, for helping farmers have a voice, for showing an understanding of how farming benefits both farmers and consumers, and for living the ideals and values embodied by sustainability.”

Each day, Will Hedquist Sr. dedicated himself to God’s plan for him. By following his faith, he became a leader by example as a farmer, social worker, teacher and father. These examples demonstrate his commitment to his community and to sustainable farming and this is why he was honored with the 2006 Farmers’ Voice Award.

Will Sr. passed away unexpectedly in March, but his farm, Green Pastures Dairy, his family, and his vision continue on because of the values he imparted in them. He first moved his family – his wife, KenMarie, and his children Will Jr., Kyle, Joy, and Jennie – to the farm in 1981, following God’s plan for him. He implemented a rotationally grazed and seasonal dairy herd because that is what he felt should be done. And he did this before studies showed that it was good for the land, the cows, and made healthier milk.

The children had farm chores from the beginning, however, as they grew, they were given more of a say in decision-making. This was a key to the farm’s current sustainability. Will Sr. made including his family a priority. He demonstrated to his children his priorities of following his faith and let them see that farming sustainably was a desirable life, a life they also chose based on his example. Following in their father’s footsteps and with his wisdom and guidance, Will Jr., Joy, Jennie and their families expanded Green Pastures Dairy from a production dairy farm to one that makes aged raw milk cheese that is sold directly to customers.

Green Pastures Dairy has also grown through the relationships that Will Sr. helped to cultivate. Not all families can work together, but the Hedquist family can and does. Everyone has a leadership role and contributes in different ways. They are constantly forming new relationships with customers as they build friendships and share their knowledge about their product and practices. Their farm is always open.

This is how Will Sr. spread his vision for agriculture. He did not go out preaching about his farm or why his way worked. Instead, people came to him. People saw that his vision for his family and farm were and are working. And for these people, Will Sr. was always glad to share his knowledge, exchange ideas and encourage other people’s visions for their own farms and families.

Will Sr.’s legacy will continue onward because of his example. We are all blessed to have known him as a husband, father, friend, mentor and farmer.

****************************
For more information about Green Pastures Dairy visit: www.greenpasturesdairy.com.
Meet Chris Barnier

I am currently the treasurer for the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota State Board, however, my involvement in SFA started in 1995 or possibly earlier. I gave a talk at an SFA program in late 1995. At the time I was a representative of the USDA. I stayed involved with the SFA because I find the people in sustainable and organic agriculture to be sincere, interesting, and creative, and that makes it a great place to find friends and fellow travelers.

I grew up in Anoka, MN, however, not on a farm. Both of my Grandfathers farmed for part of their lives, although I did not see their farms. I was greatly influenced by two great uncles who farmed their entire lives in southeast Iowa. This led me to earned my Bachelors degree in Agricultural Business Administration from the University of Minnesota in 1978. I was a Farm Loan Manager for the Farm Service Agency (previously Farmers Home Administration) for 25-years, working mostly out of Little Falls. I retired in 2004 and I now do farm management work for Organic Land Management out of Albany, MN. In 1985, my wife Claudia and I moved onto an 80-crop farm 10-miles from Little Falls and the farm has been certified organic since 1991.

Nominations open for SFA of MN awards

It’s that time of year again to start thinking about SFA awards. What awards you may ask? Well, the SFA Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award and the SFA Distinguished Service Award, of course. These two awards will be presented at the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota’s 16th Annual Conference on Saturday, February 17, 2007.

The Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award is given for a farmer or farm family, currently farming or retired that has dedicated many years of their live to the advancement of sustainable farming in Minnesota. The Sustainable Farming Association Distinguished Service Award is given for a farmer or non-farmer who has shown a high level of dedication, commitment, service and perseverance in supporting sustainable farming in Minnesota. Previous winners of these awards include Ralph Lentz, Jim & LeeAnn VanDerPol, and Mary Hanks.

Nominations are now being accepted for both awards. How can you nominate your favorite, most deserving farmer or person dedicated to sustainable agriculture? There are three main ways.

1) Visit the SFA of MN web site discussion board (www.sfa-mn.org/discussion) and click on the forum for “SFA Award Nominations.”

2) Email you nomination directly to Jerry Ford (jerry@marienne.com), Crow River Chapter president

3) Mail you nomination as a hard copy directly to Jerry Ford, 7616 25th St. SW, Howard Lake, MN 55349.

Please include as much information as you can about your nominee and their farm, including their name, address, phone number, email address (if they have one), and a brief essay of why your nominee deserves this honor. You can nominate more than one person too. These farmers must be located in Minnesota and should have farmed here for a reasonable amount of time (this can be discussed if the situation arises). If you have questions about the awards, nomination or selection process, please contact Jerry Ford.
Mission: We support the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through farmer-to-farmer networking, innovation, demonstration, and education.