By Mary Jo Forbord

For farmers, every year the growing season offers a new menu of challenges and hopeful opportunities—what to plant, where to plant, how and when to market, changing climate, weather and field conditions, labor and capital availability…the variables seem endless.

Here at Prairie Horizons Farm, we have been in a major transition for 6 years—from annuals to perennials, from row crops to pasture, from conventional to certified organic, from dairy to beef, from growing commodities to selling food directly to customers. You would think we would have farming down to a ‘science’ by now, after devoting a lifetime to it, and having the lineage and experience of the four generations of American farmers that came before us. Yet 2008 is shaping up to be a year to remember, way different than any other year that has come and gone before it. Wheat, corn, soybeans, and rice are at record-breaking price levels, followed closely by soaring agricultural crop and livestock input prices, escalating land prices, and oil topping $100 a barrel. In our complex global economy, many more factors are at work, but what is becoming clear for all of us is that we are entering a new era—an era where business is anything but usual.

Until now, Americans have not had to think much about the price of food, due to a long run of ample supplies and relatively low prices. Now, with food and energy costs soaring, populations growing, food recalls increasing, dietary patterns changing, global incomes rising, domestic employment and the US dollar falling, many more people will want and need to know how to sustain a safe, affordable and reliable food supply. They will want and need to know how and where their food is produced, and how to reduce the real cost of food through choices based on nutrient density as well as environmental and social costs.

And what of the champion of all nutrients and metabolic processes—water? We are about to see this wondrous liquid of life take its rightful place on center stage. Water is also the trump card of all best laid plans and predictions. I can’t quite fathom the impact of a widespread drought on the precarious situation looming for the growing season of 2008.

Although some of the changes ahead will be very tough, some will be very beneficial and overdue.
Under the Sun continued from page 1

I am hopeful that we are ushering in a new era of eating foods grown locally, realizing the multiple benefits of agriculture done sustainably, harvesting diversity and bounty despite changing climatic conditions, unleashing the power of nutrition to prevent disease, and at long last, achieving food security as a non-negotiable human right for all.

Thankfully, I’m reminded of what is precious and won’t change. Solar energy is still free and plentiful, and photosynthesis still converts this life-source energy to provide food for all of earth. Love, caring and the human spirit continue comfort, heal and strive for the common good. Over the years, sustainable farmers have anticipated the tough choices facing us, and are well prepared to chart the course toward developing and enhancing sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education, and farmer-to-farmer networking.

More and more people, especially young people, are looking for just what we have to offer. Some have not yet imagined farming in their future, but then again, some have never had the opportunity to do so. Incredible interest is developing in on-farm internships, farm tours, farm to school programs, farm stays, and on-farm experiential learning of all stripes. Let this be the season when educating and mentoring young people is the crop that you add to the diversity you already sow. It’s a crop that just might reap rewards beyond what you could imagine.

Do you need to renew?

Membership in the SFA of MN entitles you to receive the CornerPost Newsletter and discounts on SFA of MN Events. Use the form on page 20 or go to www.sfa-mn.org and join or renew your membership today!

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.

Become a CP 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!
Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota
Chapters .... there’s one near you!

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

cannon river/hiawatha valley
Kathy Zeman
9800 155th St East
Nerstrand, MN  55053
(507) 664-9446
kzeman@kmwb.net

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

couteau ridge
Don DeWeerd
1826 70th Avenue
Pipestone, MN  56164
dondeweerd@earthlink.net
(507) 825-2077

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

crow river continued on page 4
Crow River continued from page 3
assignments. Irene passed out “Paper Palm Pilots” - calendars for each of us involved with Garlic Festival, with important dates marked. Jerry thinks this is a great tool to “keep us all on the same page and progressing together.” We are encouraged to keep it handy, or transfer the appropriate dates to our own calendars. According to Jerry, “We’re going to use it as we move toward the festival as a ‘production schedule’.” It is hard to go wrong with a good plan, bless his slave driving little heart.

The local food aspect caught fire with the food demos last year. The chefs who made the Great ‘Scape Cafe are already talking about what they are going to do. Look for more music, more food, more garlic, more kids, kites, and more sunshine this year. There has been some interest from Minnesota wineries, but that is a tough call because we want to keep it a family oriented festival. More vendors and volunteers are always welcome.

Our next event will be a canoe trip down the North Fork of the Crow River in early June. We will look at the river through the lens of the Crow River Organization of Waters. C.R.O.W. is a group that has been involved in water quality monitoring and improvement for years. The canoe trip will also stop at a couple farms along the way for a tour and refreshments.

Lake Agassiz Chapter

By Denise Hemrek

Greetings from Northern Minnesota! On January 16, 2008 we had our local SFA chapter meeting at the Unity Bank in Red Lake Falls, MN. We discussed our upcoming Ag Education Day and had our chapter elections. The election results were as follows: Bill Langlois, president; Richard Schmitz, vice president; Time Hoefer, treasurer; Denise Hermreck, secretary; and Jamie Derosier, membership chairman.

On March 13, 2008 we hosted our fifth annual Ag Educational Day in Red Lake Falls, MN. We had a nice crowd of farmers, ranchers, bankers, suppliers and purchasing vendors.

Our featured speaker was Dr. Dan Skow with International Ag Labs, Fairmount, MN. Dr. Skow spoke on soil fertility of small grains, row crops and alfalfa, along with foliar feeding of these crops. He emphasized that when out in the field SEE WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING AT. This meaning, when you are scouting your fields, your must try to understand what the problems are, what the solutions might be and the consequences are of any changes.

We had a great lunch, which consisted of some organic meats, milk cheeses, and wild rice soup. Door prizes were given to both exhibitors and attendees.

Southeast Chapter

By Edgar Hansgen

WOW, I have never tasted so many chocolate covered eggs for Mrs. Bunny EVER! Didn’t realize there were so many kinds. I think I might have OD’d on them. They tell me that spring has sprung down here in southeastern Minnesota, but I sure haven’t. Wonder how that Van Winkle fellow got by with it?

Our Chapter Annual Meeting was a lot better than the weather that day. We had a “hot” little meeting with “Elvis” there to entertain us. Our own Vic Ormsby even joined the action; he may have even gotten one of the best applause! Our other speakers were also well received, and then we went out into the winter storm and home. We expanded our area of interest a little more this spring with a meeting on gardening in Winona, MN. Many thanks to “Rock ‘n’ Roll” Vic Ormsby and Lonny Dietz for all their efforts in making this program a smashing success. We hope this program can expand and give us another area in which to help fulfill our mission.

Doug Gunnink remains one of our most popular presenters with his presentations on grasses and grass-fed beef and dairy products. It would be nice if we could develop plots to demonstrate some of the things that he has been talking about. We do have some interest in this, so we will see what happens. We also want to thank Arlene Nelson and Roy Michaelis for the good food at the meeting too. We now have summer to look forward to, but before that, we have had some interest in aerial interseeding. I hope that we can tour a few fields that were seeded last fall when they green up this spring. This program surely should fall into our scope of SUSTAINABLE. Do you think a short nap would do and be the same?
Cannon River/Hiawatha Chapter

By Mary Ellen Frame

Our annual meeting exemplified to me what SFA is all about—farmer to farmer learning. A panel of four long-time farmers, members of our chapter, each told the story of how they got into sustainable farming, some of the difficulties they’d encountered, how they had made key decisions and how those decisions had worked out.

Martin and Atina Diffley (Gardens of Eagan) have been raising vegetables since 1973. They have seen great changes in the market since they began selling from their farm in Eagan. Speaking of scale, Martin said, that a farm needs to have enough land to allow you to continue to build the soil through rotation, cover crops and fallowing. They’ve recently sold their farm to one of their best customers, the Wedge Co-op in Minneapolis. In the future, Martin and Atina plan to perform research and educate.

Lori Callister and her husband, Allen, (Callister Farms) started with beef, berries, poultry and produce. In 2003, they took the big step of establishing an E2 (Equivalent To) chicken processing plant in an old barn on their farm. This allowed them to concentrate on the meat birds, both chicken and turkeys. They sold directly to customers, at farmers markets and to co-ops. In 2006, they opened a store in the Mid-Town Global Market in Minneapolis, where they sell products from 70 farms (including their own) from Minnesota and Wisconsin. They grow Cornish Cross chickens, which need corn and soybeans, but they’d like to find a better breed of meat chicken. One of Lori’s most important comments of the meeting was when she said, “You have to love what you’re doing.”

Mike and Linda Noble (Farm On Wheels) started out as conventional farmers, but human and animal health problems forced them to take another look at how they were farming. At one point, they were about to commit to expanding their dairy herd and building a very expensive milking parlor, but because the cows they had were not healthy, they made a big turn around. Now they pasture all their animals -- beef, pork, lamb, chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese. They sell frozen cuts of meat from their truck directly to customers, at farmers markets and to co-ops. There’s an endless demand for organic and pastured meat. They grow corn and soybeans as cash crops, but for their own livestock they raise 120 acres of oats, barley and field peas.

Dave Minar’s great-great grandfather homesteaded in the New Prague area in 1866. In 1926, Dave’s grandfather bought the farm that he and his wife, Florence, are on now. They were farming conventionally until 1974, when Dave had a bad reaction after mixing chemicals. At that point they swore off chemicals. In the 1980s and 1990s they became disenchanted with Holsteins and began to develop a herd of colored cows. In 1994, started rotationally grazing their cattle; now, they don’t feed any corn to their cattle. In 2002, they took the big step of building a milk processing plant and store on the farm. The milk and ice cream they produce is currently sold in over 80 stores all over the region.

The most exciting part of the meeting for me was to see the response of the audience, most of who are beginning farmers, with a sprinkling of students and other folks. People had a lot of questions for the farmer panel and enjoyed talking with the presenters afterwards at our potluck lunch. There’s a new generation who have hope, dedication and an eagerness to learn. When our chapter started twenty years ago, the climate of opinion among the general public was very different from what it is now. Our panelists, among many others, have been leaders in readying their farms for this change and helping to bring it about. One thing that hasn’t changed in these farmers’ lives is their deep commitment to the land and the work they do on it and with it.

From May to November on the third Sunday of each the month, we will be hosting monthly field days at several of our members’ farms. Tours will start at 3:00 p.m. with potluck suppers to follow.

Our schedule (subject to change):
May 18: Open Hands Farm, Erin Johnson and Ben Doherty, CSA, produce -- Northfield, MN
June 15: L&R Poultry and Produce, Rae Rusnak, poultry and produce -- Kenyon, MN
July 20: Simple Harvest Farm, Kathy, Nick and Theresa Zeman, poultry beef, goats, sheep, etc -- Nerstrand, MN
August 17: Loon Organics, Laura Frerichs and Adam Cullip, CSA, produce -- Farmington, MN
September 21: Sunshine Harvest Farm, Mike and Colleen Braucher, pastured meats -- Webster, MN
October 19: Earth’s Return Farm, Lynne Reeck and Katie Wall, vegetables and goats -- Nerstrand, MN
November 16: Laura and Connie Mobry-Bathke, goats and sheep -- Zumbrota, MN
South Central Chapter

By Jim Tjepkema

The South Central Chapter held its annual meeting on Saturday, March 8th at the First Baptist Church in Clarks Grove, MN. Three board members were elected: Katy Wortel, Chris Borden and Dean Goette. Ray Yokiel, who has served on our board for 6 years, chose not to run for another term on the board. Ray’s service on the board has been very much appreciated. Katy and Chris were re-elected to the board, both having served for several terms. Dean Goette, who is new to the board, is an agricultural consultant and a strong supporter of sustainable and organic agriculture.

Katy Wortel gave the secretary’s report covering our last annual meeting. Wes Tennis presented the treasurer’s report, which indicated that we are maintaining a small surplus in our treasury with expenses about equal to money gained through membership dues. Jim Tjepkema gave a summary of the activities for the last year, which included a large organic farming field day organized by Ray Yokiel and Dennis Lutteke, held on their farms. Ray and Dennis have already made plans for another field this year to be held at their farms on September 6th. The featured speakers will be Bob Yanda from Midwest Bio Ag and Jerry Brunetti, know for his inspiring talks on his experiences as a cancer survivor.

Our coordinator, Julie Ackland, has served our chapter on a volunteer basis for several years. She told us earlier this year that she did not wish to continue in this position. We are very grateful to Julie for all the work she has done to manage our affairs. We will be looking for one or more people to take care of the coordinators duties, which include mailings, publicity, making arrangements for meetings, and some other work.

Following the business part of our annual meeting we were given information about the Slow Food Movement by Ron Huff, the founder of Slow Food Minnesota. Ron has a great deal of experience working with food as a chef and food consultant and has learned much about food from his travels in Europe. Slow Food is an International organization which works toward preserving traditional foods and healthy eating habits. Ron led a question and answer session following his presentation.

An afternoon session on farm policy followed a noon potluck meal of homemade soup, bread, and other items supplemented by organic milk, cheese and butter provide by Ray Yokiel. Congressman Tim Walz had to cancel his appearance, but did prepare a video for us. In the video Rep. Walz told us that he is very much a supporter of sustainable agriculture and is working on several pieces of legislation related to sustainable ag issues.

The legislation Rep. Walz is working on include: modifying programs to allow planting of vegetables and fruit; changes in conservation programs to make them friendlier to organic and sustainable farming; and more financial help for beginning farmers.

Loni Kemp, a specialist on farm policy for the Minnesota Project, provided information on farm policy and led a discussion on this topic following the video from Tim Walz. She coordinates her efforts on policy work with two coalitions composed of various organizations from across the country who are sustainable ag supporters. Loni told us that the Midwest Sustainable Agricultural Working Group, which works on farm policy, will be holding a meeting from August 12-14 near Farmington, MN. SFA is welcome to send a representative to this meeting and our members can attend as observers. Loni is working on a wide range of policy issues and is most excited about developing legislation to support use of mixed stands of native grasses and flowers for biomass production. Our meeting ended with Loni encouraging us to keep up our efforts because she feels that small groups working together can bring about major changes if they continue to push for a better approach to agriculture.
Lake Superior Chapter

By David Hopkins

The Lake Superior Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota held its 2008 annual meeting at the Marshall School in Duluth, MN on Saturday, January 26th. A screening of the movie King Corn and a variety of well-attended workshops highlighted the event.

With the election of the Board of Directors being the main business of each annual meeting, we have some new people in the mix. The new Board is now composed of these members. (Terms end in January of the year):

- Cree Bradley, Secretary, Two Harbors MN (2011)
- Gene Dutkin, Kettle River MN (2009)
- Janaki Fisher-Merritt, Co-Vice-Chair, Wrenshall MN (2011)
- John Fisher-Merritt, Vice-Chair, Wrenshall MN (2011)
- Katie Hanson, Superior WI (2011)
- Deb Shubit, Treasurer, Duluth MN (2010)
- Loren Nelson, Chair, Mahtowa MN (2010)
- Joel Rosen, Mahtowa MN (2009)
- Paula Williams, Barnum MN (2009)

Retreat Motto: We Are Farmers, We Exist & We Are Cool!  
- Paula Williams

The Board began its year together with a daylong retreat at the Food Farm. A motto for the day was coined as a reminder of the importance of sustainable farming. The mission statements were read, discussed and a short version was created for easy reference. “Working to build the local food system” reflects the core of the Lake Superior SFA. During a day of presentations and group discussion these priorities were determined:

- **Raise the visibility of the organization.** SFA needs more sophisticated and attractive marketing materials that are more widely distributed. We need more contact and active direct links with more media outlets where people can discover the services provided for farmers, as well as youth and others who would like to be sustainable farmers.

- **Harvest Festival is the signature event of the association** and needs to continue its growth and quality. This annual celebration rewards the working local food system.

- **Give farmers more support,** encouragement and inspiration. SFA can become the regional ‘Welcome Hay Wagon’ to new and beginning farmers. We will continue to develop a strong *Farm Beginnings* program as a basis of mentorship for farmers and host other farmer mentorship opportunities with educational workshops, farm tours and news stories. SFA needs to be a functional resource for farmers.

- **Collaborate** more with other agricultural and gardening organizations to provide services and educational programs for consumers, businesses and farmers. Such organizations include Slow Food Lake Superior, Superior Grown, Duluth Community Gardening Program, Northeast Entrepreneur Fund and Northern Communities Land Trust.

SFA is part of a cultural change in motion. Among these priorities we need to keep our eyes on the future to help create farmland preservation programs, to attract minority groups into farming, to develop more marketing connections between producers, consumers, retailers and restaurants. As an organization we seek to increase committee work by non-board members, to create opportunities for interns and to host more open forum discussion by members create, perhaps with a blog on the website. The publication of a Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association calendar with local phenology would be a valuable resource.

Though agriculture is near the center of urban and regional sustainability, the word applies to many realms besides farming. As in many places, people in the Lake Superior area are studying the Swedish Natural Step principles. Regional government bodies and institutions have adopted resolutions that adopt these principles of sustainability. In the Twin Ports several initiatives are moving the resolutions into action. The Early Adopters program is currently recruiting volunteers.

On the internet we find several discussion groups in ongoing conversation about efforts to surpass and survive climate change and peak oil phenomena. SFA member Kelly Smith contributed an essay from a farmer’s point of view. He encourages people to “Join and support the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association. SFA is working to build a local, sustainable food system. SFA is starting a *Farm Beginnings* course to help folks get off to a successful start... working to start a land trust to keep food producing parcels ... affordable for working farms...

He explains a need to be prepared for petroleum shortages. He says that natural gas is likely to be one of the first to go, a primary fuel for home and building heating around here. He believes that since it is so difficult to ship natural gas we are limited to natural gas piped from Canada. He says, “That Lake Superior continued on page 8
Lake Superior continued from page 7

could end very abruptly as production has already peaked ...
We should work to convert heating to wood pellet stoves and
geothermal heat pumps or other strategies.” He also believes
there is room to rethink the design of housing. “If we were to
raze a block at a time of housing that is old, worn out trash,
not worth rehabbing, put up good three story townhomes in
a corner, the rest of the block could be for grazing the milk
goat, the garden, the honey bees, frisbee and dog. Energy
consumption would be way down and quality of living way
up.”

Smith believes that the Lake Superior is a relatively good
area to be. There is “lots of hydro power potential, mostly
micro... lots of fish farming potential, and wind potential.
Biofuel potential from wood and brush is better than a
lot of places. There’s the shipping & rail infrastructure in
place. The soil and climate isn’t stellar for food production,
but it has potential. There was a lot more farming in the area
60 years ago than now. Our soils are easily damaged and worn
out compared to the southern MN farm belt; however, we
know better now how to nurture them.... When I see the lower
St. Louis River valley I am struck by how productive it could
be in fish, wild rice, and orchards, if it were cleaned up.”

The Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association
supports the new Duluth City Chicken Ordinance

“When chickens are outlawed, only outlaws will have chickens.”

A new city ordinance to legalize urban chicken flocks in
Duluth has been drafted and will soon be debated by the City
Council. For more info visit: www.DuluthCityChickens.org.

A new curriculum to help people get started as sustainable
farmers in the Lake Superior region has taken another giant
step. Cree Bradley, Chelsea Morning CSA farmer and Lake
Superior SFA secretary, has been hired as the facilitator of the
Farm Beginnings program now offered in the Lake Superior
region. She will immediately begin training with the Land
Stewardship Project (LSP), the parent organization of the
curriculum.

Farm Beginnings is a 10-year old project developed
by LSP. It is a farmer-led education and network building
program to help people succeed with sustainable farming.
The 10-month program includes class work in goal-setting,
whole-farm planning, financial planning, business planning,
alternative marketing, and low-cost sustainable farming
techniques with farm visits as models. Involvement in
supportive networks and using mentorships are stressed
as sustainable practices. Winter classes are followed by
summer farm tours and an option to engage in a mentorship
with an established farmer. Graduates who complete a
mentorship are eligible for no-interest livestock loans through
Heifer International. For more information visit: www.
farmbeginnings.org.

Prospective students, instructors and mentors please
contact Kelly Smith by phone (218) 879-3829 or email:
kellythegreenman@yahoo.com

Western Chapter

By Mary Jo Forbord

Come one and all to the season opener, and the
entire great line-up of SFA Western Chapter Farm Tour
Fridays! You don’t have to be a farmer, you don’t have to
be a member, you only have to be interested in where your
food comes from. Learn about the innovative ways that
your neighbors are producing fresh, great tasting food that’s
healthy for you, your community, and the environment. Each
Friday Farm Tour begins with a potluck supper, and proceeds
into an evening filled with a farm tour, great networking,
conversation…and activities for children under 10 years of
age. Call 320-760-8732 for more information.

Friday, May 30th -- Paul Wymar and Amy Baciagalupo’s
Kalliro Farm near Montevideo, MN. Pasture-raised pork,
Paul’s Prairie Honey, homegrown rhubarb and lots more.

Friday, July 11th -- Jim & LeeAnn VanDerPol and Josh &
Cindy VanDerPol’s Pastures A’ Plenty Farm is home to a hog
farrow to finish operation, free-range chickens and seasonal
cattle grazing business. The VanDerPols are experienced
marketers and recently added a meat store to their on-farm
operations. (www.prairiefare.com/pastureshp.htm)

Friday, August 22nd -- Luverne and Mary Jo
Forbord, Prairie Horizons Farm. The Forbords rotationally
graze Lowline Angus beef on certified organic pastures and
market directly to customers. They are experimenting this
year with multi-species, and cooperative grazing. (www.
localfoods.umn.edu/prairiehorizons)

Friday, September 12th -- Audrey Arner and Richard
Handeen’s, Moonstone Farm is a family farm near the
Minnesota River Valley that features river friendly meats,
local artisan foods, a guest cottage and hand-thrown pottery.
(www.prairiefare.com/moonstone)
Coteau Ridge Chapter

By Dorinda Speh

On January 28, 2008 the Coteau Ridge chapter had their meeting at the American Legion in Lake Benton, MN. Our speaker for the night was Joseph Rolling, an organic grain and poultry producer from Arco, MN. He shared with us his experiences as a Peace Corp volunteer working on farm reform in Panama. He not only served as a volunteer with this project, but also liked Panama so much that he lived there for another eleven years.

On March 1, 2008 our chapter had its annual meeting at the Pizza Ranch in Tyler, MN. Our featured speaker was Mary Jo Forbord, the Executive Director of SFA. Her presentation was about the incorporation of locally raised food into the community, establishment of young people into the farming industry, food security, health and nutrition. After her presentation we had the election of officers. They are the following: Don DeWeerd, President; Sunny Ruthchild, Vice President; Dorinda Speh, Secretary; Joseph Rolling, Treasurer; and Richard Rolling, State Board Delegate.

Richard Rolling, a Richmond, MN resident, but originally an organic grain producer from Ivanhoe, MN, and a brother to Joseph Rolling, also served as a Peace Corp volunteer. He shared his past experiences as an agricultural extension advisor working with the Wabamba tribe in Kenya with us at our March 24, 2008 meeting.

An upcoming event will be a tour at Southwest Minnesota State University of the Culinology Program on April 9, 2008. Michael Cheng, the Director/Associate Professor of the Culinology Program and Kurt Struwe, Assistant Professor Hospitality Management/Culinology, will be showing the teaching facility and talking about the Culinology classes and the green Bistro. The green Bistro is a dining night restaurant experience (a Monday night from 6-7:30 p.m.) for which, Culinology students prepare “traditional American food with a twist; comfortable food people are familiar with, presented differently, with a little more flair.” The public has the opportunity for reservations (seating capacity of 30) online at www.greenbistro.net (online reservations will be confirmed

Coteau Ridge continued on page 16
Hedquist seeks greener pastures in Europe

By Anne Borgendale

Joy Hedquist of Green Pastures Dairy is on a European journey of growth, new skills and appreciations as she continues perfecting the imperfect art of cheesemaking. Hedquist set out on March 14 for seven weeks of apprenticeships in three countries on four farms, all with the goal of learning European techniques and new methods that she can apply to her current and future cheesemaking.

Located near Carlton, MN, Green Pastures Dairy is a seasonal, grass-based dairy and a family enterprise. When they were in their early 20s several of the Hedquist children decided they wanted to join their parents in farming, but they had to do it in a way that would support several families. Farmstead cheesemaking, in addition to dairying, were their chosen ventures. Joy is the cheesemaker. Her brother Will is the dairy manager. Their mother, KenMarie, assists in the cheesemaking and Will’s wife, Ester, is head of packaging and shipping.

Overnight they switched from selling liquid milk to cheese. Joy had no previous experience in cheesemaking, but she took several courses offered by the University of Wisconsin – Madison and read plenty of books and publications on the subject. Using this newly minted knowledge and a lot of hands-on practice, she started creating artisan cheese from their high quality cows’ milk.

Now in her eighth year of making cheese, Joy’s skills and confidence in her abilities have grown. Green Pasture’s cheese business has also grown, and the farm is now able to sell all of the cheese that Joy can produce. However, the farmstead cheese business is about more than volume and sales. Joy feels that cheesemaking is really an art form and she wants to further her craft; like all arts, it is something you learn by doing and from another artisan.

After researching her options, Joy discovered that there wasn’t really an opportunity for her to apprentice with other artisan cheesemakers in the U.S., though Europe offered this opportunity. According to Joy, many artisan cheesemakers in Europe are very open to teaching Americans their craft. Unfortunately, in the current economic climate an educational artisan cheesemaking trip like Joy’s demands a certain cost. It is generally assumed that government agricultural organizations want to support and promote the entrepreneurial spirit of its farmers.

However, the answer to that question generally depends on where you live and farm.

Last fall, Joy took an artisan cheesemaking course offered through the University of Wisconsin – River Falls. Through the course, she met and talked with a few people from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (www.datcp.state.wi.us). They provided her with the contact information for several of the farms where she will apprentice. She also found out that if her family’s farm were just 50 miles to the east, in Wisconsin, that she would have access to monetary support and grants for an educational trip in order to learn more about the art of cheesemaking. However, she lives in Minnesota, which does not offer a similar program. She also contacted various cheesemaking organizations across the country. They were sympathetic, but not able to help her.

Despite these setbacks, Green Pastures and Joy decided that the cost of the trip would be far outweighed by the returns. Joy is very grateful to experience a learning opportunity like this.

Joy’s first apprenticeship is near Bristol, England, where Hedquist continued on page 11.
Green Pastures Dairy farm store open for business

By Jeremy Lanctot

Not only are the Hedquists pursuing more training in cheesemaking, they have a new farm store they have just opened this spring. Now people can visit Green Pastures Dairy right on the farm and buy pasture-raised meats, farmstead cheeses and farm-fresh eggs, directly from the farmers who care for their land.

The Green Pastures Dairy farm store is still under construction, but is opened for limited hours this spring. Each Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., you can visit the store and purchase product. They offer about nine varieties of their famous cheeses including Gouda, Haven and English Cheddar. There are frozen meats from their pasture-raised animals including hamburger, beef cuts, pork sausage, pork cuts and breakfast meats. Their summer sausage, hot dogs and bacon are nitrite-free. Plus, they offer a family-pack of frozen meats at a bulk discount. Bring your family and friends to experience the farm and learn a lot about responsible, environmentally friendly farming practices that yield tasty, nutritious and high-value foods.

The Hedquists have renovated an unused portion of the building that houses the present cheese plant and expanded it into this new 900 square foot farm store. Will Jr. is still installing some of the flooring and there are plans to finish a portion into farm offices and children’s play area so their children can stay close while the family works together. Their farm business is an extension of their family and their Christian values. Hard work, resourcefulness and close family relationships are essential ingredients of their enterprise. This bears out in the quality of their food products. They will not sell something that they wouldn’t consume themselves. Let’s just say, “It’s family tested.”

Don’t miss their up-coming Grand Opening this summer. Mark your calendar for Saturday, August 2, 2008. There will be food, hayrides and music to celebrate the past year of work they’ve put into expanding their farmstead and food products. Bring your family and friends for an experience of real farm atmosphere and great conversations. You can find them online at www.greenpasturesdairy.com and on-land at (218) 384-4513. Green Pastures Dairy is located south of Duluth, MN. Take the Mahtowa exit west off of Interstate 35 to Old Hwy 61. Turn right (north) and watch for their farm sign on the right side of the highway.

Hedquist continued from page 10

she be working with world-famous cheddar makers. Then she will travel to the Cork area of Ireland where she will stay at a farm that produces a semi-soft style of cheese. Her third and fourth stays will be in Holland. The first of these farms has a bed and breakfast on-site and focuses on agro-tourism in addition to cheesemaking. They raise both cows and sheep, and produce Gouda cheese. The final farm is located on a small Dutch island. It produces a Gouda-style cheese, which is said to be one of the best cheeses in Holland.

Upon her return in May, she will promptly start the 2008 cheesemaking season, applying her newfound knowledge to Green Pasture’s cheese business. We also look forward to Joy sharing what she learned in Europe about cheesemaking with SFA members and potential cheesemakers in the summer edition of the CornerPost.

For more information about Green Pastures Dairy and how to find their cheese visit: www.greenpasturesdairy.com. If you would like to contact Joy after she returns, email cheese@greenpasturesdairy.com or call (218) 384-4513.
Organic Dairy 101: The Farmer’s Perspective

By Rich Vander Ziel

As one of the farmer presenters at the Organic Dairy 101: A Workshop for Dairy Support Professionals in Marshall, MN, I hope that those in attendance gained a greater understanding of the organic community in terms of its history, intentions, goals, shortcomings and challenges. However, after I went home that evening, I started to worry that maybe my presentation didn’t explain dairy producers challenges and needs well enough, especially with regard to the services provided by the various professions that were represented. Here are a few areas and ways that dairy support professionals can aid organic dairies.

**Government and Conservation:** It is quite apparent that one of the driving forces behind the organic movement is a particular interpretation of the conservation ethic that emphasizes diversity and resource protection within a holistic production system that utilizes a lot of rotation and grazing. This is a fundamental re-thinking of modern day land use. Many of our governmental agencies that regulate, advise and subsidize agriculture are very well situated to encourage and promote this, and many of them already are; the EQIP program is a great example.

There is so much more that needs to be done to address the issues of urban sprawl, wetlands preservation, water retention and quality, energy production, carbon sequestration, nutrient management and a host of other issues. Sustainable agriculture could serve well as common ground for a new cooperation aimed at achieving some real progress in all of these areas. For example: Why are carbon credit markets so often discussed in terms of no-till production of corn and soybeans?

**Media:** Perhaps the best developments have occurred within the media. Even those parts of the media that have historically been controlled by the agri-business enterprises have realized that organic/sustainable agriculture has markets, sophistication and economic viability. We need to keep them busy reporting on new, real advances in marketing and production methods as well as quantified, comprehensive studies of traditional, natural production techniques.

**Accounting and Finance:** Some of those studies will be done in economic terms. As the accounting progresses, the financial world will awaken to the profit potential that exists in an enterprise that is in harmony with the natural world.

**Nutritionists and feed dealers:** When it comes to those that supply the more physical inputs (feed, soil and crop inputs, medicines, etc.), there are some basic differences from conventional agriculture. Since there is such a great emphasis on systems that are basically self-sufficient and cyclical in nature, the greater demand is going to be on knowledge and analysis rather than on materials. Still, a demand for organic feed is exploding; as the industry grows here there will be room for prudent development in that field. Due to the logistics of sourcing, inventory and documenting all the organic ingredients, there is and will be an earlier market for the specialty feeds such as calf starters, vitamin and trace mineral mixes and other nutritional supplements.

**Fertilizer dealers:** There are a few crop inputs that use larger quantities of materials. Organic farmers generally seem to use lime, sometimes even in areas where that is not conventional practice. Rock phosphate is another example. But many problems are addressed with practical changes that could be the result of knowledgeable advice. Some fertility plant health issues are addressed with small amounts of biologically based materials. When homeopathic methods are utilized, the materials used are often made from the target plants or pests themselves.

**Veterinarians:** Veterinary care is another area where organic husbandry varies greatly from conventional agriculture. While the rules of normal function, prevention and diagnosis are virtually identical, the paths tend to diverge when it comes to treatment. Knowledge and experience are crucial, and the expertise is far from well documented. There is a rather large field of materials that are used for treatments, far too many to address here or in a one-hour discussion.

On both of these last two topics, there is actually a considerable amount of reading materials available. I think that by far the best single sources of these are: the National Center for Appropriate Technology -- ATTRA service (www.attra.org/organic) and the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (www.mosesorganic.org).

Sometimes, information you find about organic is not scientifically correct and is anecdotal in nature. It must be remembered that current rules and regulations make research and analysis economically unattractive when unapproved materials are involved. It is time for some type of improvement in the body of knowledge about a part of our cosmos that has been overlooked!
Ken Peterson honored with Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award

Ken Peterson was honored with SFA’s 2008 Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award at SFA’s 17th Annual Conference on Saturday, February 2nd at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN. Ken was unable to be present, but received a standing ovation from the crowd. Joel Rosen, SFA’s state board chair and Lake Superior Chapter member presented the award and gave short speech about why Ken deserves this honor. Here are Joel’s comments.

I’m Joel Rosen, state board representative from the Lake Superior Chapter. I’ve been a delegate to the state board for more than 12 years, but if it weren’t for the man we’re honoring today, I probably would never have even joined SFA. In 1991, Ken Peterson saw the need to bring together farmers interested in trying out a new model of agriculture, one that departed from the conventional view promoted by large corporate interests, the university research establishment, and extension. Given the history of farming in our area, most of the farmers were either current or former dairy farmers interested in using intensive rotational grazing to improve profitability and soil health or small-scale fruit and vegetable growers looking to direct market their product to an increasingly health conscious public.

Thanks to Ken’s efforts, our first formal meeting occurred in winter of 1992. With a series of informational workshops and field days in the next few years helped build a sizable membership of area farmers in the developing Northeast Chapter. Ken was one of the first Extension employees in the state to promote sustainable farming, and he never shied away from exposing our membership to new approaches in farming, even some that raised more than a few eyebrows. In addition to a number of workshops and field days on intensive rotational grazing, Ken brought in farmers who related their experiences with use of large quantities of high-calcium lime, top-dressed ground taconite, radionics, foliar feeding, and pastured poultry.

Ken worked with one of these workshop instructors, Doug Gunnink, to put together a 10-week class on Holistic Resource Management. At about the same time, he was instrumental in organizing our first Harvest Festival held in Duluth’s Bayfront Park. The Harvest Festival, now entering its fifteenth year, draws an estimated 10,000 people to Bayfront Park on the Saturday after Labor Day.

In addition to being a visionary, Ken has no peer when it comes to raising funds for the causes he believes in so passionately. Drawing on an astonishingly diverse list of contacts from the varied, often distinct worlds of farmers, the clergy, local and state government, and area businesses and foundations, Ken almost singlehandedly kept the Harvest Festival and our chapter afloat for more than 10 years. He also served as our chapter treasurer during this period, and as state board delegate for the first three years of our existence.

In addition to his work with the SFA, Ken has served on a number of other non-profit boards, including MISA, the Land Stewardship Project, and the AMPI national board. He has also had a huge impact fighting world hunger through the Lutheran Church, organizing relief efforts and retreats.

Today Ken lives on the farm his father started as a dairy just west of the Aitkin/Carlton County line, about 50 miles west of Duluth. As a younger man, Ken continued the dairy farm, which today he now operates as a direct market, grass-fed beef farm. He is unable to be here today, but I encourage all of you to stand up and applaud this remarkable man--an optimist, an idealist, a visionary -- yet fully grounded in the soil he loves and hopes to pass on to his grandson, the 2008 recipient of the Farmer Emeritus award, Ken Peterson.

Reception for Ken Peterson
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Wright MN
Wednesday, April 16th — 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Ken has been given the Farmer Emeritus Award by SFA. His career has included work as an agricultural extension agent and vigilant promotion of sustainable farming while continuing his family farm.

Directions: Travel east about 2 miles from Wright on MN 210, go north on County Road #2, continue north about 1.5 miles on Gisler Rd/Township Rd 181.

Please send any stories you have about or pictures of Ken Peterson for the Summer CornerPost. Send submissions to Anne Borgendale at communications@sfa-mn.org or mail to: 5663 W Bavarian Pass, Fridley, MN 55432. Thank you!
Opportunities abound at Grazefest Minnesota 2008

By Mary Jo Forbord

The 4th Annual Grazefest Minnesota is scheduled for Friday and Saturday, August 1 and 2, 2008. Kent & Linda Solberg, Seven Pines Farm and Dan & Rosie Middendorf, MiddMinn Dairy, both near Verndale, MN, are this year’s host farms.

The focus of Grazefest this year is creating opportunities for small grazing dairies and we will be drawing on the expertise of successful dairy practitioners and notable grazing resource people.

Grazefest Minnesota keynote speaker is Joel McNair, Editor/Publisher of Graze magazine. Joel, raised on a southern Wisconsin livestock farm, is a veteran agricultural journalist who has been writing about—and practicing—grazing for nearly 20 years.

According to host farmer Kent Solberg, a window of opportunity currently exists in north central Minnesota for grass-based dairies—land prices are not yet exorbitant, markets are available, and the local dairy infrastructure is intact. Some of the area’s other attributes that are favorable to livestock farming include: large animal vets, equipment dealers, dairy supply companies, hardware stores, lumberyards, good forage growing conditions, good roads, a selection of milk processors and an overall general acceptance and encouragement of dairy.

Grazefest 2008 Overview:

Registration starts at 9:00 a.m. at MiddMinn Dairy. Morning speakers will include hosts Kent Solberg and Dan Middendorf, along with Ron Monson, a well-respected area farm consultant, and Tim Anderson, a farmer from Evansville, MN. Breakout sessions will take place at both the Middendorf and Solberg Farms.

The morning topics include:
• Getting started in grass-based dairies
• Low cost/Low labor dairy components
• Low cost parlor design/New Zealand style swing parlor
• Selling your carbon credits—Dean Current, University of Minnesota
• Forage Production—Craig Schaeffer, University of Minnesota
• Pastured Egg Production—Linda Solberg

The afternoon will continue with keynote speaker Joel McNair and a presentation of the economics of pasture irrigation with Dennis Johnson, University of Minnesota dairy scientist. From 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Verndale area farmers have agreed to provide opportunities to watch a swing parlor in operation.

Presentations, learning and networking will continue well into the evening at England Prairie, a Pioneer Village located 3-miles southwest of Verndale. A full schedule of presentations, grazing resource specialists, and grazing activities will be available in the next issue of the CornerPost. England Prairie camping spots are available for $15/day, $20 with electricity.

On Saturday, August 2nd, after a delicious breakfast of pasture-raised sausage, pancakes, eggs and all the trimmings, grazing bus tours will launch from England Prairie. One bus tour will visit dairy operations, and a concurrent bus tour will visit beef operations. The beef tour is headed up by the Wadena Soil and Water Conservation District.

SFA hosts Grazefest Minnesota to promote the health benefits of pasture-raised foods, the positive environmental impact of grazing and the economic growth from local, pasture-raised food. Grazefest Minnesota will also highlight how farmers can benefit from grazing systems through healthier animals, a healthier working environment, and healthier land. Natural Resource Conservation Service is a major sponsor of Grazefest again this year. Generous sponsorship has also come from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Make plans now to attend Grazefest Minnesota 2008. Watch for more details and registration at www.sfa-mn.org.
Vendor and Exhibitor Call for the 2008 Minnesota Garlic Festival

By Dennis Ingle

Vendor and Exhibitor opportunities abound at the Third Annual Minnesota Garlic Festival, which will be held in Howard Lake, MN at the Wright County Fairgrounds on Saturday, August 16, 2008.

What kind of opportunities you may wonder?

• Opportunities to reach a great cross-section of people interested in good food, unique gifts and friendly conversation.
• Opportunities to network with vendors involved in direct marketing.
• Opportunities to educate the public about local products and sustainable communities.

The Minnesota Garlic Festival started in 2006 as a showcase for sustainable farming and local creativity. Garlic is the main theme around which the message of local foods, chefs, music, artisans, and products revolves. The atmosphere is family oriented, including old-fashioned games for children, air guitar and kite building/flying. Minnesota talent provides unique entertainment ranging from magicians to belly-dancing to folk music. Regional artists, young and old display a wide variety of art. The "star power" of the festival are well-known Twin Cities chefs who apply their talents in the Great ‘Scape Café and wow attendees with cooking demonstrations using local food. All in all, the festival has great drawing power. A 2007 vendor commented, "The people that came, came wanting to spend money."

The festival committee is planning for 2000 visitors this year as the advertising plan is refined and expanded to reach more Minnesotans. In its first year the festival drew 900 with good weather. In 2007 attendance was 875 despite cold temperatures and rain. All vendors/exhibitors were accommodated indoors, except those working from trailers. Participants can expect a country fair atmosphere with a choice of indoor or outdoor spaces. More festival information and application forms can be found at www.sfa-mn.org/garlicfest.

The Minnesota Garlic Festival is the premier event for lovers of garlic and good times. It is a family friendly, fun-filled and fragrant day for the whole family. The Crow River Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota is providing an excellent venue for the message of sustainable farms and local communities. Get your application for an exhibitor or vendor in soon before space is filled up.

Minnesota Dairy Initiative Update

By Jeremy Lanctot

What is available for dairy farms that don’t want to expand their milking herd? Often we hear the mantra of “get big or get out” parroted by industry, agency and higher education experts. Many farms are perplexed at the changes necessary to get bigger. Many don’t have the labor force to handle getting larger and many don’t have the management skills to accommodate a larger operation.

Basically, over the next ten years, many of these farms will simply close shop and retire. What’s the point when all that happens to many farmers is that they become a pass-thru entity doing all the work and taking all of the risk, while the bankers and industry companies glean the profit. Top this off with a heavy dose of environmental regulation, I can see why many are fed up with the thought of staying in business much longer.

Even with the pessimism that exists in some segments of the agricultural industry, there are many farmers (mostly younger) who are looking into diversifying their enterprises. Every year there seems to be new niche opportunities for all farm types, not just dairy. Over this next year, I’d like to highlight a few of these farms and the clever things they are doing to make their operations sustainable for future generations. Believe it or not, there are solutions for many problems encountered on our path towards sustainability. It’s often nice to look at farms that are doing innovative things to allow the flexibility to stay the same size they are presently.
By Ashley Prieve
Ashley is a student intern for SFA at the University of Minnesota, Morris. She is a senior, majoring in economics.

When thinking about what I wanted to do after I graduated from college this spring, I really had no definite ideas or plans. I knew that I was interested in working with some program or organization that was involved with the environment, but I didn’t have any idea as to what that would be. I wanted to participate in some kind of internship during either my last semester at the University of Minnesota, Morris (UMM) or in the summer after I graduated.

I am glad that I got to meet Mary Jo Forbord, SFA’s Executive Director, when I did and I have thoroughly enjoyed all that I have done so far in my internship with SFA. My favorite part of the internship so far has definitely been the Youth Sustainability Confab and the SFA’s Conference in February. I was so happy that I was able to get a group of ten people from my school to be involved with both of them as well.

As a student on the UMM campus, sustainability is something that a lot of people are interested in being involved with, but like me, they don’t really know how or where to start. The Confab was a great opportunity to talk with others from around the state about sustainability issues. Youth (those under the age of 35 years old) from across the region came together to discuss the real issues that are facing us today. I think a lot hard work went into planning the event, but it was set up great and really gave us “youth” a chance to have our voices heard in the midst of everything.

The SFA conference the next day was also a real eye opening experience. I had no idea that there would be so many related organizations exhibiting and that they would have representatives to talk with. The best part of the whole weekend was getting the chance to meet so many new people and to start talking about where I could take my interests in the near future. For me, the most important part of my SFA internship has been discovering what is out there in sustainability and I think the conference was a key part into really opening my eyes of different avenues I can take when I graduate this spring.

On campus, I’ve really enjoyed interviewing people. I’m learning so many things about what sustainability endeavors they are involved with. I wish I would have known about them sooner. I think there are great people working towards these efforts on the UMM campus.

By the end of my internship I will have taken all that I’ve learned about how students can become involved with sustainability projects on the UMM campus and compile them into a directory. This will become the one ‘go to’ resource that will really display for future students all the great people on our campus, what they are involved in, and how more students can get involved. It would be so great if more of these groups, both on and off campus, knew what each other was working on, and in the future, would work together on bigger projects to really tackle some big goals that we have for our school and our community.
"Read all about it!"

Using SFA’s Online Discussion Board

By Jeremy Lanctot

About 3 years ago, SFA upgraded the website, www.sfa-mn.org, adding some new functionality and user interaction capability. One of these web-based programs on the SFA website is called a Discussion Board. A discussion board is somewhat like a bulletin board where people can post their thoughts and share information. A discussion board organizes these ‘discussions’ (they’re actually typed, not spoken, of course) by subject and chronology.

When there are just a couple people and a short conversation, email works very efficiently. It’s fine for many everyday exchanges of ideas. Where email falls short is when a ‘discussion’ gets complex, involves many people and lasts for many weeks, months or years. Also, if a new person comes along with an interest in a certain subject, it is very difficult for them to catch-up unless the history of the discussion is well organized and well documented.

This is where a discussion board on a website works well. A discussion thread (chronological subject) between any number of people may have been in-progress for several months and contain dozens, or hundreds, of messages posted by the engaged people. A new member of this discussion can join the group at any point in time and see a very clean trail of how the thread got started and every step of its path to the point it’s at today.

Presently, the SFA state board is using the discussion board to collaborate on communication to aid in the operation of the organization. If you were to go to the SFA discussion board (www.sfa-mn.org/discussion), you wouldn’t see any of this activity. Why? Because they use a hidden discussion topic area that is protected by password. The administrator of the discussion board grants access to select people to this discussion area, so the general public can’t see what’s being exchanged. Most of what’s being discussed isn’t very sensitive of information, but occasionally something may get posted that others shouldn’t see. For instance, any company keeps its new employee selection process well concealed.

Other topic areas in the SFA discussion board are sparsely populated with ‘talk’ and haven’t seen much activity. Usually, any topic area needs at least a dozen, or so, people to keep the topic smoldering. Several dozen to a hundred people are needed to keep a topic ‘hot’ and active.

When we started this discussion area, we knew it wouldn’t get much use without people interested in using it. Demographically, farmers are often the most interested in the topics listed on the site. Unfortunately, they are often older and less likely to use computers and definitely slower to adopt things like posting messages on an electronic discussion board. Many have limited access to high-speed internet capability. This hampers their willingness to spend time online. After a hard day’s work, they may seldom have interest in plopping in front of a computer and interacting with others on a message board. This isn’t true of the younger generation.

The next generation of farmers is, for the most part, well integrated in newer technologies and electronic interaction. Text messaging on cell phones is a primary means that those under 30 use to interact. The popularity of Facebook and MySpace, et. al., speaks to the willingness of younger folks to interact online. They expect to be able to do this, just like many of us expect the phone to work when we pick up the receiver. Remember party lines you old folks! <grin> My family had one when I was young. Remember having to wait for your neighbor to get off the line before you could make your call. Nothing stopped our neighbors from listening in on our business either. Nobody would put up with that today. Likewise, this generation expects to be able to interact immediately. The thought of having to wait to make a call to someone in a few days when there’s time is simply verboten. SFA’s website is more of a tool to reach out to this new generation than to the existing curmudgeons.

Even if some of our older membership doesn’t desire to communicate online as much, in order to attract younger farmers, we may have to mentor them electronically before we get to mentor face-to-face. Our website is a tool...only one of many...but, a critical means of interfacing with the next generations. In order to increase efficiency, reduce windshield time and burning of fossil fuel, we’ll be relying on this tool more and more in the future.
Youth Sustainability Confabulation
Your Voice, Our Future

By Anne Borgendale

On a cold day in February, thirty “youth” (defined as people under the age of 35 years old) from the region gathered at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN. They were excited to be there, but not quite sure what to expect; all were a bit confounded by what a confabulation was. However, by the end of the day all agreed that they had good conversation, expanded on new ideas and that they had their voices heard.

The format of the event was a World Café Discussion (WCD). A WCD is an informal yet guided discussion that revolves around a question or series of questions. An unlimited number of groups of four to seven people sit at tables and discuss the question(s) posed. There is usually a large sheet of paper on the table where participants can write down some of their thoughts or draw pictures. After 5-10 minutes a moderator tells participants to switch and everyone goes to a different table. This process is repeated several times. The event usually ends with a brief report from each table.

At the Confab WCD each table had an “elder” (someone over 35 years old) to record some of the ideas discussed. However, these elders had to follow the “Duct Tape Rule,” which was defined as active listening and asking questions, but not dominating the conversation.

The topic areas at the Confab were climate change, food, technology, rural communities/farming, renewable energy, policy and a wild card category. Some the questions included:

- How will climate change impact your life and future?
- What characteristics of food are most important to you?
- What are the aspects of rural communities that are worth preserving and building upon, and what aspects need to change for you to consider living in a rural place?
- Are you considering a future in farming? Why or why not?
- How would your life change if gas was $5 per gallon and headed upward?
- How should our world address energy production and use as developing countries adopt western consumption patterns?
- What is one new government policy that would make life in Minnesota more sustainable in the long-term?
- What would the world look like without rural communities?
- How will the USA’s consumption-driven economy impact our country’s long-term sustainability?

After several hours of WCD at the Confab, it was finally time to eat. SFA elders joined the group at this point and everyone mingled over a supper of Minnesota-style tapas. To close the evening, the elders posed questions to the youth which the youth took turns answering to the best of their abilities. Much thought was put into both the questions and answers, with creativity abounding. Most people, both youth and elders, agreed that this was their favorite part of the event.

There were great connections made among the youth, and between the youth and elders as well. All are looking forward to SFA’s forthcoming youth and cross-generational events.
SFA of MN Sustaining Fund

Calling all farmers, farmers at heart, collaborators and supporters

SFA has established a Matching Fund which will donate $2,000 to our Sustaining Fund if we receive $2,000 in donations before June 30th of this year. We have nearly made our goal $2,000 in donations as matches to the Matching Fund.

We are grateful to the follow contributors to the Matching Fund:

Albert Lea Seed House
Thomas Bonner
Mary Jo Forbord
Jerry Ford
Mary Hanks

Linden Hills Co-op
OCIA Minnesota #1
St. Peter Food Co-op
Sunopta
Lucia Watson

Dear SFA Supporters:

We have received $4,828.75 in donations since initiating our fundraising drive last fall. 49 donors have contributed to our Sustaining Fund or pledged money to our Matching Fund. The Matching Fund was announced at our conference in February and since then we have received $1,825. We need $175 of additional donations to receive the full amount of the pledges made to the Matching Fund. Your contribution will play an important role in supporting the activities of SFA. Any contributions made before June 30th will be added to the total of for our current fundraising drive. Contributions to the Sustaining Fund are welcome at any time. There is a great need for funding to pay for important work that does not receive support from other funding sources.

Gratefully yours,
The SFA Fundraising Committee: Jim Tjepkema, Mary Hanks, and Chris Barnier
SUSTAINING CONTRIBUTIONS

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

$250 ____ $100 ____ $50 ____ $25 ____ Other Amount $________

Name: ____________________________________________________________________________
Farm/Business/Organization Name: _____________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________________________
City: ___________________________ State: ________ Zip: ______________________
Phone: ________________________ Email: ____________________________________________

How would you like your contribution to be listed in the CornerPost?
____________________________________________________________________________________

Would you like to receive SFA’s bi-monthly Events Email? (If “yes,” please list email address):
____________________________________________________________________________________

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.

SFA Annual Membership $30 ____

I designate that my membership goes to:

☐ Cannon River / Hiawatha
☐ Lake Superior
☐ Central
☐ Lake Agassiz
☐ Coteau Ridge
☐ South Central
☐ Crow River
☐ Southeast
☐ Western

Total SFA Support:

$ ______________

Please send a check payable to: SFA of MN, 29731 302nd St, Starbuck, MN 56381

You can also become a sustaining member & contribute online at the SFA of MN web site: www.sfa-mn.org.

Thank you for your support!
Spring Events Calendar

For more details visit: www.sfa-mn.org/calendar. If you would like to add an event to the SFA Events Calendar contact Anne at communications@sfa-mn.org or (320) 226-6318.

Apr 5-6  Badgersett’s Annual Spring Short Course on Woody Agriculture. For more info visit: www.badgersett.com.

Apr 7  Organic Winter School – St. Charles, MN. For more info contact Harriet Behar at 608-872-2164 or harriet@mosesorganic.org.

Apr 12  Introduction to Grazing Workshop – La Crosse, WI. For more info contact: Heather at lspse@landstewardshipproject.org or 507-523-3366.

Apr 26  Grass-fed Dairy with Pastureland Coop – Benrud Farm, Goodhue, MN. For more info contact: Heather at lspse@landstewardshipproject.org or 507-523-3366.

Apr 26  Post-Harvest Handling Workshop East Troy, WI. Michael Fields Agricultural Institute – dsorensen@michaelfieldsaginst.org - (262) 642-3303 ext.128

Apr 27  Slow Food Conversation Series: Making Sense of Local Food System Issues – Duluth, MN. For more info visit www.lakesuperiorfarming.org.

May 3  Grasp the Nettle! – Moonstone Farm, Montevideo, MN. An outdoor local foods workshop. For more info contact Audrey Arner at 320-269-8971; audrey@moonstonefarm.net; May 3-4  Living Green Expo & Community Food & Farm Festival - Minnesota State Fairgrounds, St. Paul, MN. For more info visit: http://livinggreen.org/.

May 18  Cannon River/Hiawatha Chapter Field Day Open Hands Farm, Northfield, MN. For more info contact Kathy Zeman, (507) 664-9446 or kzeman@kmwb.net.

May 30  Western Chapter Field Day - Kalliro Farm, Montevideo, MN. For more info call (320) 760-8732 or email sustainablefarming@hcinet.net.

Jun 14  Cedar Summit Farm: On-farm Creamery Farm Tour – New Prague, MN. For more info contact Amy Bacigalupo at amyb@landstewardshipproject.org.

Jun 21  Intro to Grazing Workshop and Pasture Assessment – Canby, MN. For more information contact Susan Hurst at fbwest@landstewardshipproject.org or (320) 269-2105.

Jun 15  Cannon River/Hiawatha Chapter Field Day L&R Poultry and Produce - Kenyon, MN. For more info contact Kathy Zeman, (507) 664-9446 or kzeman@kmwb.net.

Jul 11  Western Chapter Field Day - Pastures A’ Plenty Farm, Kerkhoven, MN. For more info call (320) 760-8732 or email sustainablefarming@hcinet.net.

Jul 20  Cannon River/Hiawatha Chapter Field Day Simple Harvest Farm, Nerstrand, MN. For more info contact Kathy Zeman, (507) 664-9446 or kzeman@kmwb.net.

Aug 1-2  Grazefest Minnesota 2008, Verndale, MN. For more information visit www.sfa-mn.org or see page 14.

Aug 16  Minnesota Garlic Festival, Howard Lake, MN. For more info visit www.sfa-mn.org/garlicfest/index.html.

Do You Have a Guesthouse?

A new agri-tourism project is just beginning. Its purpose is to identify all family farm—or forestland–guest facilities in the state of Minnesota. Once this database is assembled, there is funding for the creation of a collaborative website for group marketing, and for the coordination of a referral system to move travelers and retreatants between them.

If you have a separate guest facility on your property which you already use for short-term rental or, which you would like to rent for agri-tourism, yours is the right place. “Guesthouse” would include such on-farm facilities as: a bed and breakfast, a retreat cottage, a small studio, a comfortable bunkhouse, a lake cabin, the original homestead cabin or even worker quarters (if they are clearly appropriate for tourism and periodically available). Also, included would be the same kind of facilities on family forestland. Email Kent Scheer (rscheer@charter.net) with your contact information and a description of your guest facility. When convenient, also mail photographs, rates, seasonal availability, a map, a preferred customer profile, and any marketing material or a website address to: Green Island, 850 Scheer Drive NE, Wadena, MN 56482.
Meet Joe & Michelle Gransee-Bowman

I am one of the newest members to the SFA State Board. I am also the youngest member at a youthful 35 years of age. My wife, Michelle, and I are caretaking on and directing the development of a 200-acre sustainable urban farm, the Prairie Oaks Institute, located partially in the City of Belle Plaine, MN. Last year we began to convert the tilled land to pasture for rotational grazing and started a partnership with Greg Harris, a cattle rancher. I was connected with Greg during the 2007 Grazefest hosted at the Forbord’s Prairie Horizon Farm.

This year, there will be cattle, sheep, broilers, laying hens, turkeys, ducks, and rabbits, as well as a direct market CSA garden on the farm. Together with several partners in the agriculture non-profit sector, including SFA, we will be working with Howard Moechnig on an integrated species research project. This three-year research project is jointly funded through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Research and Demonstration grant and the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Farmer Rancher grant programs. The intent of the project is to document and share strategies for integrated rotational grazing of multiple species, such as cattle, sheep, and poultry. Several pasture walks and workshops are scheduled over the next three years during this process to share our research.

We have complex roles on the farm. We are parents, producers, educators, program developers, grant writers, sustainable designers and, we are actively working with the Devine family (the owners of the farm) and the Prairie Oaks Institute board to preserve and protect this heritage family farm and to develop it as a model retreat – education – and sustainable farming site for future generations. In our farming community, we are members of the local harvest alliance, a group of farmers and consumers working with Scott County to develop farmland protection and a local food network.

Our four children are Daniel (10), Hunter (7), Diana (5) and Elijah (4). Also, Michelle’s parents, Earl and Anita Gransee, live in town and are active on the farm – assisting us when we are busy or gone, providing childcare, and sharing their helpful knowledge of growing up farming. Farming really is a family business. It is great to have grandma, grandpa, and our kids involved!

I first became involved with SFA in 2006 when I attended two SFA sponsored events -- the Windy River Fair and Duluth Harvest Festival -- while volunteering at the booth for the Minnesota Renewable Energy Society. I attended several sessions where I learned about poultry netting, which supported switching our laying hens out of the movable pens into open rotational pasture. The following year I attended the 2007 SFA Annual Conference at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN with two of our children, Daniel and Hunter. This year the entire family attended the conference and I was nominated to the SFA Board of Directors to an at-large position to represent the youth and next generation farmers.

We strongly believe in the connection of sustainable farming as producers and consumers and because of its impact on sustainable community development. By engaging and investing in cultivating the capacity of individuals to meet our own growing environmental, social, and cultural needs, we feel sustainable farming is at the center of transitioning our
societal change towards healthier living. As everyone eats and wants to be comfortable in their places of work and rest, farming plays a part in providing food and fiber. We are playing our small part by helping develop a local food economy, jobs, provide education and retreat offerings. We see that the resilience for people to meet our needs will continue to grow at the same time that natural connections within the community take place. We are excited to be connected with SFA and my new role as a state board member. SFA offers opportunities for individual farmers to connect with and learn from one another as well as linking them with consumers – this is a great resource for us all.

The Databank® Update

By Jeremy Lanctot

SFA has embarked on a new project to improve its data management and administrative efficiency. Presently, we keep several copies of our membership data with dissimilar fields and duplicate records in several places. There is NOT one master copy of our mailing lists, etc. When the CornerPost gets mailed, we assemble our latest lists by combining the data we have and trying to clean it up to remove duplicates and errors. Inevitably, some addresses are wrong and we get returned CornerPosts with an extra postal charge. This is just one example of the many challenges we face in keeping records straight.

Another example concerns tracking memberships and alerting members when their memberships expire. This has been somewhat of a haphazard process, which is in need of much improvement. The task of courting new members and keeping track of all of the data related to that endeavor is daunting. An effective campaign is hard to accomplish without a clear, concise process. Thanks to our recent Bush grant, we are now able to streamline these processes and keep administrative law and order.

The Databank® is an organization that helps non-profits improve their data efficiency and integrity by offering an online data management system that keeps ONE copy of all of the non-financial information needed to run an organization like SFA. We will have an internet-based member database that can be maintained by anyone, anywhere, with an internet connection. Whether our board members or contractors are located in Worthington, Minneapolis or Duluth, there is one interface to the same dataset. Multiple people can update records in this system no matter where they live. Each SFA chapter can maintain their own member records or they can defer this job to an SFA person located somewhere else, if desired. The flexibility is there to manage our critical functional data however we want.

Not only does this database maintain our SFA membership information, it provides online tools to coordinate events, perform targeted mailings, deliver informational emails and more. If a chapter plans an event, they can use these tools to target people in their region by proximity to the event or by type of farming practice, etc. They can keep a listing of attendees to their events and follow-up with further information to these people in the future.

The Databank® system helps coordinate and execute membership drives by any sized geographical region or any type of people grouping. It will keep track of donations and help with follow-up to those showing interest in educational materials, membership and volunteer opportunities. The Databank® is NOT a financial system that keeps all of the financial information necessary to run SFA. Presently, our treasurer keeps this in another accounting program. But, we will have the capability to accept payments for memberships and event registrations online.

Most of the benefits SFA will receive from coordinating our process data will be transparent to most SFA members. Many won’t notice any difference at all. The benefits will be felt primarily by those on the SFA state and chapter boards and the worker-bees helping keep our events and goals organized. Fewer people can accomplish more work with much less hassle than ever before. For those with an internet connection, go to www.thedatabank.com to see what they are about.

www.sfa-mn.org Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota :: 23
Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota

29731 302nd Street
Starbuck, MN 56381

Return Service Requested

www.sfa-mn.org  printed with soy-based ink on recycled paper

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