“Imagine that you enter a parlour. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally’s assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.”

-- Kenneth Burke, 1941

A few years ago, Beth Waterhouse pointed out to me that those of us exploring and promoting and researching and practicing sustainable agriculture are engaged in an “unending conversation”. We, the currently engaged, are far more inclined to focus on meeting the next perceived challenge or opportunity, to “push the envelope” of what is next, than we are apt to notice and graciously welcome “newcomers”. It seems less efficient and less effective to simply listen to someone who doesn’t fully understand, to patiently supply resources, answer questions, to be challenged about decisions already made, to assist them in catching up on the conversation until they can skillfully, knowledgeably, and effectively engage to our standards and liking.

Having passed the half-century mark, I sense that my priorities are changing. Moving up on my list is welcoming and equipping “newcomers”, those new to discovering sustainable farming and sustainable living. Moving down is the drive to meet tomorrow head on, to “win” the day. With the acceptance that the conversation is indeed unending, I’m finding more value, enjoyment and progress in equipping young people to push the frontiers of what they perceive as most essential. “Equipping” means more than taking time, being accessible, sharing the past to glean its lessons, offering a hand, a connection, or an experience. It can also mean admitting mistakes, relinquishing control, and increased risk (just my perception, I know!), but to make it all very worth it, the

Unending Conversation continued on page 2
Unending Conversation continued from page 1

refreshing realization comes that it isn’t all up to me, or us, after all.

An SFA director commented at a board retreat that, “unless we have a next generation of sustainable farmers, none of our other goals matter.” Well said.

Think about young people you know, and I hope you know many. Who among them are the sustainable farmers of the future, and who are the future leaders of SFA? How will we equip them? The work and the conversation continue, and it matters most that it does.

A Letter to SFA of MN:

Dear Friends,

It was such a pleasant surprise to find that Dan and I had been chosen to represent all the hard working folks who work to promote local, land friendly Agriculture. The Farmer’s Voice 2007 Award was so satisfying, and it is a chance to celebrate what all of us, together, are doing.

Remember when we started with a fall educational meeting and moved to the popular festival? I rarely have missed it, but this year was conflicted by a speaking engagement on the same day on the iron range, so was doubly amazed to arrive home and see the award!

I will continue to write books and letters to the editor, which reflect the joys and rewards of living close to the land, or at least valuing care for the land and sustainable farming.

Thank you for this honor, and for all of the work that all of you do.

Sincerely,
Margaret Olson Webster

More mileage per CP

Before recycling the CornerPost, please leave your copy at your place of worship, 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!

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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.

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Lake Superior Chapter

By David Hopkins

First, I’d like to introduce myself as the new coordinator of this chapter. I am a lifelong organic gardener with a farm background as well as communications. I am an amateur musician, a freelance journalist, a part-time publicist and a part-time worker at a small family resort on the North Shore. I’ve been on the shores of Lake Superior for 25 years and I am committed to help preserve her purity. I am an advocate of tribal sovereignty and Native leadership and hope to help bring a stronger Native involvement to the SFA. The potential of the SFA is so huge and exciting that I’ve had a few restless nights while considering the possibilities.

After four years as the Lake Superior Chapter Coordinator, Jean Sramek has moved on to work with the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council. With her background in arts she could not resist the opportunity. Fortunately she also loves her work with SFA and will continue as an active member. Fortunately, she is taking plenty of time to show me her systems and methods. When I ask her about returning to the 2008 Harvest Festival she jokes, “I might join the Witness Program so I can avoid answering questions.” She also says that she will be there in a cocktail dress and high heels rather than her sensible shoes and slacks that enable her to hike some 10 or 12 miles as she monitors the event.

Our 14th Annual Harvest Festival, held on Saturday, September 15 in Bayfront Park in Duluth was, once again, the best ever. There was an estimated record attendance of 15,000 people enjoying a lovely autumn day by the bay. The kites of the Kiwanis of Duluth annual Family Kite Fly lent a festive air. The collaboration with the Lake Superior Energy Fair, also larger than ever, proved once again to be Lake Superior continued on page 4
Lake Superior continued from page 3

a great match. The demonstrations and displays provided an inspiring educational experience with more going on than a person could absorb in a day. There was a wind turbine on the scene, solar heaters and photovoltaic grids. Demonstrations, consultations and networking continued throughout the day as people explored composting, green building and new energy production modes. At the heart of the festival the Farmers Market was an elbow-to-elbow affair touted as a success by both sellers and buyers.

A week after the Harvest Festival, our chapter held the 3rd Annual Urban Farm Tour. The tour was hosted at each stop by gardeners who produce substantial food and income with small plots. Despite a relentless drought the backyard food production systems are growing in the city of Duluth. More people are now using greenhouses, creating micro-environments that are a zone warmer and bringing in city-friendly farm animals such as chickens, worms and honeybees. This trend is something that the Lake Superior Chapter encourages. Several conversations included ideas of increasing the partnership with the Duluth Community Garden Program, which was part of the tour.

The event highlighted a guided tour of the rain garden on the campus of UMD. This garden cleans and slows the runoff of a large asphalt parking lot, which would otherwise feed directly into Oregon Creek and the Lake. It is an inviting garden where people frequently eat lunch or take a short walk. It is also an educational opportunity for those who would like to build such a garden elsewhere. The people of Duluth and Lake Superior will benefit as more of these gardens are installed.

The Lake Superior Chapter will be hosting the annual “Farmers Take the Stove” winter dinner and silent auction. It will be held on Monday, December 3rd at 6:00 pm at the Peace Church, 1111 East 11th Street in Duluth. The dinner will be open to the public and will highlight meals grown, prepared and cooked by farmers. Besides being an enjoyable community meal it’s a great way to introduce people to sustainably grown food.

SFA members who travel to Duluth or the shores of Lake Superior are always encouraged to let us know you’re coming. We can often point out interesting sights, events and places for good dining. As my role model Mr. Rogers says, “The more we get together the happier we’ll be.”

South Central Chapter

By Jim Tjepkema

The South Central Chapter sponsored two events this summer, an organic field day and a potluck social. There are no plans for gatherings during harvest season when most of our members are very busy getting their crops out of the field. We usually have some informal meetings where members are invited to exchange ideas and information on topics of special interest during the winter months. Please contact Julie Ackland, South Central Chapter board member or me if you have a topic you would like to discuss. Wind power is a topic that our board thought might be a good one for discussion. Also, please contact us if you have suggestions for speakers for our annual meeting to be held early next year.

The organic field day was organized by Ray Yokiel and Denise Lutteke and was held on their farms on September 8th. Ray, Dennis and their families did all of the work on organizing this field day and our coordinator, Julie Ackland, sent out notices and publicity. Organic Valley and the Faribault County NRCS also worked on publicity. There was a large turn out of organic farmers and people interested in organic farming.

The field day moved from Yokiel’s to the Lutteke farm where a noon meal of organic food was served. The meal featured: beverages and cheese and milk donated by Organic Valley; chips donated by Whole Grain Milling; beef and cookies from the Lutteke family; cole slaw prepared by Marlys Yokiel; baked beans prepared by Leona Yokiel; organic buns made by Mary Hartman; and ice cream donated by Mom’s Milk. 120 people were served at the noon meal.

After the meal Dr. Paul Detloff, DVM, presented information on his production practices and the equipment he uses. Bob Yanda, a field man for Midwest BioAg, presented extensive information on soil fertility and other topics related to organic crop production. Several organic farmers provided information on their practices and answered questions. Jim Hassing displayed a roller he is trying out to roll down winter rye so that he can plant soybeans with a no-till planter into the rolled down rye. Meg Moynihan, from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, provided information on organic and sustainable agriculture programs available from the state.

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After the meal Dr. Paul Detloff, DVM, presented information on organic methods for taking care of dairy cattle and other aspects organic dairy farming. Dr. Detloff covered a wide range practices for treating dairy cattle with
herbs and with many other alternatives to conventional practices. Dr. Detloff also led a tour of the Lutteke organic dairy farm. Ray, Dennis and their families and friends deserve a lot of credit for all the work they did on putting together this very well attended field day.

On September 12th, Wally Dunn and Janet Stadhiem hosted a potluck dinner at their home. A small group of chapter members and other guests enjoyed socializing over a good selection of potluck food items. Following the meal Jim Tjepkema presented pictures and information covering a trip he made this summer to do volunteer work for ACDI/VOCA in Bolivia. ACDI/VOCA is a non-profit group, which recruits volunteers to work on agricultural projects in many different countries. Jim worked on a project concerning pest control in organic black beans. A company in Bolivia that exports these beans hosted the project.

**Cannon River-Hiawatha Chapter**

By Mary Ellen Frame

On account of the weather, it’s been a tough summer in this area. The weather was so localized that a hail storm that did serious damage in one township hardly touched farms a couple of miles away, as it was with the June hail storm. The drought was much more widespread and did variable damage to crops and pastures, depending on when the rain finally came and what was being grown. When the drought was over, things didn’t improve much, as a week of rain and heat, topped by a second hail storm in August, aggravated mold, insects and late blight. The frost early in September also had variable severity, finishing off some of the tender vegetables. My neighbors, who have a CSA were glad that they had a wide diversity of vegetables. It’s pretty clear, from recent years, that new weather patterns are emerging, and we haven’t figured out what to expect or whether there are any things we can do to mitigate the unpredictable.

Our chapter is planning a field day at L and R Poultry and Produce, near Kenyon, in October, details to be announced. We also plan to have a meeting in November to talk further about forming a producers’ co-operative, details to be announced.

**Crow River Chapter**

By Greg Reynolds

The big news around here is that the drought is letting up. We have been getting rain ever since the Garlic Festival. From the beginning of June until the middle of August, we had 5/8” of rain. Since the middle of August we have had about 7½” of rain. Clearly, rain on the Garlic Festival was Jerry’s fault, but I’m thinking that we should move it up to early June.

The Minnesota Garlic Festival was a success even with the rain. Everyone that came hung around and was looking for things to buy or eat. I heard that Cedar Summit had some killer garlic ice cream. I went for the vanilla. It was great. The Lanctot’s garlic jelly sold out early. All of the garlic vendors did all right too. At the Great Scape Cafe we had five local chefs who are all committed to using local, seasonal food. The line up included Phillip Becht from the Modern, Russell Klein at Meritage, Mike Phillips Craftsman; Tracy Singleton owner of the Birchwood Cafe, and Lucia Watson from Lucias. Since it rained we had too much food, that put our costs out of line with our sales, and we lost a little money. Remember that this was the weekend where farmers in southeastern Minnesota has their year’s work washed away, so we did great. It was much easier with five chefs rather than one last year. They are already planning the menu for next year.

An adjunct to the Great Scape Cafe was cooking demonstrations by three of the chefs. The demos were very popular. People were taking out chairs 20 minutes before the start time. Mary Jane Miller, came out of nowhere, organized the demos, and made them a huge success. She made it easy for the chefs to be personable and enjoy themselves. Truth be told, Mary Jane has a resume that is just short of amazing. Who knew Jerry had contacts like this? While the headliners get all the attention from the attendees, it is people like Mary Jane who volunteered who made the festival work. Everything from planning through, set up, moving everything indoors, staging the attractions, cleaning up was done by people pitching in to help out. Thanks everybody.

Our next event is our Fall Social. It will be held on Friday, November 2nd at Three Crows in Delano. The theme will be, “Eating Locally Year Round or Freezing is Not a Sin.” Eating local is a hot topic, and we will be exploring how to eat local in winter. Freezing is not sin. Plenty of time is allocated for dinner and socializing. Come early, get a bite to eat, and visit with the people that Crow River continued on page 6
Crow River continued from page 5 you have not seen since things got busy this spring.

Something that I have gotten involved with lately is the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy’s (IATP) Sow the Seeds Fund Flood Relief effort. I have been busy trying to ship everything that is worth a snap, so I have not seen the devastation in southeastern Minnesota and southwestern Wisconsin first hand, but it sounds terrible. I hear about vegetable growers who had 30 acres under water, have $200,000 in crop losses, had water come up six feet, recede, and leave a foot of mud in their packing shed and fields, turkey growers whose birds all drowned. An 80% to 100% loss of their fall crops is not uncommon. There are farmers who cannot make the payments on their operating loans, making it likely that they are out of business. We have just gotten an application for emergency help put together. See www.iatp.org for more details. For the application visit: www.sowtheseedsfund.org/pdf/2007_flood_application.pdf. If you have uninsured losses, please fill out the application and send it to IATP as soon as you can. If you have not sustained losses, please consider a contribution to the Sow the Seeds fund. If you have connections to organizations with deep pockets, please ask them to make a donation too. Thanks.

Western Chapter

By Cheryl Landgren

Permaculture came to western Minnesota in August. The Intro to Permaculture workshop, presented by the Permaculture Institute Cold Climate and co-hosted by our western chapter and the Land Stewardship Project, was well attended on the first rainy day of our drought-filled summer. Thirty-three participants gathered to explore the basic concepts of a philosophy and movement that synthesizes aspects of agriculture, architecture, meteorology, ancient wisdom, and modern technology into “the conscious design and maintenance of ecosystems that have the diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems” (from Permaculture co-founder Bill Mollison’s designer’s manual). Our greatest challenge was to incorporate a huge volume of ideas into a few hours time. Workshop presenters started beneath ground level with an appreciation of living soil and the complex interactions among its inhabitants. Another chunk of time was spent on understanding plant communities in which layers of plants fill niches from tall canopy to beneath ground cover. Underlying the science is the importance of observing and interacting with the ecosystem as a foundation for design. The workshop concluded with the inspiring story of Cornercopia, a student-managed organic farm on the University of Minnesota St Paul campus.

Is permaculture science or art? Like sustainable farming, there is no need to make a distinction. A permaculture designed ecosystem harmoniously integrates people and their landscape with an emphasis on practical solutions to meet basic human needs. I include a need for beauty and elegance in design, and isn’t Mother Nature an elegant designer?

As summer turns to autumn, the pulse of western Minnesota, as in all rural areas, is attuned to harvest. “Obtain a yield” is one permaculture principle. I recently participated in a CSA farm’s final harvest that was greatly reduced by an early freeze and a hail storm. The final delivery to urban consumers, which was a bit thin, offered a valuable lesson in one of community supported agriculture’s basic tenets of “sharing the risk” with the local farmer. In permaculture terms, “Find a solution within a problem.”

Speaking of problematic solutions, a new Super Wal-Mart recently opened in Montevideo. Many in our area welcome the 24 hour availability of stuff, while others view its arrival with trepidation, fearing an adverse effect on locally owned businesses. Some feel resigned to the seeming inevitability of the relentless march of large corporations across the countryside. How might a permaculturist view the arrival of the new giant? It compels me to clarify my values and choose which community resources I will use to design and maintain my personal ecosystem. Once again, the problem is the solution.

There are numerous examples across our region of individuals and groups taking action in support of their values. The Greater Milan Initiative, an organization of community activists dedicated to sustaining their small town, has purchased the recently-closed elementary school with the intention of transforming it into a community and small business center. In another example, the Montevideo Chamber of Commerce is partnering with Western Minnesota Prairie Waters to sponsor a local foods dining experience next month. Yet another October event, the fourth annual Upper Minnesota River Arts Meander, will offer visitors a self guided tour of 45 artists’ studios from Ortonville to Granite Falls. From a global perspective, these are small local actions, but isn’t every action a local one? And isn’t the movement toward sustainability made up of local actions?

Happy Harvest Time! May winter bring you the semi-hibernation that all of us need to rest, reflect, and give thanks for the blessings of our lives on the land.
Coteau Ridge Chapter

By Dorinda Speh

The summer is always a time for tours in our chapter and, we did a variety of them. On June 11th we visited Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) and toured their greenhouse, natural history museum, anthropology museum, garden courtyard, and geology rocks and minerals collection.

Our next tour was of the Prairie Coteau Scientific and Natural Area (SNA), north of Pipestone, MN on August 11th. Nancy Sather, a botanist for the DNR in Minnesota, gave this tour. This tour featured rolling hills with dry gravel prairie and mesic prairie in the draws. We had a taste of what early explorers experienced as they crossed the Coteau. Nancy is a “walking botany encyclopedia,” so if you want a wealth of information about plants contact her at Nancy.Sather@dnr.state.mn.us.

On August 27th, we had a tour of Cliff Millsapp’s ranch in Gary, SD. Cliff uses native grasses and non-native grasses in his pastures for grazing of his grass fed Angus cattle. He showed us a unique electrical system that he designed and built to pump water for his livestock. This system used a wind tower, solar panels, and a battery pack to generate electricity to activate the pump. Finally, what would the summer be without picnics, and after every tour we had our share of food and fun.

Central Chapter

By Sue Peterson

The Central Chapter has been busy with getting the coloring books reprinted and will be distributing them this school year. Our new endeavor is the 100 Orchards Project. The goal of the project is to get 100 orchards planted and maintained in our region over the next few years. We have had two workshops so far with another planned for sometime in October as an apple festival. The workshop will be about preserving the harvest. Please contact Sue Peterson for details (320) 355-2980 or azariahsue@yahoo.com. Our annual meeting is planned for January 5, 2008 at the Wadena VFW from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. We plan to talk about the health regulations side of marketing processed produce, and a possible breakout session on alternative crops with Dr Craig Schaeffer of the University of Minnesota.

Mark your calendar!

The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota’s 17th Annual Conference is going to take place on SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2008 at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN. The Crow River Chapter is hosting the conference and decided to return to Gustavus for a day focused on “Local Foods: The Next Step.”


The Garlic Festival Choir filling the raining day with music at the 2007 MN Garlic Festival.
Artisan Cheesemaking: Gaining Momentum

By Jodi Ohlsen Read

It has already been a year since SFA began its adventure in artisan cheesemaking. Last September we launched a project to raise awareness, generate enthusiasm, and provide resources for artisan cheesemaking. Looking back over the year, it is rewarding to see that we’ve accomplished the goals of the first phase of this project – provide basic cheesemaking resource information online, establish a forum for online discussion, hold a half-day workshop on cheesemaking, and host a field day at a farmstead cheesemaking facility.

We knew there was an interest but response has been astounding. From the wonderful turnout at the February workshop at Gustavus Adolphus College to the two full-house field days at our farm, we’ve seen proof that people want to know more about cheesemaking. Nearly double the number of people I expected turned out for each event. We even set up a second field day to accommodate everyone.

The enthusiasm and quest for more information is exciting. Ranges of interest and experiences spanned from the just curious to the experienced home cheesemaker seeking to start a licensed business. Some simply wanted to “see what it’s about” and others wanted nitty-gritty details about inspection requirements and where to purchase professional grade equipment.

During the tours of our cheesemaking facilities at Shepherd’s Way, people were able to see and hear how we set up our cheese make and aging rooms. We talked about obstacles for small operations, ways to learn cheesemaking, marketing and selling, and the rewards of making cheese.

These are just some of the questions and topics I hope to see in the SFA online discussion board soon. Of all the areas of this project, I’m afraid that this has been the slowest to gain momentum. As more of those interested in cheesemaking discover this resource, I expect to see more lively activity online. It may seem intimidating to sign-on but it truly only takes a couple of minutes the first time. We’d love to hear about your cheesemaking experiences or questions. No question is too simple – the forum is open for anybody, whether or not you’ve even made cheese. The more of us that join in, and check in, the better we can support each other in cheesemaking ventures.

Online resources will also show some changes soon. I will continue to add to the material and hope to make it easier to access and navigate. If there is something you’d like to see on the website, please let us know through the discussion page.

One question came up in our discussions more than any other – How can I learn to make cheese? My answer is to find the route that suits your situation: Just trying it out or making just for yourself? Best bet is trial and error in your kitchen, using books, videos, online resources. Looking for more technical information or complete, professional training? Check out the University of Wisconsin/River Falls cheesemaking short courses. (Next one is in November) People have also asked about more hands-on cheesemaking, particularly in a farm setting. At this point, there are no local farmstead courses scheduled in the area but as things arise, I will post them on the SFA website.

We are working on the next phase, revising materials for online resources and planning another series of artisan cheesemaking workshops. Keep your eye out for information about the next day-long workshop, which we hope to schedule for this winter. It will likely focus on cheesemaking as a business, with follow-up business planning sessions and a potential technical cheesemaking class at a later date.

The momentum we see in Minnesota is just a hint of the national momentum in artisan cheesemaking. It is a natural part of the larger focus on local food and the broader shift toward sustainable foods and farming. At the national American Cheese Society conference in Vermont, I was reminded that as artisan and farmstead cheesemakers, we are truly a part of something bigger.
Because farm legislation is in the news in farm country, and because none of what is being said about it amounts to much, I am going to write a few thoughts down. My thoughts come of what I persist in believing is both necessary and possible, in tension with the reality of what I see before me. My “dream farm bill” thus is a product of despair and hope. You will notice that much of it is impossible in the face of a corrupt and incompetent Congress and the absence of an informed and involved citizenry, about which we will all have to ask the guy in the mirror.

First item: National health care for all. This should be done in a way that does not enrich the insurance industry, the drug industry or the health care industry. These are enormously profitable sectors that already have too much of our money. The reason for universal health care is that far too many farm families are not able to concentrate effectively on their farming because they must have someone working in town for the health care. Progress in agriculture absolutely depends upon real people, many of them, being able to farm thoughtfully and carefully. We need more people on our farms and operating our related businesses, not fewer.

Corporate health care, found in job related benefit packages, is a form of corporate control. That control stifles the necessary human creativity and entrepreneurship. People are the only source of creativity, corporations never are.

Second item: Reform of American corporate law. Congress needs to pass legislation instructing the courts to begin the rewriting of corporate law in such a way that the concept of “person” applies once again to flesh and blood people only. The idea of allowing corporations to assume the role of “persons” before the law has bent our representative democracy to the breaking point by allowing corporations to torpedo one campaign finance reform effort after another, thus putting government into corporate hands, and has given the individual farmer and farm community essentially no standing in any legal proceeding against any corporation whose stable of lawyers is arguing the corporation’s “right” to use its property as it wishes. Anyone who has worked to oppose the siting of a huge livestock confinement or the route of a power line knows this first hand. Control of corporations is going to be necessary if we are to build local economies.

Third item: Give the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) a final burial. This piece of Orwellian nonsense would put more regulation on the ownership of a livestock animal than on ownership of either a car or a gun. It is a thinly disguised attempt to do away with farmers in favor of the large integrators who already have their exemption written into the proposed regulation. This and all other systems of surveillance, spying, information collecting, secrecy and control must end and now. We must not cease demanding an end, for we know that the government is never to be trusted with this kind of power; they will soon run out of Mid-Eastern males to persecute and will turn their equipment and stables of spooks upon the rest of us if they have not already. Too much wonder and awe at the idea of “cyber space” and “virtual reality” has dulled our common sense and caused us to allow government too much latitude.

Fourth item: Get rid of the commodity programs. Government should never support the production of one crop or livestock species in preference to another. To do so puts too much money into too few pockets and leads to bad farming, poor local economies and foreshortened opportunities for people. And it is the height of hypocrisy for the government to shovel money at corn, wheat and cotton, driving up the price of the land, and then create a “beginning farmer and rancher program”. The first action destroys the second, no matter how much money is pumped into it. Government support for ethanol should be phased down, and then out. The corporates are stepping up to that trough and we don’t need to feed them. Farmers should not be paid from the government for anything except perhaps for certain good and environmentally sound farming practices which are a benefit to the population as a whole, and then the amount should be modest. We cannot build a sound local economy on a bogus agricultural one.

Fifth item: Some of the money saved on the commodity programs should be invested in public finance of research at public Universities. The problem with most University research is that it is corporate owned. This public program of research should be broad and general, to benefit the sort of farmers that are putting the livestock and crops together is new and interesting ways as well as getting good use out of traditional farming practices. A share of the research money should always...
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Sustainable Dairy: MDI Update

By Jeremy Lanctot

I was involved in a conversation recently where sustainability was discussed. When people think of sustainability they normally think of a solid financial statement, plenty of feed in storage, emergency plans in place, irrigation systems for drought years like the last two, and so on. Human nature often focuses on the ‘how’, ‘what’, ‘when’, ‘where’, etc. Something I’ve observed over the last five years of involvement in SFA is that most agricultural enterprises have a difficult time identifying the ‘who’ for a sustainable system.

Most farmers are well aware that they aren’t going to live forever. It’s ten for ten. We’re all going to die sooner or later. We can be the best at what we build and do, but who’s going to get it when we’re gone?

I’m always amazed at what people will do for prestige, fame and plain ol’ riches. They sweat, toil and fight to get what little they have (from their perspective). Most don’t even create a will (mine is out-of-date and inadequate).

I spoke with a frustrated farmer last week who is the primary worker on his farm with his brother and father. He’s nearly 40 years old and his dad won’t let him own any of it! This is endemic of our lack of sustainable foresight in our society. We spend our whole lives building for ourselves and for our retirement without mentoring in and handing over to the next generation. We need to work harder at identifying the ‘who’ of sustainability; namely, the next generation.

I see organizations and businesses rise to a crescendo, wane, then crash, because it is built upon one primary charismatic personality who is too myopic to look past their own nose and plan an exit strategy. For farms, this should be done decades before the eldest generation passes on. In my opinion, a farm shouldn’t call themselves ‘sustainable’ until the ‘who’ is clearly defined. Namely, who is going to get to own and operate this enterprise next?

At SFA, we have realized that we’re fighting a lost cause for sustainability unless we include the younger MDI continued on page 16
Dear Reader,

As a friend and supporter of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, you may be wondering why we are making a plea for donations in this edition of the CornerPost. SFA is pleased to be your advocate dedicated to the development and enhancement of sustainable farming practices in Minnesota. We are uniquely positioned as a farmer based organization that promotes sustainable farming through the activities of our chapters and our state organization. Your help is needed to maintain and strengthen our position as leading advocates for a more sustainable approach to agriculture within our state.

**WHY** - As a result of grant funding we’ve been able to build a network to support the local chapters, and have been able to underwrite events sponsored by our state organization. SFA members have supported each other in doing important work promoting and adopting sustainable practices. We have become your voice in Minnesota on issues related to sustainable agriculture.

**WHY NOW** - SFA is grateful for the funding from the Bush Foundation, which allowed us to hire our first Executive Director, Mary Jo Forbord. The Bush grant has run out. We need support for the day-to-day operations that were previously supported by Bush. A fundraising drive is needed to fund our daily operations because grants do not provide this kind of funding. We are asking you to contribute to our new fund, The SFA Sustaining Fund. Without your generous support we will not be able to expand our impact in Minnesota - or perhaps even sustain the programs we have started.

**HOW** - Please make a gift to the SFA Sustaining Fund today, by contributing $250, $100, $50, (or any amount). You will be joining with like-minded Minnesotans who care about our natural resources and are committed to advancing sustainable farming. An envelope is included with this newsletter for your convenience.

**WHEN** - Please make your gift prior to November 30. Our organization will be developing a budget over the winter months for the coming year. We are committed to responsible stewardship and will plan our budget based on projected income.

This request for funds is being made with the approval of the SFA state board. It is part of the strategic plan that has been developed by the board to strengthen our organization. Your contributions to our new SFA Sustaining Fund are urgently needed to maintain and improve the day-to-day operations of SFA.

Gratefully,
The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Fundraising Committee Members:
*Jim Tjepkema, Mary Hanks, and Chris Barnier*
all about the Sustainable Farming Association:
WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

By Mary Jo Forbord

The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota is a nonprofit educational organization, founded in 1988. SFA’s mission is to develop and enhance sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education farmer-to-farmer networking.

SFA provides a year-round offering of high quality, farm and family-centered programs, tours, field days and events to educate and demonstrate the many aspects and diversity of sustainable farming systems.

SFA Conferences

Each year, SFA delivers a major education conference customized for the sustainable farming audience, supporters and resource people, and each year we grow in attendance.

In 2005, Success and Succession on the Land: Sustainable Farming’s Next Generation, focused on the next generation of sustainable farmers. In 2006, Cultivating Common Ground: Linking Sustainable Agriculture and Health highlighted the connections between food, farming, the environment and health.

In 2007, Sustainable Farming Systems: the State of the Art was held at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter. Students, faculty and farmers enjoyed a pre-conference “Locavore Dinner” that farmers and students prepared together in the Gustavus Dining Center kitchen. More than 50 students attended the conference, which included a policy panel consisting of two state Senators, two state Representatives, and a Congressional Representative. In 2008, SFA will again hold our conference at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter on February 2nd. Stay tuned— it’s going to be the best yet.

Grazefest Minnesota

Grazefest Minnesota provides a high quality, experiential educational opportunity for farmers who graze livestock and those who want to implement rotational grazing, while providing state-of-the-art grazing education for agency personnel and consumers. Grazefest events include on-farm education about sustainable grazing systems, and highlights the nutritional and environmental benefits of pasture-raised foods. Grazefest 2007 at Cedar Summit Farm brought together farmers, grazing specialists, chefs, processors, musicians, agency resource peoples, and consumers for a daylong extravaganza of learning, eating, and enjoyment.

The Grazefest Minnesota/Working Lands Bus Tour brought together graziers, beginning farmers and graziers, grazing specialists, conservationists, biologists, educators, and researchers in Western Minnesota for a day of in-depth learning and information exchange as they toured a variety of grazing systems and listened to experienced graziers, grazing specialists and conservationists.

Minnesota Garlic Festival

SFA rolled out its first Minnesota Garlic Festival in 2006, under the direction of its founder and Crow River Chapter Chair, Jerry Ford. The Festival is an SFA outreach program, using family-oriented entertainment to educate people about the benefits of sustainable agriculture, connect farmers directly with the public, and to share their authentic experience of working conscientiously with the land. Over 1000 people attended Garlic Festival in its debut year. The Festival has become a flagship event for SFA, and could very well serve as a model for revitalization at county fair sites throughout Minnesota. The 2nd Annual Minnesota Garlic Festival
Hello friends of sustainable farming and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. I am writing today to encourage you to think of the necessity of sustainability in agriculture and the unique way in which the Sustainable Farming Association supports the move toward sustainability. The SFA is a farmer to farmer networking organization primarily, linking folks with interests in various kinds of alternative agriculture to each other through the very human need for a support system. The work that we all do is unique enough to make us feel pretty isolated, particularly in American agriculture with its extreme overemphasis on commodity production.

An SFA acquaintance, when the talk comes around to farming, says to me: “Here is what I am trying to do on my farm. This is what works well, and this not so well, and this I have to work out yet. But it may not fit your farm, or you might not like this approach. What are you doing?” Now notice that this conversation, this very mutually supportive exchange, is not available anywhere else. The extension division at the University is not seeking our wisdom; it is trying to relay to us its research. Corporate education is not interested in what we know, only in how we may become convinced to buy their product.

The result of course is that if it is going to be done, we shall have to do it ourselves. So please give the letter in this issue from your fundraising committee your most careful attention and see if it is possible to contribute. Talk about it with non-farming friends. Some of them, particularly those interested in local foods, have a warm interest in us and our organizations. Do what you can, take care of yourself, and stay in touch!

Jim VanDerPol, Sustainable Farmer Emeritus

Harvest Festival

SFA’s Lake Superior Chapter held its 14th annual Harvest Festival in September 2007 at Bayfront Festival Park, Duluth MN. Harvest Festival showcases local food and agriculture and promotes local food production as a key component of a healthy economy, environment and community. Renewable energy exhibits and demonstrations have helped increase attendance to over 9000 people annually.

Artisan Cheesemaking for Beginners

With funding from MDI, SFA has initiated an Artisan Cheesemaking for Beginners Online Forum, led and moderated by Minnesota artisan cheesemaker and writer Jodi Ohlsen-Read. More than 60 people attend an Artisan Cheesemaking Workshop in February of 2007, which featured Minnesota’s artisan cheesemakers, and many expert resource people. SFA has a DVD of the workshop for purchase. In June, two very popular on-farm Cheesemaking tours helped to further experiential learning, and build an excellent and readily accessible resource network. SFA believes that Minnesota deserves to enjoy a flourishing artisan Cheesemaking industry, and we will continue to work with all willing partners until that goal is achieved.

Minnesota Dairy Initiative

Since 1998, the goal of SFA’s Minnesota Dairy Initiative (MDI) has been to assist organic and grass-based dairy farmers in making well-informed decisions to enhance profit, quality of life and benefit to the environment. SFA focuses on farms in need of resources and information to start, transition to, or improve any aspect of grass-based and organic cow, goat and sheep dairies. Under the direction of Jeremy Lanetot, SFA’s MDI coordinator, we are contributors to the success of many value-added dairies in Minnesota.

All about SFA continued on page 14
All about SFA continued from page 13

**Organic Dairy 101: Workshops for Dairy Support Professionals**

SFA will expand the organic dairy professional resource pool by educating veterinarians, vet students, lenders, nutritionists, crop consultants, dairy inspectors, agriculture instructors, and agricultural reporters about organic dairy systems. Four workshops will be offered in four locations across Minnesota in 2008, funded through a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Professional Development Program.

**CornerPost Newsletter and SFA Website**

SFA’s quarterly CornerPost Newsletter includes a variety of information and articles of interest to chapters, members, and Minnesota citizens. Editor Anne Borgendale packs in close-to-the-ground information in each issue, and likes most to print what farmers have to say. The circulation of the bimonthly Sustainable Farming Events Online continues to increase. Email Anne (communications@sfa-mn.org) if you’d like to receive updates and the SFA event calendar electronically. Check out the improvements on SFA’s Website www.sfa-mn.org, and renew your membership online. You can also register quickly and easily for SFA events online. The SFA Forum provides an online venue for topical discussions, and SFA exhibits at more than 20 conferences and events each year to create awareness of SFA’s events, programs and information services.

**SFA Governance**

In 2006, the SFA board of directors made significant structural changes to strengthen its strategic direction and diversify its governance. SFA changed its bylaws to reduce the number of chapter representatives elected as directors from 18 to 9, and eliminated the position formerly known as “board alternate”. SFA created four at-large board member positions, to allow timely, specific and necessary skill sets to effectively govern SFA. The board took on two top priority internal goals: building organizational capacity and fundraising.

In July of 2007, the board welcomed a new at-large board member, Chris Kudrna. Chris has much experience in organizational development and strategic planning. The SFA board is working on fundraising, and is pleased to be working with a top-notch professional fundraiser with a heart for sustainable agriculture. The future looks bright for sustainable farming in Minnesota. Let an SFA board member know if you would like to explore leadership opportunities in SFA.

(See a list of SFA State Board Members on page 18)
# Sustaining Contributions

I am supporting the future of the SFA of MN with a Sustaining Contribution of:

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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 happenings in sustainable agriculture and you’ll receive discounts to SFA events.

**Annual Membership $30 _____**

I designate that my membership goes 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!**
MDI update continued from page 10
generation in our vision and mission. Fortunately, the next generation does not need as much convincing as us older folks. They probably won’t wait for us to get with it. We need to meet up with them and work together on the vision for the future of agriculture, not leave it with industry and the government to decide for us. I’m very glad that Mary Jo Forbord and the SFA Board are focusing in on connecting with youth, especially those under age 35 (now that I’m over 35, those are ‘youth’ <grin>).

Presently, we’re figuring out how to connect up with existing agricultural youth organizations, such as, 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA). Also, there are college campus groups who believe in supporting sustainable agriculture ideas. Great new connections are being made on these campuses.

Farm transfer and transition is a big problem for the dairy industry, both locally and nationally. SFA’s MDI steering committee challenged us to develop a program that trains farm workers and herdspersons to become farm owners and managers. Presently, there are limited pathways for these workers to develop credentials which will help them transition into owning their own farms. Presently, we are pursuing development of a system that will give these people a future in agriculture; otherwise, as organic dairyman Joe Borgerding says, “We’re going to lose them to Wal-Mart.” When someone spends years developing skills that make them a great livestock herdsperson, they should be able to translate that into something that gives them credibility with lenders when they are ready to venture out into their own enterprise. Even if this individual has no plans to borrow money, which is something I hail, they need breadth and depth in their experience base to make transitioning into their own farm much easier. How better, than to have a system of on-farm training that ensures they have necessary skill-sets before that final leap into freedom. The transition from being an employee to employer is a difficult one for most. Let’s help the next generation of farm owner the best we can and ensure sustainability.

**Fall Events Calendar**

For more details visit: www.sfa-mn.org/calendar. If you would like to add an event to the Events Calendar contact Anne at communications@sfa-mn.org.

**Oct 5-6** Tri-state Meat Goat Conference – Aberdeen, SD. For more info visit: www.extension.umn.edu/meatgoats/.

**Oct 13** Planting the Seeds for a Successful Marketing Strategy (Session 1) – Roseville, MN. For more info visit www.mnla.biz.

**Oct 13** Grassfed Beef Production Field Day – Milan, MN. For more info contact Don Struxness (320) 734-4877.

**Oct 18** 3rd Woody Decorative Florals – Fairmont, MN. For more info contact Jeff Jensen at (507) 238-5449.

**Oct 26-27** Rural Youth Summit – Iowa State University, Ames, IA. For more info visit www.iatp.org.

**Nov 2** Crow River Chapter Fall Social – Delano, MN. For more info contact Jerry Ford at jerry@marienne.com.

**Nov 2-4** 2007 Northland Bioneers Conference. For more info www.nbconference.org.

**Nov 6** University of Minnesota, Morris Pride of the Prairie Fall Community Farmers’ Market. For more info visit www.morris.umn.edu.

**Nov 6** University of Minnesota Morris Pride of the Prairie Fall Feast. For more info visit www.morris.umn.edu.

**Nov 8** Planting the Seeds for a Successful Marketing Strategy (Session 2) – Roseville, MN. For more info visit www.mnla.biz.

**Nov 9-11** Women, Food & Ag Gathering – Strawberry Point, IA. For more info contact Denise O’Brien at denise@wfan.org or 712-243-3264.

**Nov 29** Advertising to Make Your Business Bloom – Roseville, MN. For more info visit www.mnla.biz.

**Dec 3** Farmers Take the Stove – Duluth, MN. For more info email: info@lakesuperiorfarming.org.

**Dec 4-5** Midwest Dairy Expo – St. Cloud Civic Center. For info contact Eir Garcia-Silva, MMPA, (320) 203-8336.

**Dec 6** Branch Out and Explore Internet Marketing – Roseville, MN. For more info visit www.mnla.biz.

**Jan 5** Central Chapter Annual Meeting – VFW Wadena, MN.

**Feb 2** SFA of MN’s 17th Annual Conference – Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN. For more info visit: www.sfa-mn.org.
WEBSTERS HONORED FOR HELPING FARMERS HAVE A VOICE

By Anne Borgendale

Dan Webster and Margaret Olson Webster are not farmers, but they understand the importance of a healthy environment, independent farmers, and nutritious, fresh, local foods. The Websters exemplify the qualities outlined in the Farmers Voice Award, which honors persons “for ongoing and tireless dedication to farming, 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,” and were presented with the honor at this year’s Harvest Festival.

The Lake Superior Chapter and the Webster’s kids kept the award a secret from Dan and Margaret. Thus Margaret, who had a previously scheduled speaking engagement in Virginia, MN, was not even able attend the Harvest Festival. Several of the Webster’s children kept a close eye on Dan the entire day to make sure that he ended up at the Music Tent at the right time for the awards ceremony. He graciously accepted the award on behalf of Margaret and himself.

The Websters have an extensive history with the environment, agriculture and food. Both grew up on farms and then went off to college to become teachers – Margaret in home economics and Dan in agriculture. After they moved to McGregor, Dan left teaching, but stayed involved in farming concerns. They are now both “retired”, but they are still active in the community in many ways. Margaret is a published author who has speaking engagements all over the tri-state area. Some of her books, which address a love of the land and farming include, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Cemetery and Are all the Heroes Gone. Dan is busy promoting the use of pelletized grass as a burnable fuel, among other things. Both are working to keep non-ferrous mining out of their part of northeastern Minnesota. Their four children – Paul, Kaija, Perry and Andrew – and six grandchildren also reside in the Duluth area.

Dan and Margaret are concerned about the health of the environment and of its people. They are alarmed at the destruction of soil and the toll that people have on the environment in general. Margaret stated, “We were both raised to love the land and the outdoors.” Overall, Dan wishes that more farms would use the model of Joel Salatin’s Polyface Farm, commenting, “His farm is a good example we could all follow.” Margaret used to teach and still believes in the health and economics of whole foods, even though many consumers have been conditioned to the convenience of processed foods. She commented, “Using whole foods is easy, tasty and they have better nutrition.”

Taking action on their beliefs, they helped start the Lake Superior Chapter of the SFA of MN in the late 1980s with the help of the Land Stewardship Project and with Margaret’s cousin, Ken Peterson (the 2005 recipient of the Farmers Voice Award). They were also involved in the very first Harvest Festival and have been

Websters continued on page 18
Farm Bill continued from page 9

be allocated to the very fringiest ideas, as that is where progress always shows up. Farming knowledge benefits the population as a whole, therefore the population should pay for research and they should own it.

Sixth item: Certain things only the government can do, such as establishment and enforcement of weights and measures. Also included here are inspection services, as for slaughterhouses, grain elevators, dairies and so forth. All of these referee kinds of functions must be provided without prejudice against the small and at public, not farmer expense. Every effort must be made to make these services scientifically sound. Steps must be taken to keep USDA out of the politics of questions like pasteurization, irradiation, genetic engineering, and confinement of livestock. There must be provision for outside auditing.

Websters continued from page 17

at every one since helping out in one way or another— from selling vegetables from their garden at the farmers market, to making signage, signing books and writing letters to the editor.

Jennifer Buckley, a former Lake Superior Chapter coordinator and current board member summarized their commitment to sustainable farming in this way, “Dan and Margaret are founding members of our chapter, and they were behind the earliest Harvest Festivals—before there was staffing, before anyone knew us, when it was a small group of producers who thought that Duluth should know more about local farming. Dan and Margaret’s vision and imagination have made a lot of things possible, and a chat with them has often been just what I need to remind me of the big picture.”

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**SFA STATE BOARD MEMBERS**

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<th><strong>JERRY FORD</strong></th>
<th><strong>CHUCK KNIERIM</strong></th>
<th><strong>LAURA MOBRY-BATHKE</strong></th>
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<td>Crow River Chapter</td>
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<td>Howard Lake, MN</td>
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<td>(218) 562-4864</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:info@wildrosefarm.com">info@wildrosefarm.com</a></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:Mark.Hanks@state.mn.us">Mark.Hanks@state.mn.us</a></td>
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<td>St. Cloud, MN</td>
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<td>(320) 202-1708</td>
<td>SFA Treasurer</td>
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<td>Little Falls, MN</td>
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The year of 2007 has been a trying one for many farms. Drought and floods have driven some over the cliff of ruin. Minnesota’s dairy goat industry has seen some hard times as well. The bumps and bruises of getting a new industry running can be treacherous.

Many new dairy goat farms have sprung up over the last few years given some real signs of a growing industry, plus, consumer demand for goat products. From milk to cheese to soap…even goat butter, the goat dairy markets seem to be headed in a similar direction as organic dairy in general. Several farms transitioned from cow dairy to goat dairy and many expanded their herds quickly to keep up with the need for more goat milk.

The downturn started when Stickney Hill of Kimball, MN lost some cheese accounts and had to scramble to find outlets for the excess milk. Suddenly, those newly expanded farms couldn’t sell the milk they were producing. The problem was compounded by production problems on the farms, distribution headaches getting raw milk to the only buyer, Stickney Hill, and stagnated markets that weren’t expanding like expected. It was like someone threw a wrench in the gears of the machine before it had a chance to get up to speed.

All during this time, relationships between Stickney Hill and many of the goat farms grew sour. As a result of the chaos, a good number of farms quit milking and sold their herds. Some with newly expanded facilities had quite a predicament on their hands: how to pay for their upgraded infrastructure without a committed buyer for the milk. The thought of dumping excess milk when there’s a mortgage to pay is gut wrenching.

All through the summer, meetings were convened by the goat producers to figure out what to do. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) got involved at many levels, the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) was called in; Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI) and SFA of MN as well as a number of University personnel and industry thinkers all contributed their expertise. Emails and phone calls were flying throughout the summer to try and save the dairy goat industry from real carnage. Nobody had really good answers – quick enough. Many options were explored from setting up a farmer-run co-op that would collaborate on marketing and distribution to several subgroups developing their own regional on-farm products. The immediate issue was keeping the milk flowing out and the money flowing in quickly enough to keep Billy Goat Gruff from butting them out of business. The on-farm processing and co-op options simply didn’t promise a quick enough turn around to make any difference in the short term.

All through the summer there were rumors of a company from out-of-state (no kidding!) that was looking for more goat milk. As this lead was pursued by some farmers, it ended up being a stopgap salvation for some remaining farms. The Minnesota goat industry was really walking the fence rail!

Woolwich Dairy of Canada (www.woolwichdairy.com) makes goat cheeses that are sold in stores and restaurants mostly in Canada. Presently, they are building a new processing plant in Wisconsin. See www.lancasterwisconsin.com/woolwich for more information. In late summer, they signed contracts with a number of goat dairies in Minnesota and are shipping milk to Canada for now. When their new Wisconsin plant is finished, they will transfer this milk directly to the new processing plant. After this, they may be looking for more goat milk. Not only did these farms find a nice new outlet for their milk, Woolwich Dairy is paying more per hundredweight than was paid by Stickney Hill. Whether this is the end of the turmoil is yet to be seen.

Woolwich has said they will pick up milk within a 500-mile radius of Lancaster, Wisconsin. This should include a good portion of Minnesota. In the meantime, we’ll be working with some of these farms to develop other outlets and markets for goat milk. Stay tuned.
The end of seasonality has only made it easier for people to forget that their food comes from specific environments. Americans have little engagement in place, because place no longer provides food.” - Yale Historian Steven Stoll, “Fruits of Natural Advantage”

The quote above appears at the beginning of a class paper by Emily Stephenson, a University of Minnesota senior who last summer produced a half-hour documentary for the Central Chapter of the SFA of MN that aired this spring on Lakeland Public Television’s “Through the Lens” series. The documentary, HomeGrown, focuses on sustainable and organic food production in central Minnesota, and features interviews with SFA members and other farmers.

The idea for producing a local program promoting central Minnesota’s organic and local foods movement was born in 2004 - 2005 in discussions among managers and board members of the Crow Wing Food Co-op and the Sustainable Farming Association, Central Minnesota chapter (SFA-CM), from discussions about how we could best reach out and communicate to a general audience about what was happening here in central Minnesota. The goal was to nurture a reawakening about the benefits and value of ecologically responsible, locally grown food, and to cultivate economic support for individuals and businesses that were trying to make this their livelihood. Lakeland Public TV’s “Through the Lens” independent TV production program provided the perfect vehicle to carry the idea forward. At the winter 2006 SFA annual conference in Little Falls, the newly elected board of SFA-CM chapter supported the trying to get a student intern working on the project.

In the late winter/early spring of 2006, I applied for CURA-CAP (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs – Community Assistantship Project) assistance. CURA-CAP is a university affiliated program that provides U of MN student salaries in exchange for their service to out-state community organizations for a nominal matching fee. Later that spring, the Initiative Foundation contributed a 50/50 match to our own contribution that made it possible for us to receive a full time summer student intern for a total cost to SFA of just $500.

Out of dozens of student candidates who applied, both undergraduate and graduate, Emily Stephenson stood out based on her excellent quality writing samples, past experience with video production, and knowledge and interest in sustainable agriculture. In an excerpt from a term paper entitled “The World Outside Your Door,” she wrote:

“Pick up an apple. Hold it in your hand and examine its shape, its color; its perfection. It might be any shade of red, yellow or green. It has likely traveled more than a thousand miles to sit in the palm of your hand. Imagine the energy that was expended to bring you this apple, the highways, and oceans this apple might have traversed. Now, look down the road you’re standing on. What you see in the countryside around you are hundreds or even thousands of family farmers forced to sell their land to make way for the same corporations that produced your apple. What if in one simple step you could ensure both the safety of yourself, the environment, and the future of those farmers and their families? Would you do it? Envision a world of safe, fresh produce and you are imagining the world of local, homegrown farming. To embrace this idea is to change the world...”

“... Brian Hailwell’s book, “Eat Me”, contains evidence contrary to the popular opinion of supermarkets’ ostensibly unlimited supply [and efficiency]... Select a random product: a head of lettuce perhaps, or a single carrot. These products have been harvested from large corporate farms, then frozen and transported by either truck, or ship thousand of miles. Mr. Hailwell’s research found that vegetables, grown in the Salinas Valley of California and shipped nearly 5,000 kilometers to Washington, D.C., require[s] about 36 times as much fossil fuel energy in transport as it provides in food energy when it arrives.”

“In fact Professor Anika Carlsson-Kanyama of Stockholm University has found evidence that “a basic diet — some meat, grain, fruits, and vegetables — composed of imported ingredients can easily entail four times the energy and four times the greenhouse gas emissions.” This heavy use of resources seems ridiculous in contrast to the fact that many of these products can be found locally. In essence these products create “nearly 650 times the transport-related carbon emissions as the same meal made from locally grown ingredients. Why go so far for food easily available in your own backyard?”

In June 2006, Emily spent days in central Minnesota, meeting the SFA-CM members, reviewing SFA materials, books on sustainable agriculture, and reviewing script outlines. Over the next 6 weeks, we communicated via email to develop a film schedule. After requesting input for...
MN Garlic Festival a success despite the rain

By Jerry Ford

Sustainable farmers are nothing if not adaptable. The Crow River Chapter crew that plans and operates Minnesota Garlic Festival had a contingency plan in place in case of rain on the day of this elaborate outdoor event. But as day followed drought-ridden day throughout the summer, they doubted it would be needed.

As set-up began twenty-four hours before the gates opened, the forecasts all agreed - it was going to rain all day on Saturday, August 18. The festival crew, in collaboration with the Wright County Fairgrounds manager, went into high gear, redesigning most of the ground plan to move everything possible indoors.

The day went off with only minor hitches: shows in the big performance tent were warm and dry, farmers adapted to new booth locations, kids enjoyed games and kite building indoors (several still found they could fly their kites in the light rain), chefs went with the flow to adapt their demonstrations, and the trade organic coffee and spicy salsa warmed the crowd. Over 700 dedicated sustainability fans had a great time dodging the raindrops, feasting on exquisite gourmet fare, and generally reveling in the fragrant atmosphere.

Though the attendance was down from last year, the unflappable Crow River Chapter crew were very proud of the second annual festival, and the consensus was, “Hey, it’s only our second year, and now we know how to do it in the rain!”

Rural Youth Summit to help revitalize rural America

The Rural Youth Summit to be held in a few weeks will connect young people from rural communities around the country to exchange ideas on the challenges and opportunities of living in rural areas. The “Rural Youth Summit: Revitalizing Rural America” will be held on October 26-27 in Ames, Iowa. Details can be found at: www.iatp.org

In every decade from 1950 to 2000, rural communities have lost large numbers of young adults to urban areas. Rural youth face a number of challenges, particularly related to jobs, access to capital, and training and education. In addition, young people in rural areas have expressed that they haven’t felt valued as part of the community and lack social opportunities. “Young people living, working and studying in rural communities have a lot to say about how to address these and other problems,” said Amy Stratton, Rural Communities Organizer at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. “The Summit is designed to give rural youth a forum to put their ideas forward and work together.”

Youth participants, defined as 35 and younger, and rural youth advocates will be the presenters in breakout sessions and workshop at the Summit. University students, beginning farmers, new Americans, technical college students, young professionals, high school students, entrepreneurs, rural youth advocates, and young people who dream of living in rural areas are invited to participate. Highlights of the Summit include: Forum with 2008 presidential candidates to discuss rural youth issues in conjunction with the 2nd National Forum on Agriculture and Rural Life; Leadership training and youth round-table discussions; Presentations by and for rural youth; Opportunities to network with other rural youth.

Planning team members include: IATP, Gustavus Adolphus College, SFA of MN, MISA, SARE (MN), Honor the Earth, Northern Great Plains, Renewing the Countryside, League of Rural Voters, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and Iowa State University. You can find more details on the Rural Youth Summit at: www.iatp.org.
By Anne Borgendale

You don’t typically associate French fries with local foods and sustainable farming, but that’s how Nels and Carol Hursh got involved with the Harvest Festival. Irv and Shirley Peterson, Lake Superior Chapter farmers, wanted to have organic French fries at the first Harvest Festival, but they didn’t have the equipment. The Hurshes, who have a small organic farm in northwestern Wisconsin and are independent food vendors on the side, had the equipment and loaned it to the Petersons.

This went on for a few years; the Hurshes would drop off the equipment in the morning and pick it up in the evening. Eventually, Nels and Carol decided that as long as they were making the trip they might as well stay -- buying their potatoes and onions at the farmers’ market and making the fries (and blooming onions). And that is what they’ve been doing ever since.

The Hursh’s connection with the Harvest Festival and local foods is practically the definition of the Continuous Service Award, which “recognizes non-farmers who have helped to promote local farming, to create a more locally-based food system and who have made the work of SFA possible.” This is why they were presented with the honor at this year’s Harvest Festival. According to Jennifer Buckley, Lake Superior Chapter board member, “Nels and Carol have been one of the brightest spots in the Harvest Festival since I started working with them in 1996. They bring a cheerful, energetic competence to everything they’re involved with, and it’s infectious! They make you forget that putting on a big event can be hard.”

Nels and Carol were surprised to receive the award and feel that many people in SFA have done much to make the Harvest Festival what it is today. Carol commented, “We owe a lot to the younger people that work with us.” They also hope that someone else will take over the French fry booth when they can no longer work at the Harvest Festival. They stated, “It’s the great circle of life. The Petersons handed it over to use and we’ll do the same one day.”

Jean Sramek presenting Nels and Carol Hursh with the Continuous Service Award at the Harvest Festival.

Emily continued to work on editing the project throughout the fall, despite being a full-time student and the inevitable technical delays. Finally, in the early spring of 2007, she delivered a 1 hour 19 minute version of the current video. Lakeland Public TV condensed the footage to a 30-minute segment. The program aired for the first time on May 8, 2007. Copies of the DVD are still limited, but can be purchased from Lakeland Public TV directly for $15. The program may also be viewed online at the following link(s):

www.lakelandptv.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=97&show=2
www.lakelandptv.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=9&video=260
Meet Karola Dalen

I grew up in central Minnesota near St. Cloud. I had little direct exposure to farming, but corn and soybean fields surrounded our town (Sauk Rapids). My mother and grandparents were avid gardeners, so I ate plenty of meals with food from the backyard. I give them the credit for providing me with that connection between soil and food. So many people have not experienced that. I think introducing people and children to “where food comes from” through gardening, farm tours, etc, creates more conscientious consumers. SFA is an organization that contributes to these educational opportunities.

My husband, Rick, and I run Northern Harvest Farm, a 45-member CSA. Our farm is in Wrenshall, MN, about 25 minutes from Duluth. We sell wholesale produce to the Whole Foods Co-op in Duluth and to one restaurant, Chester Creek Cafe. I work part-time with Rick on the farm and part-time for Carlton County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) as a Farm Bill Technician.

As a Farm Bill Tech, I work with farmers in our county who are currently enrolled in Farm Bill programs such as EQIP (Environmental Qualities Incentives Program). I am able to promote conservation through state and federal cost-share programs that help producers and landowners cover the cost of conservation projects, such as erosion control or tree planting. I also help producers comply with program guidelines in order to receive incentive payments for rotational grazing and nutrient management through EQIP. On-farm conservation is a great thing because it most often aids in production as well as protecting natural resources.

I became involved with SFA because I knew several SFA board members through other experiences. They were all people I admired for doing great environmental and agricultural work in the Duluth area. I started attending board meetings after my husband and I had a booth in the farmers market at the Lake Superior Chapter’s SFA annual Harvest Fest in 2005. It was our first year starting a CSA vegetable farm. We had over planted carrots, potatoes, and tomatoes. So that’s all we sold at our first Harvest Fest. We were just hoping to make enough to cover the table rental and booth fee. We were pleasantly surprised when we sold several hundred pounds of carrots, potatoes, and tomatoes. It was such a great event; I wanted to learn more about SFA.

The SFA has given me an opportunity to become more active in promoting sustainable agriculture. Through SFA, I organized “Fall Fest at the Farm,” which was held at our farm on Saturday, September 29th. It’s a family event with kids activities, lunch made with local foods, folk dancing, silent auction, and of course, pumpkins. We hosted it last fall and had a great turn out. I think it is an opportunity to increase the awareness of direct market farms in the area and bring people out to discover the rural communities surrounding the city of Duluth. The funds raised go towards the Lake Superior Chapter’s “Farm Beginnings” effort. Through a licensure with Land Stewardship Project and a Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education grant, Farm Beginnings classes will be held in the Duluth area Winter 2009. As a Farm Beginnings graduate myself, I am excited to be working on this project to help small scale farmers in Northern Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin learn business management skills to help make a small-scale sustainable farm viable in our community.
**Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota**

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

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