By Anne Borgendale

Our farms sustain us. They provide food, nourishment. They can help to provide clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat, jobs, good health, economic development, a place to learn, a respite, a sense of place, a sense of community and many more tangible and intangible gifts. Minnesota’s farms sustain us, but what can we Minnesotans do to sustain our farms? What can we do to make sure our farms are resilient, especially in unforgiving times?

We can manage risk, explore new markets, learn from farmers in other places, extend our seasons, purchase local foods, plan holistically, and teach our youth. At the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota’s 18th Annual Conference on Saturday, February 21st at St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN, the day will revolve around: “Sustaining Our Farms: Produce, Pasture & Perseverance.” Throughout the conference different aspects of “Sustaining Our Farms” will be explored through breakout sessions, food, exhibits and conversations. SFA is also excited to have grass-farmer, author and lecturer Joel Salatin, tying all of these ideas together as our keynote speaker.

Conference Location

St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN will play host to SFA’s 2009 annual conference. St. Olaf is a liberal arts college in the Cannon River valley, about 35-miles south of the Twin Cities. St. Olaf may be best known for its world-renowned music programs and Norwegian roots, but it has also built a reputation for its dedication to sustainability. A few examples of what’s happening on campus: there’s an organic student-run farm, 100 percent of food waste is composted, and a wind turbine provides up to one-third of the campus’ electricity needs.

The entire conference will take place in the spacious student center,
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.

Do you need to renew?

Membership in the SFA of MN entitles you to receive the CornerPost newsletter and discounts on SFA Events. Use the form on page 8 or go to www.sfa-mn.org and join or renew your membership today!

CornerPost Ad Policy:

The CornerPost is the official membership publication of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

It is mailed to members and friends of SFA, and relevant agency personnel, through the postal mail. The CornerPost is published four times per year, with advertising deadlines of March 15th, June 15th, September 15th, and December 15th. The CornerPost runs between 24 and 32 pages per issue. CornerPost circulation is approximately 1200.

Here is our fee schedule for CornerPost ads for the 2008-09 fiscal year:
- $500 full page
- $130 quarter page
- $260 half page
- $75 eighth page

Starting in September of 2008, we are offering a classified ad section. Current SFA members will be invited to submit classifieds free of charge.

Ads ready for print may be emailed to Anne Borgendale, CornerPost Editor, at communications@sfa-mn.org. If you need assistance in composing an ad, please call Anne at 320-226-6318.

Our policy on advertising:
- SFA will not devote more than 25% of the total print space to paid advertisements.
- Advertisements must represent products and services that are consistent with SFA’s mission.
- SFA reserves the right to accept or deny any advertisement, and retains all editorial control over content.

Thank you for your support of sustainable farming in Minnesota!
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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Chapter Updates

Cannon River / Hiawatha Chapter

By Mary Ellen Frame

As host of the state SFA annual conference, we are making plans for our involvement in putting it together. Several members expressed the opinion that there is a huge interest on the part of the general public in buying locally grown food. One way for us to encourage and inform that interest is to have a supper and discussion on the Friday night just before the conference, for non-farmers. It’s being called, “Simply Soup Supper: Sustainable Food—A Community Discussion.” We hope to attract lots of young people, as well as others, and we’ll be promoting it in Northfield, MN and around the state. While we’re eating a simple supper of soups and bread, there will be a short panel presentation, then an open microphone for all to participate, sharing ideas and information.

As a further encouragement of young people, we have decided to offer student memberships to our chapter at the reduced rate of $10. In a town with two colleges, there are a lot of young people interested in sustainable farming in one way or another. They even encounter discussion of sustainable farming and local eating in some of their regular classes. A student membership would be an opportunity for them to learn from meetings and field days, and to get acquainted with farmers.

Another discussion we began is about forming some sort of co-operative or other entity for people Cannon River/Hiawatha continued on page 4
Cannon River/Hiawatha continued from page 3 to market poultry to institutions and other high-volume buyers. Callisters have an E-2 processing plant, but can’t fully utilize it with just their own birds, so bringing together several small producers could utilize their facility and expand the marketing opportunities for others. Those interested will meet on Saturday, January 31 at 10:00 a.m. in the Just Food Co-op event space in Northfield, MN. Bring your numbers.

Our chapter Annual Meeting will be on Saturday, January 24 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., with a potluck supper at the end. This will also happen at the Just Food Co-op event space.

Southeast Chapter

By Edgar Hansgen

We had our first informational session on Thursday, December 11, in Lewiston, MN. It was entitled, “Renewable Energy and Soil Fertility.” The presenters were Dr. Bruno Borsari, professor of biology from Winona State University, and Bob Yanda from Midwestern Bio-Ag.

The Midwest Value Added Conference will be held in Rochester, MN, on January 22-23. This will be a very interesting and informational conference for anyone marketing or considering marketing their own produce. For more information, call Sandy or Lonny Dietz at (507) 932-5225.

Our annual chapter meeting will be on Saturday, February 14 at the Altura City Hall. Tentatively, in the morning we will have a presentation on stray electricity. In the afternoon, a panel is scheduled to address a major concern facing sustainable agriculture: ensuring that we will have sufficient young farmers in the future. There will be a mailing when details are finalized. We do need some new faces on our chapter board. Remember Uncle Sam saying, “I WANT YOU”? We do to!

The MOSES Organic Farming Conference will be held again in La Crosse, WI, on February 26-28. If you think that these aren’t enough meetings/conferences, check this CornerPost for the state SFA annual conference! It sure should help make winter go must faster. From your Board of Directors, I hope you had a Merry Christmas and have a Happy New Year!!

Crow River Chapter

By Greg Reynolds

The Garlic Festival is well and truly over. All the bills are paid, most of the promises kept, and garlic induced disturbances quieted. I hope.

At this time of year our official chapter activity centers around board meetings. Most of the activity of our members centers around making a living farming and leaving something good for our grandchildren. For the most part, the meetings are relatively uneventful. Marienne Kreitlow puts out a nice spread of hors d’oeuvres. There are reports. People volunteer to do things. Resolutions are taken. Minutes are created. We go home. One item of note: Dennis Ingle has wrested the State SFA Board seat from Jerry Ford, and brings us news of the doings at the State Board meetings. Lately, we have been working on putting together our Winter Conference.

Most, if not all, of the speakers for the chapter conference are confirmed. The space is booked. It should be a great conference. We are calling it, “Restorative Farming, Healing the Land, Feeding the People.” Presenters include Will Winter, Audrey Arner, Doug Gunnink, Nick Jordan, Paula Westmoreland, Dan Halsey, Diane Wilson, Dana Jackson, Pat and Connie Lahr, Jim VanDerPol, and Carmen Fernholz. Tim Reese will be leading a snowshoe farm tour of Gale Woods.

Lunch will be potluck as usual. Jerry has banned Jell-O, so pies are the way to go. Please note: Proper potluck protocol precludes purchased or packaged products. Mary Jane Miller is taking care of all the details of getting things organized and getting everyone fed. At lunch we will have our board election (captive audience). We are using compostable cups, plates, and dinnerware to make this a No Waste event. Next year the Garlic Festival will also be a No Waste event. Hopefully we will see you at our Winter Meeting Saturday, January 3, at Gale Woods Farm in Minnetrista (see the SFA of MN website, www.sfa-mn.org, for more details). We are starting early. Registration is at 8:00 a.m. Be there.
**Lake Superior Chapter**

By Joel Rosen

Our chapter held the 4th annual Farmers Take the Stove fundraiser on Monday, November 17. In previous years, the event was held in December. Due to the change in date, this year’s menu did not feature any turkey leftovers. However, as might be expected, squash, potatoes, carrots, parsnips, wild rice, cabbage, beets, apples, berries, and venison appeared in a number of dishes lined up on the main table. Roughly 80 people attended, making the event a culinary as well as a financial success.

Farm Beginnings classes have been underway since October. The class is full, and our chapter is hopeful that at least a few of the graduates will become farmers in the area. Planning is underway for our chapter annual meeting and conference, to be held on January 31. Keynote speaker has yet to be determined.

Advance planning has also begun for the 2009 Lake Superior Harvest Festival and Energy Fair. It looks like this will be the first year we will rent all of Bayfront Festival Park, which will in turn allow us to erect a perimeter fence and charge admission. Lively discussions are sure to take place in the next few months as we consider some of the potential changes.

No date has been set for our other fundraiser, Farmers Take the Stage. The event has been held in late March for the past five years. Farmers from other chapters with performance talent are welcome to participate and should send e-mail to info@lakesuperiorfarming.org or call Joel at (218) 389-3306. Interested performers can probably be housed and fed in a private home in the area and would of course have the opportunity to take advantage of northeast Minnesota’s excellent late winter sports activities.

**Central Chapter**

By Sue Peterson

Sustainable Farming Association of Central Minnesota (SFACM) members have been busy preparing for our annual meeting, which will be Saturday, January 10, 2009 at the Browerville Community Center in Browerville. The program will start with a talk from June Varner about her work in the Farm to Schools program in Little Falls. After the business meeting, we will be establishing focused networks. This will give our members an opportunity to discuss topics of interest such as: marketing grass-based meat, grass based dairy issues, participation in the farm to schools program, and drip line irrigation and mulching.

Work is progressing on a workbook for the 100 Orchards Project. Other upcoming events for 100 Orchards include: a booth and workshops at Back to Basics in Pine River on January 31, grafting workshop in Pine River on February 28, grafting workshop at Camphill village in Sauk Centre on March 28, and a grafting workshop in Fergus Falls (date TBD). More workshops on orchard maintenance and design will be coming in the spring and summer.

Many of the “Annalid and her Friends” coloring books have been distributed, and SFACM is starting another round of making them available to local schools. These books describe the life of an earthworm and are geared to first and second graders. They have been well received by schools so far, and we still have 1200 more to distribute.

A newsletter giving details on these projects and more was mailed to the membership on December 15. Please contact Sue Peterson if you would like a copy (azariahsue@yahoo.com or 320 355-2980).

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**Become a CornerPost Sponsor**

Are you interested in strengthening the development of sustainable agriculture in Minnesota? Supporting the SFA’s quarterly newsletter is a way for you, your business or organization to become active in the cause. We will acknowledge your sponsorship in CornerPost by providing description and contact information unless you prefer that your sponsorship remain anonymous - we will honor your wishes. Please call Mary Jo Forbord at (320) 760-8732 to discuss your sponsorship opportunities.
The board of the South Central Chapter of SFA met recently and began plans for three meetings in the New Year. House meetings (in a restaurant) are planned for Monday, January 12 and Monday, February 9, both at 6:00 p.m. at the Willows Restaurant in New Richland, MN. The Willows is located on Hwy 13, just north of the intersection with Hwy 30.

The speakers have yet to be confirmed, but the tentative plan for the January meeting is covering the topic of soil testing and fertility with Ray Yokiel leading the discussion (if we can get him). At the February meeting we hope to have a Farmers Market organizer from Albert Lea, MN.

The South Central Chapter annual meeting has been set for Saturday, March 14, weather permitting, and the Clarks Grove Baptist Church has been booked. The board is looking for recommendations for speakers for the annual meeting. All are invited to attend. For more information, contact Katy Wortel at enviros@hickorytech.net.
Dear SFA Members & Supporters:

The results from the Sustaining Fund appeal announced in the Fall 2008 CornerPost are very encouraging. The contributors listed below have provided more than $3600 in donations and pledges to support the work of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. We want to thank the members and friends who have given us a good start as we enter our second fundraising drive. We hope to raise at least $15,000 before the drive ends on June 30, 2009.

As we move forward with our second fundraising drive we are asking you to follow the example of those found below who have already made generous contributions. SFA continues to be uniquely positioned as a farmer based organization, eager to promote farming systems that sustain the environment, the family, and the community, and raise our voices for a sustainable future for agriculture. Your gift of $250 or even $5 will be put to good use allowing us to reach out to the public in ways that would not other wise be possible.

As members of the SFA and our communities, we have a long history of supporting one another through neighbor helping neighbor, through learning together in our local chapters, through speaking at township meetings, to school children, the legislature, and to civic groups, and through mentoring and helping new farmers in our communities. As a friend or member of the SFA, support our work now and into the future by contributing to the Sustaining Fund. An envelope is included in the CornerPost for your convenience. Thank you.

Gratefully,
The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Fundraising Committee
Jim Tjepkema, Joe Gransee-Bowman, and Laura Mobry-Bathke

Please join with the following contributors that have started off the 2008/2009 fundraising drive with their generous donations and pledges:

Leif M. Arntsen  
Tommy Bonner, Macalester College  
Chris* and Claudia Barnier  
Curtis Bush, Blueberry Bush’s  
Erica Dolven-Kolle *  
David Engel, Nature’s International Certification Service and Oregon Tilth  
Tom Ehrhardt, Albert Lea Seed House  
Mary Jo & Luverne Forboard, Prairie Horizons Farm  
Jerry Ford * & Marienne Krietlow, Living Song Farm  
Tim Gieseke, Ag Resource Strategies  
Joe* and Michelle Gransee-Bowman, Prairie Oaks Institute  
Mary Hanks*, Minnesota Department of Agriculture  
Edgar Hansgen*  
Chris* and Joanne Kudrna  
Linden Hills Food Coop  
Jeremy Lanctot, Glacial Acres Farm  
Dave and Florence Minar, Cedar Summit Farm  
Joe & Tom Molitor, Molitor Organic Farms, Inc.  
Laura* & Connie Mobry-Bathke, Tuckahoe Hills Farm  
Victor Mrotz, Hope Creamery  
Helene Murray, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture  
John* and Bev Sluss, Rural Life Farm  
Richard* and Andrea Rolling  
Joel Rosen *  
St. Peter Food Co-op  
SunOpta  
Jim Tjepkema*  
Lucia Watson, Lucia’s Café  
Bill Wilcke, University of Minnesota

* Indicates SFA state board members
SFA Membership & 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 ☐ South Central
☐ Coteau Ridge ☐ Southeast
☐ Crow River ☐ Western
☐ Lake Agassiz ☐ Unspecified

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!
Annual Conference continued from page 1

Buntrock Commons, which also houses the bookstore, a coffee shop, a host of meeting rooms, and St. Olaf’s exceptional dining service, managed by Bon Appétit. Every meal here features organic and locally produced foods such as Thousand Hills Cattle Co. beef, Valley View Farms milk and a cornucopia of vegetables from Cannon River/Hiawatha Chapter farmer members – and we’ll be able to taste it all. This year we actually scheduled the conference lunch in the cafeteria – it’s that good!

“Everything Want I Do is Illegal”

The much anticipated annual conference keynote speaker will be Joel Salatin, who will close the event with his address, “Everything I Want to Do Is Illegal.” Salatin is a self-described “Christian-libertarian-environmentalist-lunatic farmer,” whose family’s Polyface Farm in Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley is a multi-generational, pasture-based and “beyond organic” enterprise. At Polyface, Salatin’s family follows the guiding principles of transparency, grass-based agriculture, individuality, valuing community, following nature’s template, and embracing earthworms. By stacking enterprises, they build soil and produce “Salad Bar Beef,” “Pigaerator Pork,” pastured poultry yielding eggs, broilers, and turkeys, forage-based rabbits, forestry products, and profits. They market and sell products locally. In addition to creating and growing, they focus on healing – the food, land, economy, and culture.

Salatin is widely known throughout the alternative and sustainable farming world for his books and lectures promoting ecologically friendly and economically viable farming strategies and methods. Some of his writings include: *You Can Farm, Salad Bar Beef, Pastured Poultry Profit*, and *Everything I Want to Do Is Illegal*. He gained national fame after he was featured in Michael Pollan’s book *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*. For more information on Salatin and Polyface Farm, visit www.polyfacefarms.com.

Reception with Joel Salatin

Following Joel Salatin’s keynote address there will be an informal reception to close the conference. You’ll be able to meet Joel Salatin, ask him questions or get a book signed (his books will be on sale in the exhibit area). Local, artisan and organic cheese will be featured along with local apple cider. Savor these well-crafted foods while reflecting on the day and talking with old and new friends.

Breakout Sessions

SFA and its members tackle a variety of issues and challenges everyday. Some of these will be highlighted in breakout sessions including: Enterprising Diversity, Tales of Terra Made, Food and Farm Security in the 21st Century, Campus Affiliated Farms in Minnesota, Understanding the Farm Bill, Poultry & Marketing with Lori Callister, Joel Salatin on “Pigerator Pork,” local foods in the grocery store and more! These sessions will feature a variety of expert speakers from farmers and students to researchers and community organizers. See further descriptions of these sessions on page 14.

Simply Soup Supper

The Cannon River/Hiawatha Chapter of SFA will host “Simply Soup Supper: Sustainable Food, A Community Discussion”

Annual Conference continued on page 10
Annual Conference continued from page 9
on Friday, February 20 from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
(the evening before the conference) in Buntrock
Commons. This will include farmer, student and citizen
interactions, multigenerational discussion and a soup
and bread supper. All are invited to attend. RSVPs for
this event are appreciated. RSVP to Anne with SFA at
communications@sfa-mn.org or (320) 226-6318.

Sustainable Farming Association Awards
SFA will present its annual Sustainable Farmer Emeritus
and Distinguished Service Awards at the conference. Have
you nominated your favorite farmer or person dedicated
to the advancement of sustainable farming? You still can
by visiting www.sfa-mn.org/discussion, look for the “SFA
Awards” category. You can also email your nomination to
Mary Hanks (Mary.Hanks@state.mn.us) or mail in your
nomination form by Friday, January 30, 2009.

Exhibits
The array of exhibits and a Winter Farmers Market
is likely to catch your attention between thought-
provoking sessions and delicious food. Are you a
farmer or organization that would
like to exhibit? Contact Anne at
communications@sfa-mn.org
or (320) 226-6318 for more
information.

Sponsorship
Opportunities
Do you like what SFA
is doing? Would you like
to be a catalyst for our
work? Become a sponsor
– please use the sponsorship
form on page 18 or contact
Anne at (320) 226-6318
or communications@sfa-mn.org for more
information!

Join SFA for our biggest
and best conference yet
at St. Olaf College on
Saturday, February 21st!
The Unconventional Wisdom of Joel Salatin

By Laura Borgendale

Farming has never been easy. However, it is reasonable to suggest that the agriculture of today is more acutely volatile than ever before. There are so many forces at work – the weather, animal and plant genetics, disease, fuel prices, the global market – that it seems like a crazy career path for anyone to willingly enter in the 21st century. The idea of succeeding under these circumstances, particularly as a small business with no help from the government, is an even more doubtful proposition. This is why Joel Salatin from Polyface Farm in Swoope, Virginia, is exceptional: flying in the face of the ag-industrial complex “conventional wisdom,” he has created a sustainable, multi-generational farm business that is thriving without the help of subsidy payments, GMO technology or a million-dollar line of machinery.

Salatin, a third generation farmer featured in the bestselling book *Omnivore’s Dilemma* by Michael Pollan, has drawn on the foresight of his father and grandfather to create an innovative operation that looks and functions very differently from the animal confinement and row crop farms that currently dominate the countryside of the United States. His grandfather was a charter subscriber to Rodale’s “Organic Farming and Gardening” magazine in the 1940s, and his father was adopting alternative farming techniques in the 1960s while most farmers were hopping on the Green Revolution bandwagon. Salatin explains that his father had studied economics and “saw early on the economic fallacy of a small farm trying to compete as a commodity farm.” Rather than farming his Shenandoah Valley operation fencerow to fencerow, Salatin’s father established a perennial, grass-based system that continues to provide the foundation for Polyface Farm today.

Salatin was already engaged in the family farm operation at the age of ten, tending a flock of laying hens and selling the eggs to the neighbors via bicycle. As much as he loved farming, Salatin followed in the footsteps of countless promising farm kids who struggle to reconcile their own farming dreams with the daunting economic realities and negative societal pressures that often accompany that decision. Salatin left the farm and earned an English degree, excited about pursuing journalism in the midst of the Woodward/Bernstein era of muckraking. However, the siren song of the farm persisted, and Salatin – along with his wife, Teresa – used the proceeds of a year of frugal living to finance their transition into farming. In 1982, they returned to the 550-acre Salatin farm (450 acres forest and 100 acres open) not only to produce food and earn a living, but also to promote healing and innovation based in nature.

Innovation is truly at the heart of Polyface Farm, both in the means of production and the means of distribution. Grass-fed beef, pastured poultry and eggs, forage-based rabbits and “Pigaerator” pork (hogs are used as a catalyst to turn fermented cow bedding into compost) are all produced in an intricate cycle that stacks enterprises and takes advantage of the symbiotic relationships between organisms. According to Salatin, this largely grass-based system is not only efficient, but also very diversified, “inherently spreading the risk among many things” and Salatin continued on page 12
Salatin continued from page 11

promoting self-sufficiency rather than “farming the
government.”

Salatin also tries to minimize risk by using a
relationship marketing model rather than relying on
traditional avenues for food distribution. Being invested
in all the steps from field to fork further insulates the
farmer from risk and recoups profit that would normally
go to a middleman. Salatin direct markets to families,
restaurants, buying clubs and select retail outlets within
Polyface’s “foodshed,” which includes Washington
D.C. (three hours from the farm). Salatin will not ship
Polyface products long distances – he encourages people
to patronize their own local producers since that support
is the basis for any local food system.

There is a high demand for Salatin’s products – over
1000 families alone purchase food from Polyface Farm,
and Salatin has had to lease several hundred acres of
additional pasture for the last few years to meet this
demand. The Salatins also partnered with another
individual to buy a local slaughterhouse that is federally
inspected, which would give them greater access to the
processing link of the distribution chain.

Despite the positive growth of the business and the
increasing demand for Polyface products, Salatin is
frustrated by the plethora of government regulations
that “inhibit local food from entering the marketplace.”
Zoning laws, labor issues, prohibitively expensive
insurance and food safety legislation make it legally
challenging and expensive for farmers to do anything
but grow commodities. Opportunities for processing,
agri-tourism, collaborative marketing, added value and
distribution are denied to farmers, along with access to a
larger share of the ultimate food pie.

Salatin concludes that the “food police” are ceding
much of the power and profits to the corporate food
system while weakening the market share for farmers. It
is troublesome, he asserts, because in that process “they
have denied you freedom of choice to decide what you
want to eat.”
Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota

18th Annual Conference
Sustaining Our Farms: Produce, Pasture & Perseverance

February 21, 2009
St. Olaf College
Northfield, Minnesota

With keynote speaker:

Joel Salatin, grass-farmer, author and lecturer
discussing, “Everything I Want to Do is Illegal”

Schedule:

8:30 a.m. - Registration
9:00 a.m. - Conference Welcome
10:00 a.m. - Breakout Sessions (Block 1)
11:15 a.m. - Breakout Sessions (Block 2)
12:15 p.m. - Lunch
1:30 p.m. - Breakout Sessions (Block 3)
3:00 p.m. - Joel Salatin’s keynote address
    “Everything I Want to Do is Illegal”
4:30 p.m. - Reception with Joel Salatin
5:30 p.m. - The End

Visit the SFA of MN website: www.sfa-mn.org for a complete schedule and details or contact Anne with SFA at (320) 226-6318 or communications@sfa-mn.org.
Breakout Sessions:

Campus Affiliated Farms in Minnesota
More than just great opportunities for young people to learn and work on a farm, campus affiliated farms can provide healthy food for the college and community. This session presents a panel of four very different operations from St. Olaf College, University of Minnesota, College of St. Benedict, and Carlton College.

Enterprising Diversity
The faces of Minnesota farmers are changing and the fastest growing sectors of Minnesota's farmers are Women, Latino and Hmong farmers. Find out what challenges they face, the opportunities available, what the future may hold and what are the opportunities to work together. The panel will include Reginaldo (Regi) Haslett-Marroquin, Director, Rural Enterprise; Rae Rusnak, L&R Poultry and others.

Flood! Fire! Tornado!
What happens when disaster strikes on your farm? Are you ready to restart your enterprise? During this session you will hear testimonials from farmers who have overcome the destruction from natural disasters. Learn how communities have embraced producers and supported and helped them recover from tremendous changes to their operations and way of life. Panelists will share about their personal experience, how they recovered and recommendations for you to consider. Discussion will cover how we as a agriculture supported community will embrace impacted farmers as well as look at how we collectively can prepare and protect ourselves against natural disasters.

Food & Farm Security in the 21st Century
Jan Kelly from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture will present on HACCP (hazard analysis critical control point), using a local farmer's plan as a working example. She will address “why is this important” and “how to get started on your own HACCP plan.”

Joel Salatin on Pigerator Pork
Joel Salatin started a practice of rotating pigs through the cow's bedding in the pole shed and pastures that not only creates superior compost, but the pigs really thrive on it.

Keeping Great Farm Land Great for Farming
In this session you will learn about the challenges of land use planning and how they impact the softening of the rural -- urban growth boundary. As the increase in localized food networks requires closer proximity to urban population centers, access to farmland near these areas is getting more and more difficult. At the same time residential development is expanding outward into the surrounding countryside and pressuring farmers to sell their farms.

Minnesota Grocery Store Demand for Local and Organic Farm Products
Gigi DiGiacomo will discuss the regional and statewide findings of a 2007 survey of the southeast Minnesota region (http://www.regionalpartnerships.umn.edu/index.pl?iid=5835). Some of the findings covered will include: how many stores are purchasing local, organic foods, what they are interested in purchasing, what type of procurement obstacles they face, etc. Erin Varney of One Sun Farm of Wisconsin will be speaking with Gigi. Erin has owned & operated One Sun Farm with her husband Dave for 7 years. One Sun Farm is a value-added farm business producing many products including frozen pizza for wholesale accounts.

Poultry and Marketing with Lori Callister
Lori Callister of Callister Farms will speak about tailoring your poultry operation to fit your farm and your life. She will explore various methods of raising chickens, discuss processing, packaging and labeling, and marketing. She will also discuss the E2 poultry processing facility on her farm.

Tales of Terra Madre
Terra Madre (mother earth) is a gathering in Turin, Italy that happens every two years and brings together producers and others involved in agriculture and food activities worldwide. People who are committed to a more complex way of understanding quality food, one that is aware of the environmental and global balances, the sensory characteristics of food, the dignity of workers and the health of consumers. Various ministries of Italy, Slow Food International, and the City of Turin sponsored this conference. Three local delegates, Elizabeth Mulvihill, Laura Frerichs, and Joyce Schaffer attended this international conference and would like to share their experiences and pictures with you.

Understanding the 2008 Farm Bill
Michael Ahrichs, Farm Service Agency (FSFA) County Executive Director for Goodhue County and Lee Crawford, a FSA Farm Loan Manager based in Albert Lea, MN will be presenting. Mike will address the 2008 Farm Bill related to Farm Programs while Lee will cover FSA Farm Loan Programs. Lee and Mike will play a tag team in their presentations. Conference participants will gain more understanding on the 2008 Farm Bill from listening to the FSA speakers.
You can also register online at www.sfa-mn.org until Friday, February 20, 2009. For more information visit www.sfa-mn.org or contact Anne at communications@sfa-mn.org or (320) 226-6318.

### Registration Form

The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota’s 18th Annual Conference

“Sustaining Our Farms: Produce, Pasture & Perseverance”

Featuring keynote speaker Joel Salatin

† Saturday, February 21, 2009 † St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN †

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<th>Registration Category</th>
<th>Per Person</th>
<th>Number Attending</th>
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<td>6 • Children's Programming  (For kids 3-12 years old (and potty trained). Your children will join you for the noon meal with the large group; this is included in the registration fee. Please list your children and ages on the back of this page. Family maximum of $32.)</td>
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<td>8 • Joel Salatin keynote address – ONLY  (STUDENT RATE – This does not include lunch or any other conference sessions)</td>
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<td>9 • SFA Membership Fees and Sustaining Contribution Gifts*  (total from back of page)</td>
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**Total Fees Enclosed** *(Sum of rows 1-9)*
Contact Information

Name(s) of conference attendees ________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________ City ______________________ State _____ Zip ________

Phone __________________________ Email ____________________________________________

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

Children’s Programming (list all children who will be participating)

Name _________________________ Age ___ Name _________________________ Age ___

Name _________________________ Age ___ Name _________________________ Age ___

Membership and Sustaining Contribution Form

Become a member...or renew your membership! If you join or renew now, your membership will be current until 2010! Your Sustaining Contribution will accelerate our progress toward a more sustainable food and farming system. To “keep you posted” of interesting events and happenings in sustainable agriculture, you will receive a year’s subscription to the CornerPost, SFA’s quarterly newsletter. SFA of MN membership must be current to register for SFA of MN’s 18th Annual Conference at the reduced rate. You can also become a sustaining member & contribute online at the SFA of MN web site: www.sfa-mn.org.

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<th>Support SFA in 2009!</th>
<th>Fee</th>
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<tr>
<td>Annual SFA membership or renewal</td>
<td>$30 per family</td>
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<td>Sustaining Contribution</td>
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Total SFA Support (please list this total in row 9 on the front side of this page)

I would like to receive SFA’s bi-weekly events email (If “yes,” please list email address):

I designate that my membership goes to:

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

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

Thank you for your support!
2009 SFA Awards Nomination Form

Based on qualifications of a high level of dedication, commitment, service, perseverance, achievement, and contributions to the advancement of Sustainable Farming in Minnesota, I nominate the following person(s) for the:
(choose one):
___Sustainable Farmer Emeritus Award (farmer or retired farmer only),
___SFA Distinguished Service Award (may be a non-farmer)

To be announced at the 2008 SFA Annual Conference on Saturday, February 21, 2009.

Name: __________________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________________

Phone: ___________________ Email: ______________________________

Please write a brief rationale of why your nominee(s) deserves the Farmer Emeritus Award or the Distinguished Service Award:
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

Your signature: __________________________________________________________________

Mail your nomination form by Friday, January 30, 2009 to: SFA of MN, c/o Mary Hanks, 625 Robert Street North, St. Paul, MN 55155 or submit your form electronically to: Mary.Hanks@state.mn.us or post your nomination on the SFA of MN web site discussion board: www.sfa-mn.org/discussion.
Sponsorship / Exhibitor Form

Save time and postage by completing this form online and transferring funds electronically through SFA’s website at www.sfa-mn.org.

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<th>Contribution (Please indicate amount)</th>
<th>Complimentary Registrations Included:</th>
<th>Number of People Attending</th>
<th>Additional People at $30 per Person</th>
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**For farmer members is for current Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota farmer members.

Names(s) of Attendees: _________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Organization or Business Name:
________________________________________________________________________________

Address ___________________________________ City ________________________ Zip ____________

Phone __________________________________ Email _________________________________________

Does Your Exhibit Require Electricity? o Yes o No

Are you a Farmer? o Yes o No

Total Enclosed: $ __________________________

Please mail this form and payment by Friday, January 30 to: SFA of MN, 29731 302nd St, Starbuck, MN 56281

Thank you for your support of sustainable agriculture in Minnesota!
Lodging:

AmicInn Motel & Suites
1320 Bollenbacher Drive
Northfield, MN 55057
(507) 645-7761
www.americinn.com

SFA has rooms on hold at the AmericInn Motel & Suites of Northfield for the night of February 20, 2009. These rooms will be held until Tuesday, January 20, 2009. To reserve a room ask for one of the “Sustainable Farming Association” rooms.

Archer House Historic Inn
212 Division St.
Northfield, MN 55057
(507) 645-5661
800-247-2235
www.archerhouse.com

Archibald Inn Bed & Breakfast
107 First Street
Dundas, MN 55019
(507) 664-9481
www.archibaldinn.com

Country Inn
300 Hwy 3 S.
Northfield, MN 55057
(507) 645-2286
800-456-4000
www.countryinns.com

The Magic Door Bed & Breakfast
818 Division Street S.
(507) 664-9096
www.magicdoorbb.com

Super 8 Motel
1420 Riverview Drive
Northfield, MN 55057
(507) 663-0371
www.super8.com

Directions:

St. Olaf College,
1520 St. Olaf Avenue
Northfield, MN
www.stolaf.edu

From I-35 (from the north or south)
* Take I-35 to Hwy. 19 East (Exit 69, Northfield exit)
* Travel east on Hwy. 19 for approximately 6 miles into the Northfield city limits
* The main entrance to the college will be on your left. Enter the campus here.

From US-52 (from the north or south)
* Take US-52 to Hwy. 19 (in Cannon Falls)
* Travel west on Hwy. 19 into Northfield, which will include several stop signs and turns.
* Continue west on Hwy. 19 until you reach the western edge of Northfield
* The main entrance to the college will be on your right. Enter the campus here.

Once on campus follow the directional signs to Buntrock Commons (building 3 on the map on page 20). A more detailed map of campus is available at www.stolaf.edu/visiting/maps/screen2d.html.

Parking
No parking permit will be required for the day. The most centrally located parking lot is north of (adjacent to) Buntrock Commons. Overflow parking will be available in the parking lot by the Skoglund Athletic Center.
St. Olaf College Campus Map

Map courtesy of www.stolaf.edu/visiting/maps/

Produced and last updated by mapformation, August 2007. Copyright: St. Olaf College.
Season Extension and Climatic Adaptation: Where are We Growing?

By Joe Gransee Bowman

In our changing world, producers, entrepreneurs and researchers have developed many creative solutions for growing in challenging conditions. Recently we have seen a critical mass upswing of interest in season extension. From row covers to cold frames, hoop houses, high tunnels, all the way to full-on greenhouses, there are a range of options that growers can choose to invest in with their time and money. Workshops and seminars have sprung up all over the upper mid-west on how to extend the growing season. The main structure options remain locked in the age old debate of durability versus cost. It is the cost that we in the sustainable farming movement need to consider carefully as we choose a direction to invest our resources. This cost requires looking at the financial, social, and environmental impacts of our decisions and how they relate to the amazing benefits of season extension. Until now, this framework has been upheld by low cost petroleum based plastics. We need to look at how an agriculture supported community will protect farmers’ investments in infrastructure for season extension; extreme financial resources that vary worldwide; and how guiding the market will influence accessibility and product development that improves quality of life at home and abroad.

Considerations

Once the decision has been made to invest in season extending infrastructure based on market assessments, the accessible level of cost will reflect the cash-flow of a farmer’s operation. Limited capital will prevent investment in durable materials, which for some may compromise values built around sustainability. A grower can choose between a temporary or permanent structure, or something that transitions between the two.

Materials Selection and Method of Assembly

Addressing the durability and site placement issues for a structure means facing the elements. In our bioregion this includes wind, snow, extreme temperatures, freezing, thawing, air pressure, moisture, site elevation, drainage, soil makeup and solar heat gain. Currently, materials employed for dealing with these variables are either resource intensive to be built for longevity, or disposable with a volume that will challenge our current waste-streams.

Selecting materials and the method of assembly is based on prioritized quality or cost. One can choose higher upfront costs with more durable resilient frames that will last or a low-cost system of materials that have a greater chance of mechanically failing under the extreme conditions found in season extension structures. Are materials favored that permit solar heat gain that are glass, polycarbonate, or plastic? If cost is the deciding factor then we need to balance the long-term financial

High Tunnels continued on page 22
High Tunnels continued from page 21 and environmental costs. Perhaps we could start by weighing the tonnage of poly on an international level that will be floating into our neighbors’ property and our waterways. The beauty of petroleum based plastic is its upfront low cost, not its ecological footprint or durability.

High tunnels with soil heating plastics and drip tape, have a lot of material waste that has to be replaced within two to four years in order to grow in colder climates. Although much more durable, the resource intensive glass and polycarbonate options have their drawbacks as well, as they require significant amounts of energy in their manufacturing, transportation and eventual disposal.

The choice of materials also influences how the structure can be used. What are the goals for what the structure will do? Is ease of assembly a choice based on the simplicity of a kit or does cost savings take priority by fabricating a less expensive frame built on site? Do we, as SFA then need to educate and train our trainers for teaching the methods of home built construction for high tunnels that resist the elements? Will the structure be stationary or portable? Are we adding soil or digging out the soil and insulating the bed then adding ductwork before replacing the soil, heating not just the air and soil, but also heating air in the soil with solar thermal infrastructure? The versatility for growing is staggering in options and benefits. The fundamental question is not about if we should extend the growing season, but rather how much and what kind of stuff is being used to build these things. We, as sustainable farmers, need to avoid getting caught up in the zeal of better profits for less cost without asking how we are going to do it in the long run.

**What are We Doing**

Ultimately, the benefits of season extension are revolutionizing our way of life on a global scale. Internationally in colder climates or regions with significant rainfall, season extension allows people to use a simple technology for local food production. The technology is accessible in developing nations because of the relatively low investment cost compared to the potential output and profit. In some higher precipitation areas the reduction in plant diseases spread by rain, and a sheltered growing environment means being able to feed more people in a community with locally grown, healthy food. The challenge is how to achieve this end without smothering the world in poly refuse.

For now, the first step is to determine where does the plastic go – into the nebulous away such as a landfill – or does it go into a plastic recycling system where waste equals food, creating a resource for making more material. Is looking at high temperature incineration of poly for energy production a really good option, at a time when climate change is a result of what we have been burning to heat and power our lives? What is the long term goal? Do we, as sustainable farmers, need to engage innovation of new biomaterials that can be composted back into the soil after a few years of service? Can these structures be adaptable, starting with a plastic cover to eventually be replaced with more durable materials as profits allow for investment over time? Can the structure be portable to allow the soil to be amended with what is grown rather than what can be poured on it and mixed from a bag or bottle? Should we consider reducing soil borne diseases by changing locations for growing, or being able to move lighter structures to use when and where they are needed in the garden? As members of the farming community, we need to ask the long term questions and determine how we are going to develop infrastructure and our food production system. A volume of great work has been done by a lot of dedicated people to get us to this stage. Now it is our turn to build on this wealth of knowledge and experience, and pull together resources from farmers, researchers, supporting organizations and agencies, as well as manufacturers to create solutions that optimize our goals. From the perspective of sustainable farming we need to ask in what direction are going? Let the discussion continue so we can decide which way to grow.
A Remembrance of SFA’s Ken Peterson

By Dennis Johnson

Long-time SFA member and supporter Ken Peterson of Tamarack died on October 16, 2008. Ken was a leader in founding the Lake Superior Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association, was the SFA State Board Secretary for several years, and was awarded Sustainable Farmer Emeritus award in 2008.

Ken was born in 1929 in Crosby to Toivo and Helmi Peterson. Ken graduated from school in Tamarack in 1947. After school he worked as the manager at a Hibbing grocery store. On October 22, 1949 he married Ina. Ken served two years in the US Army. After his discharge in 1952, Ken moved back to Tamarack and took over the family dairy farm, living the life he loved on the land. In addition to farming, Ken worked for Production Credit Association in Aitkin and Carlton, and later for the Carlton County Extension Office.

Few people were fully aware of the broad influence, wide respect, or diverse, but related services Ken rendered. A supporter of civil rights, he participated in the 1965 march at Selma, Alabama, that was a turning point in the civil rights movement.

He worked tirelessly to improve the nutrition of the hungry people of the world. Roger Livdahl, retired director of the Hunger Appeal of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, but then a Pastor at Superior, WI, relates how Ken invited him to a meeting at the Peterson farm. The meeting featured Art Simon, founder of Bread for the World. Livdahl doubted that Ken had the influence to draw Simon in foul weather and failed to attend. The meeting did go on, just one of the many outcomes that can be attributed to Ken’s bulldog, but gentle, tenacity.

He was instrumental in the establishment of the Lutheran hunger program. He was chair of the Hunger Committee for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA for many years. He led tours to visit sites of poverty in Mexico. He was the first person to be recognized for outstanding synod leadership of a hunger program in the ELCA. Ken was very involved in ELCA Lutheran World Hunger and Sustainable Farming. He was a member of the Democratic Party, served on the AMPI Dairy Board, the Land Stewardship Project Board, and was a faithful member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church and its church council. The majority of Ken’s activities centered on farming issues, his church, and the ELCA World Hunger.

Ken was preceded in death by his wife, Ina in 2005; two sons, Jeffrey and Scott; brothers, Harold “Pete” and Jerry; and sisters, Dorothy Walsh and Delores Lippo. He is survived by four daughters, Deb (Paul) Johnson and Sandy (Carl) Aho, both of Kettle River; Lynn (Gerald) Rosenbaum of Lakewood, Washington; and Lori (Bruce) Hanson of Brooklyn Park; 13 grandchildren and 21 great grandchildren. Funeral services were held on October 19, 2008 in Bethany Lutheran Church in Cromwell. Burial was in Lakeside Cemetery in Wright.
Remembering Grandpa Dal (Gene Lourey)

by Marlana Benzie-Lourey

Eugene Dallase “Dal” Lourey passed away unexpectedly at his home in Kerrick, MN on October 12, 2008. He was a long time supporter of sustainable farming and social justice. Gene is survived by his wife of 46 years, Becky, children and grandchildren.

This piece was written in memory of him by his daughter-in-law, Marlana, and reprinted with permission from the Askov American.

I was standing at the kitchen sink, a towering pile of dishes before me, my hands soaked and the end nowhere in sight. My kids were just toddlers, tumbling and bumbling around the kitchen at my feet.

Slowly and quietly, the front door creaked open. “Grandpa Dal!” Stuart blurted, speeding toward our unexpected guest. My husband Tony’s father, Gene, stepped cautiously into the kitchen as his grandsons ran to his feet, calling out his nickname, Dal, a shortened version of his middle name, Dallas.

Dal looked down and chuckled, offering a quick tease that sent the boys running and giggling, only to come back begging for more.

“Ah, yeah, hey,” Dal said, nodding my way, in his characteristic, roundabout fashion. “Yeah, I was just driving by and, you know, you said you were thinking about raising goats, and, well, I have these books.”

Under his arm was a stack of books, magazines, and flyers. From the top he pulled a green, clothbound copy of the 1903 “Angora Goat Raising and Milch Goats,” tapping the cover with his finger.

“You know, you really ought to look at this,” he said seriously. Information was being lost, he told me, as he went over the stack of material on rare breeds. Did I know that big agriculture had thrown sustainability and environmental conservation in the ditch, he asked, as he pointed out flyers with “how to” advice on everything from manure management to cheese making.

Dal had started out quietly, almost timid, but now he was on a roll. He branched off into new ideas he had for fencing and told me how he’d been trying to figure out a way to feed nuisance flies to chickens. But he didn’t like chickens. Someone else would have to raise them.

By now, he was downright loud. People need to learn to live off the land and can’t rely on Big Ag, he said. Local jobs could be created right here. Your children can learn to be a new breed of farmer. He got louder and talked faster. The information poured out of him like a fount that had been let wide open. My sons stood still, transfixed. Colton’s eyes looked serious. Stu was in awe.

Yeah, well, anyway, here are some books,” he said, tapering off to a mumble as he turned to the door. “I was just driving by.”

Eventually, I brought home two goats that were better at testing the integrity of fence lines than anything else. I tried feeding Asian lady beetles to my chickens, but they wouldn’t eat them. Dal laughed when I reported back to him.

Over the years, Dal would bring me information on rare and unusual breeds of beef cattle, greenhouses, methane production, raising pigs, growing apples, harvesting timber. Always, the conversation would start slowly, as if there was nothing new to say, but then the ideas would come.

The dreams he had seemed impossible, or, at best, impractical, but each time he could convince me that there must be a better way to harness the earth’s bounty in a manner that would keep us from relying on the petroleum monster that was certain to lead us to war. He’d think of a way, he was sure, to one day make it all work, his reading glasses balanced on the end of his nose as he wrote target production numbers with a finely sharpened pencil on a yellow legal pad. A mathematician by trade, Dal charted his aspirations for his farm like he tracked elections and polling results — always with an unflagging hope that one day the earth would find a harmonious balance, injustices would be righted, and greed would be conquered.

In the hours before Dal died, he spent a sunny fall afternoon trimming trails through the woods, surely planning the next timber project, thinking about a plantation that would not be ready for harvest until the

Grandpa Dal continued on page 25
CSP: The New and Improved Conservation Stewardship Program

By Adam Warthesen

In June 2008 the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 became law. More commonly known as the 2008 Farm Bill, the legislation left much to be desired, most evident is the lack of changes to the flawed commodity programs. Yet, one bright spot for family farmers and sustainable agriculture is major investments and advancements in working lands conservation – particularly the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) formally known as the Conservation Security Program.

The new bill simplifies and expands CSP to help farmers maintain, establish, and increase conservation on land they are actively farming. Funding was increased to $12 billion over the next 10 years with a goal of enrolling nearly 13 million acres each year or 115 million acres by 2017. Considering that since 2004 a mere 17.5 million that were enrolled under the old CSP the new program is expected to have a much greater impact. The new funds allow CSP to increase the number of producers rewarded for managing their land in ways that create real and measurable conservation outcomes such as healthy soil, clean water, and wildlife habitat.

From old to new – CSP has gone through additional changes such as:
1. Eligibility is no longer tied to watershed boundaries—all farmers can apply.
2. The old three tier structure of enrollment has been scrapped for a whole farm approach (either the whole farm is in the program or out).
3. The sign-up period will be “continuous,” and new guidelines or ranking criteria bring greater clarity and predictability to the program.

Right now USDA is drafting rules for the program. Following the release of the rules a comment period will be held for public input. CSP is expected to available to farmers in the first half of 2009. Overall CSP holds greater promise than ever. With expanded eligibility, increased funding, and a simplified enrollment process many more farmers and acres will be able to benefit from the program.

For more on CSP, including a new fact sheets, contact the Land Stewardship Project at 612-722-6377 or visit their website at: www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_csp.html.

Grandpa Dal continued from page 24

next generation. A few miles away, Tony and I were admiring the last of our new cows that had arrived a few days earlier — short-legged, fuzzy things suited for grazing our northern pastures without the need for corn. A rare, old breed, brought back from a simpler time.

Stuart, Colton, and Chelsea leaned their long teenage bodies over the fence in a vain attempt to pet the shaggy black heads as the cows eagerly gobbled a bale of hay.

“Grandpa Dal has got to see these,” Stu would say. “He’d love ‘em, wouldn’t he?”
Be a “Local Vocal” and become an important part of the growing local food movement

There is no doubt that right here in the Upper Minnesota River Valley some of the best food in the nation is being produced. From Dry Weather Creek’s on farm milled corn meal and flour to Pastures A Plenty’s legendary smoked bacon, you would be hard pressed to find finer. The Twin Cities finest restaurants have known for years about the bounty of our incredible farms and the nutritional and culinary advantage afforded when serving these products. But here in Western Minnesota we are often hard pressed to be able to find these healthy and fresh foods and it is being produced right in our own back yard.

This is why U of M West Central Partnership and its Pride of the Prairie partners have initiated the Buy Fresh Buy Local Campaign to spotlight the delicious fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy and bakery items from our region and to open the vital discussion about the economic benefits of creating a strong community-based food system.

They are known as “Vocal Locals” and we want you to become one!

The Upper Minnesota River Valley Buy Fresh Buy Local (BFBL) Chapter is building collaborations all the way up and down the food chain from farmers to processors, restaurants, food co-ops and other locally owned food stores and supportive organizations. And this food chain also includes YOU. The individual is a critically important part of the local foods equation because without you there would be no demand from the grocer, the restaurant or from the sustainable farmer.

The cost of being a “Vocal Local” is minimal but the advantages are huge as you help build and show the way to a sustainable and healthy food future for our community. You can become a “Vocal Local” partner of the Uppers Minnesota River Valley Buy Fresh Buy Local Chapter by going to the Pride of the Prairie web site, www.prideoftheprairie.org/freshlocal and clicking on How do I become a Partner.

As a “Vocal Local” Partner, you will receive a Buy Fresh Buy Local Partner decal and be listed as a member on the website and in the 2009 local foods guide publication. For more information, you can also contact Anne Borgendale at communications@sfa-mn.org or (320) 226-6318, a “Local Vocal” Partner of the Buy Fresh Buy Local Upper Minnesota River Valley Chapter.

Farmers, Farmers Markets, and Restaurants in West Central Minnesota (the Upper Minnesota River Valley) who grow, sell or serve locally produced foods and are interested in being a part of the updated 2009 local foods guide should also contact Anne at the email or phone number listed above. The print edition of the 2009 local foods guide will be ready for the start of the growing season.
Guiding the way to a bright farming future: Mark & Terri Thell receive the 2008 Farmer’s Voice Award

By Anne Borgendale

“How do I compost horse manure?” Probably not a question you hear every day, but it was raised at the information tent for the Annual Harvest Festival in Duluth, MN, this past September. This is the type of information that only a seasoned farmer like Mark Thell, who happened to be volunteering in the tent that day, would know. A person doesn’t acquire this type of information through glamorous work, but rather through a lifetime of experience.

In honor of his service and dedication to sustainable farming and the Lake Superior Chapter of SFA, Mark, along with his wife Terri, were recognized at the 2008 Harvest Festival with the Farmers’ Voice Award. This award is given to honor SFA members 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.

Both Mark and Terri possess farm backgrounds. Mark grew up on a farm near Wrenshall, MN, while Terri was raised on a farm by St. Cloud, MN. After high school, Mark enlisted in the Air Force and served overseas. He returned to the Duluth area and completed his electronics coursework. Mark met Terri, who is trained as a social worker, while they were both living in Duluth.

Their first farm was 20 acres near Esko, MN. They subsequently purchased a 230-acre farm near Wrenshall, MN, which is where they currently reside. Because the house on this farm was quite small for their family of six, they had to add on. In the process of remodeling, they also made their house a model of sustainable construction. The entire house was super insulated and wood from the farm was used for heat. They also purchased a farm-sized wind turbine, which provided the majority of their electricity.

The ideals of sustainability apply not just to their home, but to their farming as well. The guiding value they follow on the farm is to produce healthy food. They predominately raise grass-fed beef, but seasonally they also have pastured pigs and chickens. Mark also grows some barley and peas for feed. In addition to crops and livestock, they raised four children on the farm as well: Tanya, Joe, Kristy and Jim. While Mark and Terri are both retired from their day jobs (Mark from the paper mill and Terri from being a special education teacher), farming, outreach and family now fill their time.

Terri works to link children with farms. For example, she recently brought a chicken to a University of Minnesota, Duluth daycare and talked about farming. When she was teaching, her students and other classes were frequent visitors to the farm. She also keeps a large garden that her daughter Kristy helps to tend and

The Thells continued on page 28
Thells continued from page 27
she has several grandchildren who are frequent visitors.

Mark continues to farm today. His son Jim
purchased Mark’s mother’s farm several years ago, and
Mark and Jim often farm together. Mark is also active
with a number of organizations besides SFA, including:
Minnesota Farmers Union, the Carlton County Soil
and Water Conservation District, the Wrenshall
Development Corporation (they work on economic
development and he’s the treasurer) and CERTs (Clean
Energy Resource Teams). He handles the finances for
his church council and is also the church handy man.
Last but not least, he continues to run WR Grains.

WR Grains was started several years back when
Mark started grinding and mixing his own feed for his
livestock. He didn’t like having strange particles that
were left in the feed mixer getting into his feed, so he
made his own. The economics of it worked out, and he
already had a mixer on his farm and he could grind and
mix feed around his work schedule. For a few years he
worked on different feed mix variations and fed them
to his own stock. Word spread about the feed mix, and
Mark started selling it to his friends and neighbors. It
eventually got to the point where he and his partner,
Marty Palmershine, contracted out the grinding and
mixing to Luxemburg Feed Mill. The feed is still high
quality, with no grain by-products in it. In their mix
they use a high grade of calcium, flax and a fishmeal
that hasn’t been chemically preserved. The feed mixes
are primarily for poultry, but there are hog mixes too.

It was while in the midst of raising a family and
farming in the early 1990s that Mark and Terri first
got involved with SFA. Ken Peterson invited them to
attend a series of meetings on sustainable agriculture
in northeastern Minnesota. Those meetings created the
framework for what became the Lake Superior Chapter
of SFA (formerly known as the Northeast Chapter).
Throughout the years, Mark served on the chapter board
and on the SFA state board. While he is no longer a
board member, he still helps out with various chapter
events and the Harvest Festival.

Mark and Terri both feel very honored to have
received that award and see it as “quite the recognition.”
They are in good company, too – past Farmers’ Voice
Award recipients include: Irv and Shirley Peterson, Ken
Peterson, Will Hedquist and Dan and Margaret Webster.
As Mark noted, these are the people that built the Lake
Superior Chapter and made the Harvest Festival the
success it is today.

Mark sees a bright future for farming in the Lake
Superior Chapter, with a dynamic mix of Christmas
tree farms, agro-forestry, CSAs, urban orchards, grapes
and chickens in Duluth. The number of young people
who are interested in farming is also growing. This
year, after much hard work and fundraising, there is a
Farm Beginnings® course (www.farmbeginnings.org)
in Duluth. As is customary in the program, veteran
farmers like Mark come in to share their knowledge.
He spoke at a class session on Holistic Farm
Management.

Mark and Terri feel that the farms in the Lake
Superior chapter are taking on different forms and that
many more people are involved. They are folks that
you may not think of as farmers, but they all fit into
it. There is a lot of energy going towards farming and
environmental stewardship. The future is bright, and
it’s even brighter when there are dedicated farmers like
Mark and Terri to help guide the way.

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Taking order from now until early spring for 2009 season

www.sfa-mn.org Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota :: 28
Conversations with the Land:
Standing beside the archer

By Jim VanDerPol

These are the second and third in a series of six articles that originally appeared in Graze magazine.

The importance of dealing with technology cannot be underestimated if we are to get at the root of what bedevils us in rural America. People who think physical work is or ought to be beneath them, loneliness and alienation from the world around us, including nature, broken relationships, lack of willingness to take a risk, general apathy, and even the horrendous rates of murder, abuse and suicide in our nation are all related at least in part with our unwillingness or inability to get technology into perspective. The powers that be are picking us off one at a time, and technology is one of their handiest tools because it can put us by ourselves and make us vulnerable. Let me give a few examples.

We use a computer in our business. We bought it at one of the super duper “max” stores. When it locked up and quit two days short of warranty expiration the super duper “max” store’s troubleshooters tried to “fix” it over the phone. When that failed they told us they would give us a box. We would need to drive the twenty miles to get the free box. Then we could carefully box up the computer, drive the twenty miles to the bulk mailing place, mail it and then wait three weeks while they tried to fix it. They got it fixed and we got it back.

I have a phone in the house, to which this computer is hooked for e-mail and word processing purposes. The line got staticky and then went dead a few months ago. We were sure it was the line at fault and so called the telephone company. The service man came out, looked the situation over and said it was the phone. I didn’t want to drive back to the super duper store for another cripple of a phone, so I told the service man, who I have known for years, to bring a phone out when he got this direction again. This he did. It still works. The store wouldn’t give us our money back on the defective phone, offering instead a credit which I don’t want to use because I don’t want any more of their stuff.

It was my pleasure to present about our farm and business on a four stop tour in another part of the country a few years ago with a woman who is one of the best graziers I know. The conversation got to overwintering at one point and she told me she planned to try using horsepower to drag the big bales into position for feeding. Then she asked me not to mention it for fear the audiences wouldn’t take her seriously if she were known to use horses.

Now notice the lack of any human contact in the first example, other than the chance to pass a few words with the shipping clerk at the bulk mailing place. In the second, I opted for human contact with the telephone serviceman. It is important to note that it is only because of my somewhat advanced age that I even know that telephone service men have to do with, guess what, telephones! And the third is simply a statement of how far we have come in a poorly considered direction that one of our brightest would question her own preference for biology over diesel fuel.

This is no diatribe against technology. But if we think about the difference between technology as a tool and technology as a master we will begin to see choice as an option. In places this choice is, or should be easy. A thirteen year old boy who can’t be talked to at home or in school because his nose is buried in the game boy is not a happy well adjusted kid. A farmer who must use a three wheeler in the pasture in the daytime and VanDerPol continued on page 30
VanDerPol continued from page 29
then a treadmill in the house in the evening to keep his heart in shape is being silly. One who goes into deep hock to buy a gps system to steer his tractor deserves to go broke trying to pay for it; he has given away to the tech companies what little was left of his occupation. But it is not always so easy. Assuming that we can learn clearly to see the difference between using and being used by technology, there still are going to be a lot of gadgets that could be argued either way. And in any case, the argument leaves out the human factor, which is where I started in the first paragraph. This is critical. Considering just electronics, we can see a line between radio, then television, then computers, then interactive internet and cellular phone technology and that line leads directly away from human interaction. It is possible to listen to radio in a group and talk at the same time, less so with television. At computers the human group drops off, replaced by semi-imaginary internet “friends” and with interactive internet, even those friends have been replaced digitally with a machine that reads your responses and gives you what you want.

A major complaint from adolescent girls is that adolescent boys are more interested in internet porn than in the girls! Maybe that’s what ails my boars!

Bringing our humanity back into our thinking is going to be difficult because it will feel like swimming upstream, against progress. We have after all, as my late friend Paul Gruchow observed, spent several generations now preferring our neighbor’s land to our neighbor, leaving us as Leviticus warned, alone in the midst of the land. Any of us left in farming are at least somewhat guilty of that.

But there are sometimes second chances and it may be that history will offer us just that, with the shortages of fuel and the deteriorating economic conditions. The question is will we choose for people, for neighbors, for family if we get a do over? Can we drive change toward that possibility by making better choices right now? But are we up to choosing people over other good things, such as production? There are no easy answers, but we should be catching on by now that for people to be whole and healthy, they must be needed.

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Value added businesses that are closely connected with farms and farm products have the potential to increase opportunity in rural areas. Our business, as an example, uses a local state equal-to processor to cut and prepare the meats for store sales in the Twin Cities. This means that meat cutters employed by this rural processor are doing the job of several metropolitan in-store meat counter employees. In developing this business, then, we have not only employed a local butcher, but gotten that shop to do work that it otherwise would not be doing, thereby replacing employment in the urban area. Does Tyson’s accountant live in a rural place? Ours does, as well as the graphic designer that does our advertising, the print shop that prints our labels, and all of our top management(us).

The importance of this aspect of farm value added businesses is significant. Yet it will not occur occasionally. There is no shortage of farm product value added businesses that operate with some or all of the most desirable work done in the urban areas and the top management locally is the plant manager. Ethanol is an example of this, as is the turkey manure electric generating plant located just up the road here. Large commodity confinement livestock production is prone to this model as well. Think of Smithfield Foods. Our labels are produced locally and our graphic design is rural in origin because our goals make it happen. And here is where the one percent deflection I talked of several issues ago comes in again.

Our label business does not make the success of the small printer that does them. The small rural trucker we use for meat hauling would have thin soup indeed if he tried to live on just our contribution. Our accountant does business with many other individuals and businesses. We are not the sole customer of our meats processor. But in each of these cases we contribute to the success of each business, and we do so deliberately.

It is more expensive to haul meat than live animals. But if we hauled the hogs to a processor in or near the Twin Cities, and arranged the distribution from there, we would be supporting an urban business and urban employment and therefore the civil infrastructure (such as schools, roads, services) there rather than here. The distinction is important to us because we have children and grandchildren and we need schools, stores and roads here. We think that it is largely up to us as

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rural businesses to provide them. Now we would not give away the business to accomplish this. The difference in trucking the two products is not huge, but it is significant. The investment keeps faith with our community. If our contribution helps make a rural business vital and viable, it is likely that other businesses and people will become customers as well and a good thing we have helped to start may take root and grow, benefiting all of us.

Some of the jobs springing from a farm value added business will be ordinary entry level employment and some will be more the professional category. It is important that we as rural folks not be talking down either type. We have some regrettable tendencies along those lines that will not be helpful in the building of a new rural economy. As I have indicated before, we have need of more people on our farms. Some of these will be employees. We farmers have been impressed enough with ourselves as owners over the years that we tend to project a kind of disdain for wage labor. (farm hand, flunky, etc) But a farm that wishes to produce livestock in a manner acceptable to a certain group of consumers and then market animal products to that group is going to find it necessary to find and employ or cooperate with people who can relate to and handle livestock animals in a non-confinement situation. These are not professional people, but they are few in number and we need what they can provide. We need to act accordingly.

Similarly, we need professional people and sales staff. These folks must be respected for what they are and can do and treated accordingly. We farmers have for too many years had it tough enough economically so that we have compensated for the damage done to us by a culture that expects us to work too hard and earn too little by looking down on everyone else, thus propping up our own sense of value. But now, with the opportunities that are presenting themselves, we need to accept our own value. In doing this, we should find it easier to see the value in others. For myself, I never respected a salesman until I actually had to try to do it myself. Sales is hard hard work, but without the sales staff the business falters and fails.

It is difficult to generate much excitement around the idea that economic improvement for our very rural areas is best accomplished one farm and one business at a time by the way in which we make decisions. It seems so pokey and slow. But it is good to remember that it is real and that the gains, small as they may be are apt to be longer lasting than those produced by that elaborate shell game by which various companies hold rural municipalities hostage for property tax giveaways and write offs in exchange for locating light manufacturing and assembly type jobs in rural areas. These businesses generally don’t outlast the buildings built to house them, and few ever generate enough local benefits to repay the tax income given up.

It seems likely that we should learn to think the only help we ever will get is that which we give ourselves.

This originally appeared in Graze. You can request a sample copy at PO Box 48, Belleville, WI 53508; graze@ticon.net; 608-455-3311.
ANNOUNCING...

THE 4TH ANNUAL
MINNESOTA GARLIC FESTIVAL

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22, 2009

WRIGHT COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS,
HOWARD LAKE, MN

WWW.SFA-MN.ORG/GARLICFEST/

Minnesota Garlic Festival is the premier event for lovers of garlic and good times, promoting gourmet garlic farming in Minnesota. Family friendly, fun filled and fragrant, this festival features local foods, chefs, music, artisans, games, competitions, and lots of garlic - all in support of a healthy environment, sustainable farms and vital rural communities in Minnesota.

COME TO FARM COUNTRY AND TASTE THE BOUNTY!

*Exhibitors and Vendors must submit an application and be in alignment with the mission of the festival and SFA of MN. Festival Mission Statement: “Minnesota Garlic Festival promotes state-wide garlic production and sustainable agricultural practices, enhancing consumer awareness and the vitality of rural communities through education and the arts in an entertaining and festive atmosphere.”
Minnesota Dairy Initiative Update: A snapshot of Valley View Dairy, Maple Lake, MN

By Jeremy Lanctot

As the saying goes, if you always do what you always did, you’ll always get what you always got. This holds true for an organic dairy farm in central Wright County near Maple Lake. Elsenpeters decided to NOT do the same ol’ thing and have been making major changes over the last few years. Dan and Luke Elsenpeter are brothers and partners on their family farm of 120 acres. Dan is married and has three children and Luke is getting married soon. Besides their home farm, they rent additional cropping acreage totaling 450 acres.

I first stumbled across the Elsenpeter farm while helping Glen Borgerding and Ag Resource Consulting, Inc. (320-845-2673) take soil samples to develop a fertility and Nutrient Management Plan. At the time, Dan and Luke Elsenpeter were transitioning to organic dairy production and were researching upgrading their facilities to improve grazing management practices and improve their milking facilities. The easy part was for me to suggest resources and farmer contacts to discuss possible plans. The hard part was for Elsenpeters to implement these changes in concert with operating the day-to-day business of a moderately complex dairy operation.

When I add up the number of processes, systems and sub-enterprises involved in the modern dairy farm, I am constantly amazed and impressed with the management skills these farmers have to master to make their home business a success. Couple this with droughts, disease and dismal economic conditions makes success in any type of farming an illusive goal many times.

Last year, I recommended that Elsenpeters consult several sustainable farmers I respect who’ve weathered some hard transitions and changes. Not all are certified organic, but all have a history of making changes that required much foresight and a high level of management skill to obtain success. Two dairy farms that represent this very well are Joe and Tom Molitor of Rockville and Dan Middendorf of Verndale. Dan Elsenpeter did contact these farmers and received enough support for what he was desiring to do that he and his brother made the necessary changes and are now starting to see some positive results.

One of the Elsenpeters’ goals was to increase herd size from the present 80 cows to about 120 cows. This required changing the design of their tie-stall barn by retrofitting it with a swing 12-parabone pit parlor. They also installed new Dairymaster (of Ireland) milking equipment and Boumatic stalls. Dairymaster is receiving rave reviews from many dairy farmers noting improved production, decreased somatic cell counts and many fewer frozen teats in the dead cold of winter. So far, Elsenpeters are seeing these improvements. Somatic cell counts have dropped from over 500,000 to 250,000 since finishing the parlor early this fall. They are still maintaining over 50-lbs per cow daily average even with a primarily grazing/forage feeding program. I was expecting to see averages under 40-lbs when Dan told me he wasn’t feeding much grain in the ration. “I attribute the milk quality improvements to better equipment and better cow prep due to improved accessibility provided by the parlor design,” Dan adds. The new parlor has greatly improved their milking time throughput making it possible to increase the herd size like originally planned.

I’ve found it humorous to listen to Dan Middendorf boast of spending less than eight hours per day doing his chores while lauding his parlor and Dairymaster milkers. Hence, I suspected that directing Dan Elsenpeter to glean information from Middendorf would in the dead cold of winter. So far, Elsenpeters are seeing these improvements. Somatic cell counts have dropped from over 500,000 to 250,000 since finishing the parlor early this fall. They are still maintaining over 50-lbs per cow daily average even with a primarily grazing/forage feeding program. I was expecting to see averages under 40-lbs when Dan told me he wasn’t feeding much grain in the ration. “I attribute the milk quality improvements to better equipment and better cow prep due to improved accessibility provided by the parlor design,” Dan adds. The new parlor has greatly improved their milking time throughput making it possible to increase the herd size like originally planned.

“I’m not seeing an immediate payback today, but I can definitely see we’re on the right path.”

-Dan Elsenpeter

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prove beneficial. Many thanks to Dan Middendorf and his sons for helping willing dairy farmers who want to improve their lot in life.

Molitors of Rockville have also had success with their swing 30 parlor and Dairymaster milkers. Any one looking to update their milking setup should contact me (320-980-2333, mdi@sfa-mn.org) and I can give them a list of phone numbers to call of those who’ve made changes like this and can spill the details. There’s nothing like word of mouth from those in the milking parlor ‘trenches’. Excuse the pun.

As a result of redesigning the tie-stall barn to include the new parabone parlor, Elsenpeters have enough room to include a sizable holding area for their Holstein/Brown Swiss cross herd. In the future, there are plans to improve herd traffic flow through the yard to aid in cow handling. One can only implement so many changes at one time.

Dan Elsenpeter wasn’t too happy with the cost of the parlor improvement. It wouldn’t qualify as a low-cost solution in his case. The Elsenpeters ran into many “might-as-wells” during the remodeling and decided to err on the side of doing it right and not cutting corners. Given the improvements in milk production and quality, these decisions appear like they will pay off over time.

“I’m not seeing an immediate payback today,” Dan notes, “but I can definitely see we’re on the right path.” Noting that even though he is only in his thirties and his body is still young, there’s a good chance he can stay in dairy for many decades with a good parlor design and better ergonomics.

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**Inside Look at Farmstead Artisan Cheesemaking**

**Saturday, January 17**

**Wednesday, January 28**

Want to make cheese but don’t know where to begin? Wonder what it means to make farmstead cheese? Curious about artisan cheese itself? Spend an afternoon at Shepherd’s Way Farms award-winning sheep dairy covering cheesemaking basics, sampling and discussing cheese, an overview of cheesemaking techniques, and learning a few steps hands-on. Portions of the class will take place in the cheesemaking facility and require some extended standing. Because we will be covering information about several cheeses, we will not follow a specific cheesemake from beginning to end. This is NOT a complete cheesemake but you will get to take cheese home. (Adults only, please!)

$85 (Registration & pre-payment required)

Limit 15 people

January 17, Saturday, 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
January 28, Wednesday, 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Nerstrand, MN (just outside Northfield, 1 hour south of Minneapolis/St.Paul)
Shepherd’s Way Farms, 8626 160th Street East, Nerstrand, MN 55053

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**Do you receive SFA’s bi-weekly Events Email?**

*No, then you are missing out on the what, when and where of the sustainable farming world. Sign up today to stay informed. Don’t miss out on any great events!* To subscribe: email Anne at communications@sfa-mn.org with “Subscribe to biweekly email” in the subject line.
Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota presents the 2009: "New Voices for Sustainable Farming, Local Foods, a Healthy Environment, and Vital Rural Communities"

Youth Sustainability Writing Competition

High School and College Age Divisions with categories in:

**Poetry**

Poems will be 40 lines or less and may be in any style or form. Themes should include rural life, nature, the environment, farming or local foods.

**Journalism**

Entries should portray a real life, eyewitness account or personally researched story about Minnesota sustainable farming.

**Limerick**

Consisting of five lines, “aabba” rhyme scheme, with a syllable structure of 9, 9, 6, 6, 9. It should be witty or humorous, and based on the same themes as the Poetry Category.

**Haiku**

In the English free form style of 17 or fewer syllables; three lines in short/long/short, focusing on images from nature, farming or local foods.

**Essay/Creative non-fiction**

200 - 400 words answering the question, "What is your vision for the future of rural Minnesota?". Themes can include farming, locally produced foods, the environment, vital rural communities and the beauty of Minnesota’s countryside.

**Flash fiction/Short story**

A short story of 100 - 500 words in which the setting, main characters, theme or plot concerns rural MN and/or farming.

**Dramatic Monologue or Duet**

A self-contained dramatic speech given by a single character, or a conversation between two characters, in 300 words or less. Themes are the same as Flash Fiction and Essay.

Judging, Presentation, and Awards

Each category will be judged by a professional author or writing teacher. Finalists in each category will be given the opportunity to read or perform their piece at the Youth Sustainability Confabulation on Saturday, April 4, 2009. Finalists will be reimbursed for their mileage to the Confab at $0.45 per mile. Winners in each category will receive an honorarium of $50 in addition to the mileage reimbursement, and a plaque. Obviously, we are encouraging finalists to attend the Confab, but if you cannot, your piece will likely be read, and you will still be eligible to win. The winners’ works will be published in SFA of MN’s quarterly newsletter, "The CornerPost", on the SFA website or in other SFA publications.

Youth Sustainability Writing Competition Awards Ceremony and Readings will be held at the Youth Sustainability Confab, Gustavus Adolphus College, Saturday, April 4, 2009

This information & entry form are also available at:

**WWW.SFA-MN.ORG**

www.sfa-mn.org
Youth Sustainability Writing

Competition Contest

Information and Rules

Purpose:
This competition is being sponsored by the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. Our intention is to encourage young people to think about sustainable farming and its implications in Minnesota: Where does your food come from? How does sustainable farming benefit the environment? Is there value in having beautiful countryside in our state? Are small farms and rural life important elements in our culture?

Rules:
1) Writers must be within one of the age divisions: 14 - 18 (high school) or 19 - 25 (college). However, if you are younger than 19 and are a full-time college student, you should enter in the college division. You do not have to be an enrolled student as long as you are in one of the age divisions.

2) Writers must be Minnesota residents, or students from elsewhere attending a MN college or high school.

3) You may enter as many categories as you like, but only one entry per category.

4) Entries must be received by the Youth Outreach Coordinator no later than March 16, 2009.

5) Formats: Entries may be printed - with each piece on a separate page - or entries may be sent electronically, in Microsoft Word or as a PDF document, either mailed on a disk or emailed to the Youth Outreach Coordinator. Each piece should be a separate document.

6) It is the intent of this competition that all work submitted will be original by the author. Other material used by the author must be properly credited.

7) The copyright of each piece remains with the author. Authors will grant SFA of MN the right to publish or broadcast the material for two years from April 2009.

8) All entries must be in English or have an accurate translation provided by the author.

Workshops:
A companion workshop is available at no cost to schools and other organizations, directed by author/playwright/songwriter/poet Marienne Kreitlow. This workshop will focus on the categories of Flash Fiction, Poetry and Dramatic Monologue. Participants will finish the workshop with pieces begun or ready to enter the competition. Call (320) 543-3394 or email marienne@marienne.com for more information. Sponsored by Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

There is no entry fee for this competition

Please send your entries to:
Jerry Ford, Events & Youth Outreach Coordinator
Sustainable Farming Association of MN
7616 25th Street SW, Howard Lake, MN 55439
or email to: jerry@marienne.com

www.sfa-mn.org
****Winter Events Calendar****

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

Jan 3  **Crow River Sustainable Farming Regional Conference – Gale Woods Farm.** For more info contact Jerry Ford at (320) 543-3394 or jerry@marienne.com.

Jan 6  **Agriculture Alternatives 3rd Annual Conference – Staples, MN.** For details contact DeEtta Bilek deebilek@wcta.net at 218-445-5475.

Jan 10 **Winter-Grown Veggies Workshop – St. Paul, MN.** For details contact Amy with the Land Stewardship Project at (320) 269-2105 or amyb@landstewardshipproject.org.

Jan 10  **Sustainable Farming Association of Central Minnesota Annual Meeting – Browerville, MN.** For details (320) 355-2980 or azariahsue@yahoo.com.

Jan 12  **South Central Chapter House Meeting – New Richland, MN.** For details contact Katy Wortel at environs@hickorytech.net.

Jan 17  **Inside Look at Farmstead Artisan Cheesemaking – Shepherd’s Way Farms, Nerstrand, MN.** For info contact Jodi at farmfriends@earthlink.net or (507) 663-9040.

Jan 15  **Eliot Coleman’s Expand Your Zone – Extend Your Season Workshop – St. Cloud Civic Center.** For details contact MDA at 651-201-6277 or mary.hanks@state.mn.us.


Jan 16-18 **Wisconsin School for Beginning Market Growers – University of Wisconsin – Madison.** For details contact John Hendrickson (608) 265-3704 or jhendric@wisc.edu.

Jan 17  **One-Day Workshops with Dave Jacke – Minneapolis, MN.** For more info contact Kara Ferguson at karaferguson08@gmail.com or (612) 423-5441.

Jan 18  **Garden Goddess Greenhouse Tour – Milan, MN.** For details contact Land Stewardship Project’s Amy at (320) 269-2105.

Jan 18  **One-Day Workshops with Dave Jacke – Minneapolis, MN.** For details contact Kara Ferguson at karaferguson08@gmail.com or (612) 423-5441.

Jan 20  **“Sustainable Communities” Town Hall Meeting & Celebration – Decorah, IA.** For details at corbinconsulting@gmail.com or call 563-419-0379.

Jan 22-23  **Midwest Value-Added Conference – Rochester, MN.** For details contact Erin Meier at tegtm003@umn.edu or 507-536-6313 or visit www.rivercountryrcd.org.

Jan 23  **Permaculture – A Workshop for Design Professionals with Dave Jacke – Chaska, MN.** For details contact Kara Ferguson at karaferguson08@gmail.com or (612) 423-5441.

Jan 24  **Whole Farm Financial Planning – Rochester, MN.** For details contact Land Stewardship Project’s Amy Bacigalupo at amyb@landstewardshipproject.org or call 320-269-2105.

Jan 24  **Cannon River/Hiawatha Chapter Annual Meeting – Northfield, MN.** For details contact Kathy Zeman at (507) 789-6375 or kzeman@cannon.net.

Jan 28  **Inside Look at Farmstead Artisan Cheesemaking – Shepherd’s Way Farms, Nerstrand, MN.** Contact Jodi at farmfriends@earthlink.net or (507) 663-9040.

Jan 31  **Grape Growing 101 – Lake City, MN.** Visit www.greatrivervineyard.com for details or call (877) 345-3531.

Jan 31  **Lake Superior Chapter Annual Meeting.** For details visit www.lakesuperiorfarming.org.

Feb 3  **Dairy Management Workshops – Perham, MN.** For more info call (877) 577-0741 or email mmpa@mnmilk.org.

Feb 4  **Dairy Management Workshops – St. Joseph, MN.** For more info (877) 577-0741 or email mmpa@mnmilk.org.

Feb 5  **Dairy Management Workshops – Rochester, MN.** For more info call (877) 577-0741 or email mmpa@mnmilk.org.

Feb 5  **Economics of Direct Marketing Workshop – Morris, MN.** For more info visit www.sfa-mn.org or www.landstewardshipproject.org.

Feb 7  **CURE’s Annual Meeting – Montevideo, MN.** For more info call 1-877-269-2873 or visit www.curemnriver.org.

Feb 7  **Permaculture Workshop – Winona, MN.** For details contact Land Stewardship Project’s Parker Forsell at
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parker@landstewardshipproject.org or call (507) 523-3366.

Feb 9 South Central Chapter House Meeting – New Richland, MN. For details contact Katy Wortel at environs@hickorytech.net.


Feb 13-14 5th annual Cold Climate Grape & Wine Conference – Bloomington, MN. For details visit: www.mngrapes.org.


Feb 14 Southeast Chapter Annual Meeting – Altura, MN. For details contact Edgar Hansgen at (507) 932-4219 or ejhansgen@hotmail.com.

Feb 14 Winter Harvest of Hardy Crops under Unheated Protection – Esko, MN. For details contact Kelly Smith (218) 879-3829.

Feb 16 Carver County/U of MN Dairy Expo – Norwood Young America, MN. For details call (952) 240-4336.

Feb 20 Simply Soup Supper: Sustainable Food, A Community Discussion – Northfield, MN. For details contact SFA of MN at communications@sfa-mn.org or (320) 226-618.

Feb 21 Sustainable Farming Association of MN’s 18th Annual Conference – Northfield, MN. www.sfa-mn.org


Mar 14 Time Mgmt Workshop – Rochester, MN. For more info contact Land Stewardship Project at parker@landstewardshipproject.org or (507) 523-3366.

Mar 14 South Central Chapter Annual Meeting – Clarks Grove, MN. For more info, contact Katy Wortel at enviros@hickorytech.net.

Mar 28 100 Orchards Project Grafting Workshop – Sauk Centre, MN. For details contact Sue Peterson at (320) 355-2980 or azariahsue@yahoo.com.

Apr 4 Youth Sustainability Confabulation 2 – Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN. For details visit www.sfa-mn.org.
Meet Rae Rusnak

Growing up, both sides of my family were involved in farming. On my mother’s side my grandfather had a 5-acre poultry breeding farm in Crystal, MN and a great uncle grew market potatoes and vegetables on about 15-acres in Rosemount, MN. I helped my grandfather with incubating eggs, brooding baby chickens, ducks, and geese, feeding adult birds, and cleaning out chicken coop and other buildings. The farm has since been turned into a city park and is named after my grandparents, “Hagemeister Park”. My great uncle used the chicken manure from my grandparent’s poultry farm to fertilize his potatoes and vegetables. We often celebrated Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner at my great uncle’s and I remember that the food was amazing. The canned and root-cellared vegetables tasted like they had just been picked. My parents canned and pickled bushels of vegetables from their farm as well as our own garden. My father made the best sauerkraut from their cabbages, and my mother canned quart after quart of dill pickles and relishes. On my father’s side, my great grandmother had a small diverse farm in Maple Plain, MN. She lived to be quite old so I do remember her. Her farm had a few chickens, cows, a horse, field corn, and an acre of asparagus, which they sold to local grocers.

My farm is in Wanamingo Township in Goodhue County, MN. Our farm is 72-acres of rolling hardwoods and old pasture areas. We grubbed and cleared 3-acres of old pasture to raise potatoes and other root vegetables, which we market through two area food co-ops, three CSA’s, and the Northfield Farmers Market. Our farm also produces about 600 broiler chickens and 50 heritage breed turkeys a year. In addition, we have about 120 free range laying hens. The eggs and chickens are sold at the farmers market and through one of the CSA’s we work with. Lastly, we produce maple syrup from our sugar maples each spring and have done some selective timber harvesting.

I am a mother and full-time farmer. I worked part-time off of the farm until August 2007. My son, Leo, is the kid in charge of our farming operation! He is the “L” and I am the “R” in “L&R Poultry & Produce.” My parents, my sister and her partner, my uncles, and a few cousins help on the farm whenever they can. My late husband continues to be a source of inspiration and fond memories for us all.

I first got involved with the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota in 2003. I saw the SFA website online in and contacted Kathy Zeman, the local coordinator for the Cannon River/Hiawatha Valley Chapter. Shortly after joining, I attended a chapter event on egg production for direct sales, hosted by the Zeman’s. I left the event with great information and many new local farmer friends.

I am privileged to make my living as a farmer. The farmer-farmer networking, education opportunities, and outreach provided by the SFA is invaluable. I believe that sustainable farms will continue to grow and prosper throughout any economy because they are using farming practices based on good ecology, good soil management, clean and humane animal husbandry, and the safe and fair treatment of human workers. Being “sustainable”, means to chart a course based on sound knowledge, justice, and concern for all living things and the earth, rather than on fast profits, greed, and ignorance. In other words, sustainable farms will be sustainable!
**mission:** we support the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education and farmer-to-farmer networking.