“I like what you are trying to do, but I think it’s impossible, because Americans just want as much as they can possibly get, as fast and as cheap as they can possibly get it.” These words, spoken by a University of Minnesota senior, still resonate in my head, months after he proclaimed them. The class of 50 marketing students, mostly destined for jobs in “Fortune 500” companies, was just beginning to discuss the presentation I’d delivered, describing the mission and goals of SFA, taking them “inside” sustainable farming systems through description and picture, and highlighting the benefits of eating a diverse selection of foods, produced locally and minimally processed—foods as high on the nutrition scale as they are low on the ‘miles traveled’ meter.

A number of students quickly took exception to their classmate’s proclamation. They made the case that Americans are indeed getting as much as they can possibly get, as cheap and as fast as they can get it, and in the process, running up an enormous tab for future generations. Along with detailing the substantial environmental tab, the classroom talk turned to the health consequences of the all-American way of “getting”. High blood pressure, hardening of the arteries, type 2 diabetes, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, polycystic ovary disorder, and disordered breathing during sleep is a list of diseases once known only among adults, but now increasingly found among children. The number of children who are overweight or obese has doubled, from 15 percent in the 1970s to nearly 30 percent today, and childhood obesity has tripled from 5 to 15 percent. The class was well aware that for the first time in history, their generation is destined to have a shorter lifespan than their parents.

Why are our children at such great risk? Instead of finding a single cause, a myriad of complex, intertwined factors is at work in our fast-paced society. Americans live, work and eat differently than a generation ago. Increased demands on family schedules, more time spent on the road, and the availability of many more pre-packaged foods and restaurants have resulted in more food eaten away from home (the term “dashboard dining” was coined to describe eating drive-through fare on the go). Family meals are becoming rare, though research shows that children that eat one meal a day with their families do better in school, make better life choices and enjoy more positive family relationships. Children view an average of 40,000 TV ads a year, often featuring candy, sugared cereal, and fast food. The costs of treating obesity-related health problems are approaching the costs of smoking. It’s apparent that a single, high-tech solution is not forthcoming to solve the problem of why we are not feeding our young in ways that promote good health. A dark cloud indeed…but is there a silver lining?

Yes! The majority of the students had intentions to be more conscious, knowledgeable consumers. Many understood the importance of connecting with local, sustainable farmers who provide diverse selection of minimally processed, minimally transported foods—the cornerstone of good health. As Americans, maybe we can’t have it all, and probably don’t want it all, especially when we can’t seem to extricate the time-saving ease of eating too much junk on the run from the dire health consequences of doing so. The students brought to mind what a wisescarpenter taught me some years ago. I consider it one of my life’s best lessons. He showed me his business card. It simply said, “Speed. Price. Quality. Pick two.”
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Membership in the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota entitles you to receive the CornerPost Newsletter. Use the form on page 7 or go to www.sfa-mn.org and join or renew your membership today!

Greener Pastures’ Report Released

‘Greener Pastures’ is an extensive report that explores how grass-fed beef and milk contribute to healthy eating, and combines analyses on the nutrition, environmental, and public health benefits of grass-based farming techniques. “When you eat grass-fed meat, you’re getting beef with benefits,” said report author Dr. Kate Clancy, a nutritionist and senior scientist in the Food and Environment Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists. “There are no losers in producing cattle entirely on pasture. Farmers win, consumers win, the environment wins, and even the cattle win.”

Greener Pastures is the first report to:

- Review the environmental, animal health, and nutrition benefits of pasture-raised beef and milk.
- Conduct a comprehensive analysis of all the studies in English that compared the amounts of several nutritionally important fats in conventional and grass-fed beef and milk.
- Compile and summarize the levels of fats in 25 studies comparing fats in products from conventionally raised and grass-fed cattle.
- Calculate amounts of fats on a per-serving basis that allows analysis of the potential for labeling and advertising claims.

The potential environmental benefits of carefully managed grazing utilizing permanent pastures are:

- A reduction in heat-trapping gases that contribute to global warming.
- Decreased fuel use.
- Decreased soil erosion.
- Improved water quality.
- Reduced fish kill.
- Restoration of wildlife habitats.
- Improved air quality.
- Reduction of antibiotic residues in water supplies.
- Improved biodiversity.

The report was released on March 7th in Chicago. Following remarks by Dr. Clancy and Dr. Margaret Mellon, director of UCS’s Food and Environment Program, Mary Jo Forbord, SFA Executive Director, spoke at a press conference about her experiences as a producer of grass-fed beef. Next, television journalist and former news anchor Bill Kurtis spoke, advising the media that he has added ‘cattle rancher’ to his resume. Kurtis owns a southeast Kansas ranch where he produces grass-fed Tallgrass beef. Tallgrass Beef is served at two Chicago restaurants, Harry Caray’s and the Prairie Grass Cafe. Link to full report: http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_environment/sustainable_food/greener-pastures.html
Chapter Updates

Cannon River/Hiawatha Valley Chapter

By Mary Ellen Frame

Welcome to all our new members!

Our annual meeting, held on February 11th, centered on connecting local farmers to local food buyers. The morning session was a panel of mostly buyers.

Bill Poynton talked about his first year of growing and marketing vegetables. As a former restaurateur, he was familiar with the needs of Twin Cities restaurants, and was able to sell all his produced to them. Prior to our meeting, he’d done a survey of eleven upscale restaurants, to which he’d gotten six responses. What those restaurant owners value is quality, locally grown, consistency, promptness and reliability. They prefer buying from the coordinator of a group of farmers, but will accept individual producers.

Hayes Atkins is the food buyer for Bon Apetit, the food service of St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN. He said that sustainability is part of the company’s mission statement. They buy a good portion of their beef, pork, liquid dairy products and pasta from farms within the region. They would like to buy more root vegetables, dried legumes, and non-artisan cheeses. He also stressed quality, quantity, and reliability. Of the products they buy locally, he said, “The quality of the products is amazing.” He likes working with an umbrella organization, such as Southeast Minnesota Food Alliance. Such a group can help with insurance.

Sodexho, the Carleton College food service, was represented by Joe Winegardner and Lorel Snyder. They said that buying locally produced food is a “phenomenon that will continue to grow.” They work with Food Alliance Midwest to provide third-party verification of sustainability. At Carleton, they provide 16,000 to 17,000 meals per week. Their criteria include quantity, quality and price.

The meat buyer for Just Food Co-op, Hortense McLeod, talked about Just Food’s experience buying not only meat, but other items from local producers. We’re very open to smaller producers—anything that’s locally grown. We like to have farm tours, and have producers give samples at the store.

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Cannon River/Hiawatha Valley continued from page 3

Todd Churchill owns Thousand Hills Cattle Company. Thousand Hills buys beef from small producers who do not market directly to consumers. These farms typically have 50 to 100 cows. Thousand Hills works at educating people about why to buy local, grass-fed beef. Churchill commented, “It’s not enough to be good for you; it also has to taste good. Genetics are very important in the quality of grass-fed beef. Most cattle in this country desperately need a feedlot to taste good; they’re grass-fed by default.”

Around noon we broke for a potluck lunch, after which there was a panel of local growers talking about their experiences in direct marketing.

Eric Klein of Hidden Stream Farm sells pastured pork, beef and chicken. He started direct marketing at the Rochester farmers market. However, to keep selling after the season, he developed a home delivery service, which is working well for him. He also sells to some Twin Cities restaurants, Thousand Hills, and is starting in with Bon Apetit.

Bill Poynton spoke again, about his plans for the coming season; he’ll plant about half staple vegetables and half specialty. He’ll also be the coordinator for his farm and two others, selling to restaurants.

Dan French said, “The whole industry rests on healthy soil. Get an education about growing healthy soil. Everybody should go to farmers market for a while; you need the feedback.”

Roseanne Steenhoek is part owner of a Community Supported Farm that tries to get people involved in the production of their food so they know where it comes from. She loves soil, food, cooking, people and community. She said, “We’re all connected by the food on our tables.”

On March 11th we had a workshop on Farm Finances. In the morning, Jim Christensen from Kenyon Farm Business Management led us through the basics of financials; what it takes to get prepared for lenders. He said the balance sheet is the foundation of financial planning. He emphasized that “roughly” is not considered good enough by lenders. Presently, the financial establishment and farm management people do not have a lot of experience with or information about non-conventional farming but that’s changing fast.

After lunch, Eric Klein talked about his farm plan and enterprise analysis. Creating the plan should include all partners. “Don’t hire your plan written. Only you know what’s in your head.”

Ralph Lentz talked about making decisions on the basis of something more than money; your quality of life is important. He said, “No other farm is like yours; the experts are only to help you out.”

Rae Rusnak talked about how the unique features of her farm -- the hilliness and hardwood forest -- influence her choice of enterprises. She sells timber and maple syrup as well as eggs, broilers, turkeys and produce.

Mike Noble said it’s necessary to include the whole family in planning new enterprises. At this point they’re thinking of getting out of pork production and gradually into sheep and goats. They now sell beef, pork, poultry and eggs, direct from their trucks. He said some studies have shown that when farmers increase the size of their enterprise, sometimes the per-unit costs go up—less TLC is available. Mike and Linda are driven by customer desires and knowledge; there’s now an interest in “nutrient dense” foods.

Bonnie Austin of Hill and Vale Farm, Wykoff, talks with Joe Winegardner, manager of Sodexho, the food service of Carleton College, Northfield.

Central Chapter
By Sue Peterson

The Central Chapter board met on March 13th and set chairs for the following committees: Kevin Happke - Facilities Chair; Kevin Happke - Windy River Fair Chair; Civic Engagement Chair - TBD; Becky Sheets - Financial Chair; and Kent Solberg - Activities Chair. Please contact Sue Peterson at (320) 355-2980 or azariahsue@yahoo.com for more details on the committees.

We are re-evaluating and revising the Coloring Books that were made several years ago. We are also starting a project with Lakeland Public TV to have several short videos made about sustainable agriculture.

We are working with the Hunt Utilities Group to coordinate their Eco2 Fair, which will be held at the Cass County Fairgrounds the same weekend as the Windy River Fair.

A permaculture guild is being planned for the Morrison County fairgrounds, to be started this summer. They are looking for plants. Please contact Sue Peterson if you have the following and might be willing to donate them: apple or crabapple tree, cherry tree, alpine strawberries, daylilies (Stella D’oro or old fashioned), chives, daffodils, wild indigo, herbs (e.g. sage, thyme, chamomile), coreopsis, veronica, coneflower, liatris, or creeping thyme.
Western Chapter
By Wendy Lange

The Western Chapter of the SFA of MN held their Annual Meeting on March 9, 2006, at the University of Minnesota’s West Central Research and Outreach Center. The morning included a session on AGR-Lite Insurance presented by Gary Hachfeld. Mary Jo Forbord gave a presentation on “SFA Today and Tomorrow”. The afternoon session was led by Jim VanDerPol with discussion centering around “Visioning” for our Western Chapter. It is the hope to see revitalization of the Western Chapter!

Elections were held and offices were filled as follows: Chairman – Jim VanDerPol; Vice-Chairman – John Sluss; Secretary/Treasurer – Linda Maus; State Board Representative (for 1 year) – John Sluss; Coordinator – Wendy Lange.

The Western Chapter held a follow-up meeting on Saturday, March 25, 2006, at the Luverne & Mary Jo Forbord home. It was a potluck brunch and action planning session for the coming year. You can read more details about this meeting in the summer edition of the CornerPost.

A Meat and Dairy Goat Workshop was held in Marshall on March 18, 2006. A number of organizations, including the SFA, sponsored the workshop. It was very well attended with 68 people present. There were a variety of speakers and panelists for a great day of education and networking!!

Crow River Chapter
By Greg Reynolds

On March 11th, the Crow River Chapter of the SFA of MN (CRSFA) had our Spring Social at Three Crows in Delano. In addition to hanging around, eating, drinking, and talking, we listened to a presentation by Irene Bender on her experience with Heifer Project International. Irene visited villages in Peru where earlier livestock recipients were passing along some of their young stock to new recipients. She said that both the country’s scenery and the poverty were breathtaking. We raised $160 for the Heifer Project.

Jerry Ford and Mary Schmidt have been busy meeting with local 4H leaders in an effort to connect 4H with sustainable farming practices. The latest effort has been to sponsor a livestock project with McLeod County 4H. Sue Peterson from the Central Chapter has also offered some help with this.

The local FFA chapter brought a mob of teenagers to our Chapter Winter Meeting. Under the direction of Laura Bihl, the students helped with the set up and clean up of lunch. We them many thanks. When Jerry Ford tried to meet with the statewide FFA, they did not seem to have any interest in sustainable agriculture. It seems kind of odd, but maybe they don’t think that farming has any future.... Who can be against sustaining agriculture?

Our planned events for the spring and summer include a tour of Dan and Becky’s Market on Saturday, April 8th. They have opened a natural food market in Cokato. In addition to carrying organic food, they try to buy as much from local farms as they can, including meat, milk, herbs, garlic, and produce (in season). In June, a Saturday dairy tour has yet to be finalized.

On Saturday, the 1st of July, there will be a tour of Senator Steve Dille’s sheep farm. The first tour will be at 10:30 am. At noon we will break for lunch (potluck - bring something homemade, desserts are always popular). From 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm there will be a public forum, moderated by our very own Mary Jo Forbord. There will be a second tour at 3:00 pm for those who have chores in the morning.

On Saturday, August 12th, be in Howard Lake for the First Annual Minnesota Garlic Festival. It will be a celebration of local food, music, culture, and garlic. The music headliner will be Poppa John Kohlstedt, but there will be music and entertainment all day. We are looking for sponsors, food vendors, and exhibitors. If you want to reserve a space, or know somebody with a fat checkbook, contact Jerry Ford (320-543-3394). For more information on any of our events, give Jerry a call.

Southeast Chapter
By Edgar Hansgen

Well, it’s Howdy-Duty time again!

I believe our annual meeting in February got us started on a very exciting and rewarding new year. We must extend another round of thanks to Kim Olson, Mary Jo Forbord, and Fred Kirshenmann for their meaningful contributions to it.

Kim Olson offered her energy, and a whole bunch of other good things to our chapter, when she accepted (railroad job) the office of chapter secretary. She has already started a young farmer program. Mary Jo Forbord again brought her positive and energetic message to our meeting, and gave us a lead-in to one of the projects for this year, “involving youth, our future, in sustainable agriculture.” Fred Kirshenmann, our keynote speaker, was as great as we expected. He also contributed to the theme of our meeting, “Rebirth of Rural America.” Read the excellent article on Fred’s presentation in this issue of CornerPost, written by Gary Holthaus. Thanks much, Gary; your efforts were and are greatly appreciated.

Another great hit at our meeting was the video from Natural Ovens, “The Impact of Fresh, Healthy Food on Learning and Behavior”. We would like to have a video made for our young people in 4-H, FFA, and whoever else, explaining the importance of sustaining and promoting the objectives of the SFA. Erin Tegtmeier of The Experiment in Rural Cooperation has expressed interest in the video project. Therefore, Mary Jo suggested that we might want to make it a SFA state project. We will bring this up that at our next state board meeting. Also from our meeting, we will be looking forward to participating

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Southeast continued from page 5
in a Food Fair later in the year.

We had a meeting on April 6th, in St Charles entitled, “Soil Nutrient Interactions.” It provided us with a basic knowledge of soil chemistry, so that we can build on this at future meetings. Laurence Mayhew from Midwest Bio-Ag was the presenter. Read more about this in the summer edition of the CornerPost. Well I’m all “dutied” out and I’m going to catch a short “whatever YOU call it”!

Lake Superior Chapter
By Jean Sramek

It’s official: we’re no longer the Northeast Chapter, but the Lake Superior Chapter. At our annual meeting on January 28, we voted to change our chapter name to reflect the makeup of our chapter membership, which includes many producers and consumers from northwestern Wisconsin. New board members were elected and some were re-elected. They include: Mark Thell (president), John-Fisher Merritt (vice-president), Kelly Smith (secretary), Deb Shubat (treasurer), Gene Dutkin, Phil Thieling, Phill Arnold, Janaki Fisher-Merritt, Jenifer Buckley, and Joel Rosen.

Our annual meeting featured keynote speaker Amy Baci galupo from the Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings program. She also led a breakout session on this topic, and many interested producers and consumers were in attendance. Troy Salzer, Carlton County extension agent, led a workshop on the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), which was also well-presented and well-attended.

We just held our third annual “Farmers Take the Stage” this month, and it was just as much fun as the first two. It’s basically a talent show featuring SFA members and SFA supporters, along with homemade treats, a silent auction, and some great performances—everything from music to poetry to (clean) jokes. Also in March, we’re holding a workshop called “Regaining Control of Our Seed Supply,” which is open to farmers, gardeners, producers, and consumers. Speakers for this workshop will include gardening experts and biologists who will facilitate discussion on topics like seed saving and genetically modified seeds.

Our 13th annual Harvest Festival will be held on Saturday, September 9th in Bayfront Park in Duluth. Last year we had record attendance (nearly 9,000), partnered with the Lake Superior Renewable Energy Fair, and were lucky to have a breezy, sunny, perfect late-summer day. The Kiwanis of Friendly Duluth held their annual Family Kite Fly in another area of Bayfront Park, which attracted even more visitors to our event. The farmers market, educational exhibits, food vendors featuring locally made or organic food, activities for kids, music, and demonstrations of traditional skills drew crowds all day long. This year it’s “lucky 13” so we’re hoping attendance tops the 10,000 mark.

South Central Chapter
By Jim Tjepkema and Julie Ackland

On March 11th we held our chapter annual meeting in Clarks Grove, MN. We invited two farmers, Jim VanDerPol and Dan French, and U of MN economist Kent Olson to lead a panel discussion on the future of the mid-sized farm. We also invited three people to respond to the panel. These people were added to the program to get input from some people in our area who do not usually attend our meetings. The people invited were: Tom Butler a grain farmer, Gene Paul who is active in the National Farmers Organization, and Henry Kalis a farmer and former member of the state legislature.

This was a two-hour long program with a long question and answer period. Much of the discussion presented by Dan and Jim centered on the opportunities for mid-sized farmers to do direct marketing of high quality products produced on their farms. They indicated that there is a growing demand from consumers, mainly in the Twin Cities, for locally produced high quality food and the demand currently exceeds the supply. Other information and comments that were shared related to the future of mid-sized farms, including the passing of these existing farms to new farmers; the economic position of mid-sized farms compared to larger and smaller farms; and the effect of government policies on mid-sized farms, including the effect of government crop support payments on the future of mid-sized farms.

There was a consensus that mid-sized farms do have opportunities to survive if they can make changes toward producing more high quality food for local consumption, but this requires a big change in how marketing is done. It was also generally agreed that a better system of agriculture is needed where there is more emphasis put on healthy food and communities and social justice. The addition of the responders to the discussion added voices from outside our organization that seemed to be in support of what we are doing. However, at least one of the responders indicated that he thought it would be very hard for him and perhaps other mid-sized farmers to switch to local marketing and higher quality food production.

Another issue that the South Central Chapter is currently concerned about is the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). People need to become aware of how the NAIS regulations are going to effect farmers. The information on this can be downloaded at www.usda.gov/nais.

These regulations would require two types of mandatory registration. First, premises registration would require every person who owns even one horse, cow, or any other livestock to register their home, and it will be keyed into Global Positioning System coordinates in a federal data base. Second, individual animal identification will require owners to obtain a 15 digit ID number, for any animal that leaves the premises of its birth. Even if you own a horse, and leave your home for a trail ride you will have to have an ID for it. These animal
Identifications devices would most likely be a tag or a microchip containing a radio frequency device that can be read from a distance.

Timetable for these regulations:
* **July 2006** - Target date for Draft Strategic Plan to issue a proposed rule.
* **Fall of 2007** - The USDA plans to publish a final rule to establish the requirements of mandatory NAIS.
* **July 2008** - Premises identification and animal identification would become mandatory

People are encouraged to look into these new proposed regulations. If you are not in favor of these new rules please contact your federal and state legislators. The USDA does not plan to finalize these rules until the Summer of 2006.

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**Changes to SFA of MN State Board Structure**

By Mary Hanks

A lot has happened in agriculture since the SFA was born. The organization is being increasingly called upon to be a leader in discussions on the future of livestock in the State, on organic agriculture, and other important issues. The state board has had to evolve as more leadership demands have been placed on the organization. While the board has always had a strong governing role, additional responsibilities and expectations have caused us to look for ways to improve our ability to meet these new challenges and take advantage of new opportunities. A change in board structure and membership was needed. After board discussions and based on the recommendations of a committee of the board, the board voted to amend the by-laws on February 17, 2006 to change the membership of the state board.

Beginning with the state board meeting on April 7, each chapter will now elect one chapter member to serve on the state board. This is a change from two representatives and an alternate from each chapter. The amended by-laws now allow the board to elect no more than four board members at-large. The purpose of this change is to allow the board to recruit people with expertise or knowledge that the SFA needs such as financial, legal, or marketing expertise. These board members must be SFA members. We believe that these changes will allow the SFA to better meet our new responsibilities and take advantage of opportunities to move toward a more sustainable agriculture in Minnesota.

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Thank you for your support!
Kirschenmann shares his hope at SE Chapter Annual Meeting

By Gary Holthaus

The highlight of the Southeast Minnesota Sustainable Farming Association’s Annual meeting was a presentation by Dr. Fred Kirschenmann, Distinguished Fellow at the Leopold Center at Iowa State University. Most of us found it inspiring, for Fred never seems to surrender hope. When he moved from teaching in higher education to take over his father’s farm, he was seen by his academic colleagues as a taking a step backward, a step toward failure. The folks in his hometown also thought he was back because he had failed.

However, Fred pointed out that he is hopeful about the future and offered three reasons why he is hopeful. The first had to do with our small towns, even though they may seem stale or crumbling. Most of us in that room, he suggested, came from a Christian background, and that one of the things Christians believe is that salvation comes from unlikely places – in a barn where teen-aged parents living in poverty were having their first child. So, for Fred, change is most apt to come from the fringes, from failed communities, not from centers of power. He commented that, “the greatest potential for change is not from Washington, D.C., or from our land grant universities, but from our small communities.”

Fred cited a survey of South Dakota, Minnesota, and western Wisconsin that sought to determine what people thought of their small towns. The most frequently used metaphor was, “this town is dead,” and that the residents left were simply waiting for a funeral. The other common image was that the town was dying and hoping that a big factory would move in and breathe new life into the place.

“We need to change our view of our towns,” Kirschenmann urged. “We need to see them as centers of hope. Change won’t come from the centers of power because they are already set and comfortable and they don’t want things to change. The new paradigm for the future comes from here – and we are all a part of that.”

Further, he reminded us, “We need to keep telling ourselves that one or two can make a difference. We don’t have to have everyone on board to change the direction of the food business, for example.” We all worry about globalization, but Fred pointed out that a Canadian philosopher studied great movements and discovered that they only last about 40 years. After that it takes force to sustain them. The Russian experiment lasted a little longer, but that was because they used the army. Globalization really got started in about 1970. Its time is about up. Across the world it is now being forced on people, a sign that its time is already waning.

“Why,” Fred asked, “have our rural communities fallen into disrepair?” He believes that, “If you are going to have a healthy local economy, you have to have local capital.” Adam Smith assumed local capital; without it, his formulations would not work. If the capital lay outside the community, the communities then became colonies for production. “We put all our labor into our raw materials which are then shipped elsewhere. We then have to turn around and import those same value-added raw materials.”

It doesn’t have to be that way, he said and told about a young man at a conference saying that his success was “not just about my farm; this is about our community.” When asked how that was so, he said that the community had gotten together and decided they would always give advantage to our local community. They would pay more per unit, but would create a more prosperous community.

A second reason Fred gave for his hope was that even financial institutions are now saying that we have to shift from wealth concentration to wealth expansion. Even if the capital is in the small community, but is limited to a few people, the economy will not be a healthy one. So he sees a movement to resist capital accumulation that will grow and merge with the healthier aspects of small towns and create a new and hopeful force for change right here at home. We can produce more value on our farms and expand wealth across a broader spectrum of the society.

A third sign of hope for Kirschenmann lies in how change happens. We have greater power to change things than we may realize. “It’s easier to change policies rather than to change institutions,” he claimed. So we don’t want to give up on changing Washington, D.C., but we don’t want to put too much effort there either. Instead we want to, “when we think of policy, we think of D.C. But policy at the local is maybe more important.” Fred cited Mendacino County in California. They got together and banned GMO crops from the county. This kind of local policy change is beginning to happen all around us. Another county offered property tax breaks to those who were willing to shift from conventional to organic farming. We “need to look at what we have the power to do, and use some imagination and innovation,” Fred said.

One sign that this local control is working is because it is seen as dangerous by those from outside the community who want to continue to treat the community as a colony for raising massive numbers of hogs or beef or dairy cattle. The assault on local jurisdiction has already begun in Iowa, Fred said, and those of us in Minnesota recognized the issue because it is happening here too.
SFA Annual Conference Cultivates Connections

By Anne Borgendale

On the coldest day of the winter SFA members from across the state braved the weather and came together on Saturday, February 18, for the 15th Annual SFA Conference “Cultivating Common Ground: Linking Health and Sustainable Agriculture.” The Central Chapter of the SFA of MN played host to the event this year at St. Francis Center in Little Falls, MN.

People started coming in from the cold by 8:00 am. They were welcomed with warm smiles and hot coffee. After greetings from Lonny Dietz, 2005 SFA State Board Chair, Mary Jo Forbord, Executive Director of the SFA, and Ruth Lentner, Franciscan Sister and chair of the Central Chapter Board, the core of the meeting got underway. Dr. David Wallinga, MD, the director of the Food and Health program at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, gave a presentation entitled, “Cultivating the Common Ground of Sustainable Agriculture and Health.” He brought up many different issues concerning agriculture and health including, antibiotic resistance, omega-3 fatty acids, grass-fed animals, plastics, the growing obesity epidemic, etc. The overarching theme of the presentation and subsequent discussion was how making health the centerpiece of U.S. agricultural policies and practices would result in food production that is healthier and more sustainable, economically sound, and socially just. Dr. Wallinga’s PowerPoint presentation can be found in PDF form on the SFA of MN website: www.sfa-mn.org.

Following the keynote address was the presenting of the Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award to Jim and LeeAnn VanDerPol and the SFA Distinguished Service Award to Mary Hanks. These awards were decided “based on the qualifications of a high level of dedication, commitment, service, perseverance, achievement, and contributions to the advancement of Sustainable Farming in Minnesota.” The SFA Music and Arts Extravaganza, featuring Jerry Ford and Marienne Kreitlow of Living Song Farm near Howard Lake, MN, accompanied the awards ceremony.

There were three groups of breakout sessions during the day covering Health, Farming, and the Connection between them. The sessions under the “Health” category were: Health Care Without Harm, Health of the Organizational Kind: SFA’s Annual Check-up, and Avian Flu in Birds and Humans: The Cause, The Threat, and The Future. The sessions under the “Farming” category were: Strengthening the Immune Systems of Animals on Grass, Plant Communities Database and Diversifying Agro-Forestry Practices, and Goats for Meat and Dairy. The sessions under “The Connection” category were: “Food for Folk and Community Supported Agriculture, Meeting the Eat Local Challenge on the White Earth Reservation, and The Farm to School Initiative: Connecting Local Foods to Children and Civic Engagement for Community Health and Prosperity.

Everyone then came together for a closing session. SFA members learned a little more about the future of the Conservation Security Program (CSP) from Tim Gieseke, a farmer, who also works for The Minnesota Project. To end the day Glen Borgerding, an independent ag consultant who owns and operates Ag Resource Consulting and Organic Land Management, Inc., presented on, “Soil: The Real Dirt on where Health Begins.”

There were over 25 organizations, businesses, and farmers with tables at the SFA Farmers’ Market and Exhibition. The small, yet diverse Silent Auction enticed people to bid throughout the day on everything from 25-lbs of organic golden flax to sustainable gift baskets to t-shirts. Another highlight of this year’s conference was the delicious food, which was mainly raised by Annual Meeting continued on page 7
The first time I heard about Jim VanDerPol was from my dad. He always read Jim’s column in our local paper and was quite disappointed when they stopped running it. Jim always seemed to write about some farm issue or musing on life, which my dad would bring up at the supper table. I think what my dad really admired were Jim’s convictions: that Jim lives what he writes and that he communicates it to the rest of us humble souls in a way we can all understand.

After meeting Jim and LeeAnn, his wife and farming partner, I could truly see why my dad so respected him. Jim and LeeAnn are unafraid to share their opinions and raise the sometimes unpopular, yet valid, point. This is one of the many reasons why they were chosen for the Second Annual Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award. The Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award honors a current or retired farmer based on the qualifications of a high level of dedication, commitment, service, perseverance, achievement, and contributions to the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

Jim and LeeAnn farm with their son and daughter-in-law, Josh and Cindy VanDerPol, south of Kerkhoven, MN. Their farm, Pastures A’ Plenty (www.prairiefare.com/pastureshp.htm), is distinctive because it is a pasture based diversified operation. Half of their farm is now a green oasis of pastures with grazing pigs and dairy heifers. This is in an area of the state where wide, flat black fields are the norm in the springtime and where corn, soybeans, and sugar beets are king. Another unique aspect of their farm is that they market their pigs themselves, with some going to Niman Ranch and some going directly to consumers. They try to unify their production and marketing to make the whole operation more financially sound.

Both Jim and LeeAnn grew up on farms; however, people from their generation were usually not encouraged to stay on the farm, especially if they went off to college. When Jim went to college, he didn’t know what career or job he wanted to have when he finished. He just wanted to learn what he could. Near the end of college was when Jim’s thoughts started to turn back to the farm. During his senior year at the University of Minnesota he went to one of the job fairs on campus. After talking to the recruiters, he started to realize that most employers wanted to and would have control over where he lived and what he did. Jim knew that he did not go to college to have that kind of life. This set in motion the chain of events that led him and LeeAnn back to the farm.

Over the past 30 years the rural landscape has changed in many ways. Of these changes, the loss of neighbors has been the most noticeable to Jim and LeeAnn. The neighborhood as they originally knew it does not exist anymore, making it a lonely place sometimes. Increasingly, their farm business and interactions with other farmers now take place over the phone and through internet instead of in person. However, they see the Minnesota farmscape 30 years in the future as a friendlier place where more of the land is in grass and where livestock are visible once again. As they look towards the next generation of farmers, they see a group that will have to turn to low-input approaches to agriculture. They foresee this as the only way to get into the profession. It will be impossible for young farmers to start a crop farm unless it handed to them. To be successful, young beginning farmers will need to consider alternative operations such as animals raised on grass or a CSA/market garden.

Sustainable agriculture is the only satisfactory way for the VanDerPols to farm. In spite of the hard work, they find it endlessly interesting. In fact, Jim is still excited about what he does every day and feels like their farm is on the cutting edge. They describe sustainable agriculture as something that can be repeated without damaging the environment or the people that surround it. It also needs to be supportive of the family and community. The ideal is to be able to farm without harm. Jim explained, “I don’t think sustainability is a state. Instead, it is a goal, an effort. You just get as close you can.”
sfa of mn spring 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 calendar contact Anne at communications@sfa-mn.org or (320) 226-6318.

April 10 Planning a Managed Grazing System - Lewiston, MN. Participants will be guided through the process of developing a managed rotational grazing plan on their own farm. To register call Hiawatha Valley RC&D at 507-281-1959 ext. 4.

April 17 Strategies for Maximizing Forage Production - Lewiston, MN. It is designed for producers who are struggling to get their grazing system functioning. To register call Hiawatha Valley RC&D at 507-281-1959 ext. 4.

April 19 Defining a Future Bioeconomy – University of Minnesota, St, Paul Campus. For more contact Dr. Satish Gupta, sgupta@umn.edu, 612-625-1241.

April 19-20 1st Minnesota Conference on Sustainable Tourism – University of Minnesota – Twin Cities Campus. For more info visit www.tourism.umn.edu

April 22 IATP 20th Anniversary Celebration Gala – For more info or to register www.iatp.org/20years.

April 22 & 29 Planting in the Dust – a one woman play dramatizing the conversation dilemma of farming. To reserve tickets call 218-632-8455.

May 06-7 Living Green Expo/Community Food & Farm Festival - Minnesota State Fair Grounds Grandstand, St. Paul, MN. For info visit: www.livinggreenexpo.org

May 06-9 All Things Organic Conference - Chicago, IL. Huge organic trade show that also includes educational sessions, keynote speakers and networking opportunities. For more info contact OTA: 413-774-7511; info@ota.com; www.ota.com.

May 09 Café Scientifique: Antibiotics in Agriculture with Timna Wyckoff - Varsity Theater, Dinkytown, Minneapolis.

May 13-14 The Minnesota Shepherd’s Harvest Sheep and Wool Festival - Lake Elmo, MN. For a detailed program and more info go to: www.shepardsharvestfestival.org.

May 15 Managing Sensitive Areas in Pastures - Earl Prigge Farm, Troy MN. To register call Hiawatha Valley RC&D at 507-281-1959 ext. 4.

May 22 Managing Sensitive Areas in Pastures - Earl Prigge Farm, Troy MN. To register call Hiawatha Valley RC&D at 507-281-1959 ext. 4.

May 22-23 Wild Foods Summit - Maplelag Resort. An intensive workshop on identifying, harvesting and preparing wild edible plants. For more info contact Sunny Johnson (yeehaw-sunny@yahoo.com) at 218-936-5620.

June 02-3 Well-Managed Forests for Community Well-Being – Palisade, MN. This workshop will highlight local efforts, the partners that are involved, and how they are leveraging good forestry for local benefit. For more info visit: www.llcc.org.

June 05 Tour of an Established Grazing System - Kasson, MN. To register call Hiawatha Valley RC&D at 507-281-1959 ext. 4.

June 05-7 Practical Farmers of Iowa Camp Leadership Program – Des Moines, IA. For more info, contact Brad Meyer at pffifarmer@hotmail.com or 515-230-1439 or www.practicalfarmers.org/resource/PFIResource_146.pdf

June 10 Thomas Farm Field Day - Kragnes, MN. Spend a day on an organic farm and learn what goes into your food and how you can connect with locally available resources.

June 12 Pasture Monitoring - Marlo Mensink Farm, Cherry Grove, MN. To register call Hiawatha Valley RC&D at 507-281-1959 ext. 4.

June 19 Pasture Monitoring - Jack Wartheson Farm, Plainview, MN. To register call Hiawatha Valley RC&D at 507-281-1959 ext. 4.

June 20 Tour of a Pasture in Development Process - Wolf Hill Farm, New Hartford, MN. To register call Hiawatha Valley RC&D at 507-281-1959 ext. 4.

July 01 Tour of Sen. Steve Dille’s Farm – Dassel, MN.

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!
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 Farm Business Management Association
(507) 280-2868
EASY TO USE INTERNET TOOLS FOR YOU!

By Jeremy Lanctot

There is some confusion about different internet-based communication tools and what they are best at. I’ll attempt to give a short exposé on the most major tools available for those unfamiliar with them.

My first exposure to the internet was in 1980. It was called ARPA-Net (the Internet name came years later) and was a conglomeration of interconnected time-share computers between major educational institutions. I used to go to our math room in my high school after cross country and track meets with a few friends and play Star Trek on the teletype terminal. This was a unit that resembled a typewriter with legs that stood on the floor and had a huge reel of paper that fed it from the floor. It had a QWERTY keyboard that you’d sit in front of and a telephone coupler which allowed the teletype terminal to communicate to the mainframe in Lauderdale, MN (University of Minnesota) via a standard phone line.

After we’d sign on to the time-share mainframe, we could run a text-only version of a Star Trek game that would print out on the advancing paper roll. Different text symbols represented stars, planets, the Enterprise, Klingon warships, etc. It printed out the action sequence in sentences and you had to tell (type) it where to fire photon torpedoes or phasers, etc. Real action! I first experienced ‘email’ at that time. We didn’t call it email then, I think it was simply ‘messaging.’ Anyway, we could send messages to friends attending a state university nearly anywhere in the country.

Email Listserv

Listservs grew out of this original email. Web pages came about a decade later so researchers kept abreast of each other’s work via listservs for many years before the first internet web page. A computer mail server keeps track of a topic and all of the email subscribers to that topic. Any subscriber can send information to that topic server and the computer responds by sending this info to all subscribers so each subscriber doesn’t have to type in all of the email addresses. A nifty tool for keeping people of similar ilk informed. This type of communication becomes cumbersome when too much time passes and too much information must be retrieved from too long ago. Enter discussion forums and groups.

Discussion Forum

Throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s, ‘bulletin boards’ became quite popular for personal computer aficionados. These had a dedicated phone number that you could call and logon on to a dedicated server to view and download databases and documents. These were unrelated to the Internet, though. Each company had their own bulletin board system and had to have a bank of telephone lines to handle many people logging onto their bulletin board servers. Someone got the great idea of combining the bulletin board concept with the Internet-based listserv. Voila! The Internet discussion group forum was born. Compuserv had proprietary fee-based forums like these in the 1980’s but they got superseded by standard internet websites in the late 1990’s.

Our SFA discussion board is an off-the-shelf package that we setup to service people who have questions and want to easily view a complete history of what has been discussed previously. Listservs start to falter at this point. They are great for asking questions amongst a small group of subscribers, but the ability to retrieve what’s been discussed six months ago becomes cumbersome. A visual discussion forum allows instant text conversation with a memory, so reviewing old info from months or years back becomes quite simple. Also, when new members enter the group, they can more easily see what has transpired in discussion previously. In essence, it builds a webpage for a listserv discussion. Visit our discussion forum at www.sfa-mn.org/forum/phpBB2/index.php.

Blog

A new phenomenon in internet activity is the ‘blog’, or weblog. This is somebody’s personal website where they can post pictures, commentaries on trips taken, or books read, or political diatribe. Others can subscribe to this website and get updates from it, plus, post replies to the owner. This is a personal form of a discussion forum. It is a powerful way to communicate. We’ve heard that ‘new journalism’ is being created by a sea of internet blog sites that get information before the big news networks can respond to events. This is also how some news networks have been exposed in fraudulent reporting practices.

Wiki

Another type of internet communication which is becoming popular is the WIKI website. This is a living encyclopedia written by a collaboration of many people. www.wikipedia.com is a large example of this. When we first started reworking our SFA website, I wanted to create a sustainable farming WIKI site. Time and money kept us from doing that, but it would be a great endeavor for sustainable farming types to define who they are and how they do things for the world to see. Insider terminology could be explained for beginning farmers and explanations of sustainable farming practices could be posted to help those getting a new practice started on their farm. Maybe as our children grow into farming, they can build a site like this to help each other.

Summary

There are other communication tools over the Internet, such as instant messaging and internet telephones, like Skype. As end-user connections get faster, voice and video streaming will become more standard. In the meantime, more farmers are connecting up and interacting across the ‘web’. As we reach out to younger/beginning farmers, having a web presence is a necessary tool for passing along our knowledge to the next generation.
Forbord Elected to Hunger and Environmental Nutrition Post

Mary Jo Forbord was recently elected to the Chair-Elect position of the Hunger and Environmental Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group of the American Dietetic Association (HEN/ADA). Forbord is a Registered Dietitian and has been a member of ADA for 26 years. HEN/ADA is a professional interest group within ADA's 65,000 food and nutrition professional members. With nearly 700 national and international members and growing, HEN/ADA promotes optimal nutrition and well-being, acknowledging the interdependence of food and water security, health, agriculture and the environment.

Mary Jo commented on how she envisions the group’s future direction:

“Food systems thinking and action is central to the emerging world view of sustainability. HEN/ADA members are leading the way to forge connections and provide expertise in this dynamic arena. Sustainable food system development must include thoughtful discussion and informed decisions about the food we grow, how and where we grow food, how far food travels, how food is processed, what it costs, who has access, who is left out, and more. Clients and consumers look to registered dietitians for answers to a broad realm of complex and interconnected food system questions. As a practice group, we listen, learn and deliver. By powerfully uniting the seemingly diverse, yet closely related, areas of hunger and environmental nutrition, we carry a strong message of justice from the land to all people, so that all people have access to food from a healthful, sustainable environment.”

Mission:
The Hunger and Environmental Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group promotes optimal nutrition and well-being for all people, now and in the future, acknowledging the interdependence of food and water security, health, agriculture and the environment.

Goals:
• Increasing appreciation for and understanding of food security, food production and environmental nutrition issues among members.
• Promoting member involvement locally, nationally, internationally in hunger and environmental nutrition issues.
• Providing leadership both within the American Dietetic Association and outside as the preferred educators on issues of food security and sustainable food systems.
• Identifying issues, educating members, and supporting legislation and regulations related to sustainable ecosystems as they relate to current and emerging food production, processing and distribution practices
• Increasing public awareness and action on hunger and environmental issues

For more information, visit the HEN/ADA website at http://www.hendpg.com/

Mary Jo wishes to assure SFA members that she will continue as SFA’s Executive Director, and that her newly elected post will augment her work on behalf of SFA.

Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition

The Haworth Press, Inc., in cooperation with the Hunger & Environmental Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group of the American Dietetic Association is pleased to announce the publication of the Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition, beginning with Volume 1, No. 1, Spring 2006. This peer-reviewed professional quarterly examines hunger and the interconnectedness among individual, political, and institutional factors that govern how people produce, procure, and consume food and the implications for nutrition and health. It comprehensively examines local, national, and international hunger and environmental nutrition issues—specifically food access, food and water security, agriculture, food production, sustainable food systems, poverty, social justice, and human values. The Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition will serve as an essential resource for dietitians, nutritionists, agronomists, anthropologists, economists, educators, epidemiologists, food scientists, public health practitioners, and policymakers.

The Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition will provide current research and application information on public policy, legislation, and regulation related to sustainable ecosystems and the link with maintaining optimal nutrition and well-being for all people. Recurring features in this new journal include: “Spotlight on the Field: People, Programs, and Policies,” “Internet Resources,” “Research Briefs,” and “Book and Media Reviews.”

To reserve a free sample copy of the Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition, please contact Mary Jo Forbord at mforbord@sfa-mn.org or 320-760-8732.
Meet the Borgendale Sisters

You may have seen them at any number of sustainable agriculture events, chatting excitedly with wild gesturing of their hands. You may have even gotten them confused from time to time. But yes, they are different people, and contrary to public belief, they have a brother too. Laura, Anne, and Colleen Borgendale all currently work with and have a dedication to the progress of sustainable agriculture. They all grew up on a conventional dairy farm in Lac qui Parle County near Montevideo, MN that their ancestors homesteaded in 1869. They all participated in farm work in varying degrees. Their father, the late Jon Borgendale, a progressive yet, conventional farmer, often shared his views on the state of agriculture and the world with them. Throughout their childhood on the farm, more cows and cats than people surrounded them. Thus, because of this lack of other people, they had to settle on getting along and playing with each other. These experiences all helped to shape their work and land ethics along with their strong bond.

Laura, at 26 years old, is the oldest of the brood. She is a graduate of the University of Minnesota, currently works for the Land Stewardship Project, and is a freelance web designer. Anne, 24 years old, is next in line. She is a graduate of the University of Minnesota, Morris, where she first started working with sustainable agriculture in the form of the Pride of the Prairie local foods initiative. Last, but not least, is Colleen, the baby of the family at only 19 years old. Colleen is a sophomore at the University of Minnesota, Morris, pursuing a degree in history and social science. In addition to her full-time studies, Colleen was the co-organizer of the Pride of the Prairie events at UMM and is an intern with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service, gathering oral histories of land use from elderly farmers. This summer she will continue on with sustainable agriculture by interning with the Green Lands, Blue Waters Initiative. As I said, they also have a brother, Kevin, who is 21 years old and a junior at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN. Yes, Kevin does exist.

When they are not dedicating themselves to the pursuits of sustainable agriculture, there are a variety of other things that they enjoy doing together and separately. They all enjoy music, including attending concerts of many different genres. Laura and Colleen sing and play guitar and piano, among with other instruments. Anne and Colleen enjoy photography and knitting. Anne likes cooking (feeding her siblings) and canoeing (usually dragging one of her sisters with her). They don’t quite know why they get along so well. Colleen thinks it may be because, “Laura and Anne are as crazy as me. We’ve had similar experiences. We also realize how important family is.”

The sisters see the many issues facing agriculture in the world today. They see that the rural landscape is an increasingly lonely place for people their age. However, they also see that there are alternative options in agriculture for people who want to farm and that the tides are changing.

MDI continued from page 12

at Dan and Brenda Carlson’s farm in February. I have posted notes from this interchange for the public on our discussion board noted above. We intend to have more meetings for goat producers and cow producers. We are organizing groups in Stearns county and Wadena county for organic and grazing cow producers. This will include roundtable formats and farm tours. Farm tours will take place this summer and roundtable discussions will happen primarily between harvest and planting over the winter. Watch the SFA website for announcements of these events.

Farm Transfer Website

We’ve begun a Farm Transfer web portal on the Minnesota Dairy Initiative website at www.mndairyinitiative.org. There is a link on the main page to the Farm Transfer portion which lists farms for sale, rent or partnership as well as producers seeking farms to buy or rent. The contact information is located on the website to add new listings. This site is still under construction and won’t be advertised more broadly until later in 2006. Dairy producers can use it now. We would like to have a good number of listings entered before ‘ribbon cutting’.
Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota

29731 302nd Street
Starbuck, MN 56381

Return Service Requested

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