SFA’S BRANDING PROJECT:  
Telling our story with a new look

By John Mesko, Executive Director

SFA’s presence, image, and appearance in the sustainable farming world impacts everything we do, from how potential members perceive us to our fundraising capacity and grant writing success. We have quality programs and we inform our members about important issues. These same members also tell us that the SFA annual conference is a valuable and successful event and that other events, like GrazeFest and Garlic Festival, are focused dead center on SFA’s mission.

I’ve asked Anne Borgendale to shift gears slightly in her work with SFA. Anne will focus a good deal of her attention on the re-branding of SFA and some new communication pieces we’ll discuss more in the future. Anne is our Branding and Communications Coordinator. As the brand and the resulting communications pieces roll out, we’ll also be asking Anne to coordinate a redesign of our website. Our current website is designed for SFA as we were 5 years ago. It’s time for us to use improved technology and tools to create a better web experience for our members.

Anne and the team she’s assembled will be communicating regularly about the progress of the projects through the SFA Branding Blog at http://sfabranding.wordpress.com/. Here, you’ll be able to see what’s happening, and have input into the process through comments and emails. We all look forward to your support and feedback in this re-branding effort; it’s going to return good things for SFA.
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 20 or go to www.sfa-mn.org and join or renew your membership today!

SFA BRANDING MEETINGS

Monday, August 9
6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Northfield, MN
(exact location to be determined)

Tuesday, August 10
6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
St. Cloud, MN
(exact location to be determined)

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Join us for an evening and share:
• What does SFA mean to you?
• How has SFA been part of your life?
• What is your history with SFA?

Your story is the story of SFA.

For more information visit http://sfabranding.wordpress.com/ or contact Anne at communications@sfa-mn.org or call 320-226-6318.
Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota
Chapters .... there’s one near you!

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

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

central
Jim Chamberlin
23111 State Hwy 18
Deerwood, MN  56444
(218) 831-0521
islandlakefarm@brainerd.net

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

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

core river

Chapter Updates

Cannon River Chapter

By Mary Ellen Frame

As part of the Festival of Farms, our chapter offered tours to three farms in the Nerstrand area in the afternoon, and a tour, dinner and barn dance at Callister farm near West Concord in the evening. From 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. the afternoon a bus, which was sponsored by Just Food Co-op, took participants to the three farms; there were also a few people who biked, and several cars. The first farm was Simple Harvest Farm where Kathy and Nick Zeman raise meat chickens and layers, pigs, goats and sheep; they also have a vegetable CSA. The next stop was at Big Woods Farm, a vegetable CSA owned and run by Laurie and David Hougen-Eitzman. The last stop was at Shepherd’s Way Farms, where Steven and Jodi Ohlsen-Read have a flock of sheep and an on-farm cheese-making plant. At each farm, the farmers showed and explained what they’re doing. The participants all seemed very interested, and in all cases would have liked to have had more time. One estimate of numbers was about 65 visitors, including those on the bus, on bikes, and in cars. There were families and single people, young and old, from Northfield, the Twin Cities, and the region.

The farm tour of Callister’s started at 6:00 p.m. Lori and Allen showed visitors around their on-farm, E-2 poultry processing plant, their flocks of meat chickens and layers. At 7:00 p.m. they served a delicious dinner of Callister chicken drumsticks, Open Hands Farm green salad, Minnesota wild rice salad, and Cedar Summit milk and ice cream. Tables were set Cannon River continued on page 4
Cannon River continued from page 3
up in the haymow, where there was a continuous-loop slide show of some of our member farms. The band Depot Creek (Josh Reinitz’s group) provided live music. About eighty people came to the dinner and barn dance.

Altogether the events were a great success. For the people who came, it was a beautiful day in the country, fun and informative, with lots of variety as to farms visited. The participants drove through miles of beautiful countryside dominated by conventional corn and soybeans, then saw some other ways of farming and heard from the farmers about how they do things. Children (and adults) had an opportunity to get up close to animals, and to taste vegetables right out in the field. At Big Woods farm, people were offered fresh cucumbers, and at Shepherd’s Way Farms we sampled cheeses and sausage. It was a great way for eaters to connect with some sources of their food, to learn and to enjoy.

**Crow River Chapter**

By Greg Reynolds

Our Spring Social was a huge success, standing room only. The focus was on urban gardening and farming, and was held in a nice neighborhood in St. Paul.

Our chapter has been to Grazefest at the Mill City Farmers Market and had two farms and a store participate in Festival of Farms. Both events had good turn out. We still could do a better job on getting the news out about events. The trouble is that a lot of our board are vegetable growers and are really busy in the summer. But I guess that’s everybody else too.

Now we are up to our ears in planning the Garlic Festival. This will be the fifth year for the festival. We will have the usual mix of great local food, music, and garlic. Last year we saw an increase in attendance on a correctly forecast rainy, stormy day. This year we are expecting 2500-2800 people and thunderstorms. If the weather is nice Jerry is floating attendance numbers of 4000 or so. That’s it for this time. I have to get a few things planted before I head out of town for vacation.

**Central Chapter**

By Jim Chamberlin

As many of you may have read in the last CornerPost, Sue Peterson resigned from the coordinator position with the Central Chapter. I am pleased to inform you that I was selected by the Board to fill this position and look forward to working with members I have come to know over the years and new members I have yet to meet. Please don’t hesitate to contact me with any questions, concerns, or ideas you may have.

The Festival of Farms tour has been the main focus for the Central Chapter for the last couple of months. The Festival of Farms tour for the Central Chapter included four farms. The Farm on St Mathias, owned by members Arlene and Bob Jones, was the host farm. Although relatively new to farming, the Jones’ have a wonderful operation that includes a 50-member CSA, corn maze, and on-farm market. They also market through local restaurants and farmers’ markets. They host several entertainment events a year and perform community outreach such as providing garden space to local organizations.

The second farm was Brambling Rows owned by John and Ruth Jansen. They have 4.5 acres of berries and vegetables and are in their nineteenth year of operation. They have five greenhouses that extend their growing season by several months. John is a wealth of knowledge when it comes to plant breeding and we hope to tap his expertise for future 100 Orchard Project events.

Boys-n-Berries, owned by Bob and Caroline Nibbe, has the main goal of giving their two boys, Aaron and David, the opportunity to earn their college education. They raise several acres of asparagus, strawberries, pumpkins, and sweet corn. The farm also boasts a 10 kW Jacobs wind turbine.

The Ray Puetz Wild Rice farm was the final farm on the tour. Ray began farming wild rice in 1967 and currently has approximately 200 acres available for production. His rice is grown without chemicals in flooded paddies that are drained during mid summer after the rice has begun its elongation growth stage. He grows sunflowers, buckwheat, and hay in rotation with wild rice.

Although the head count for the event was down from last year, those attending felt it was educational and informative. We were pleased to see SFA Executive Director John Mesko and his family in attendance. A
delicious lunch of grilled chicken breast and wild rice with vegetables was prepared by Prairie Bay out of Baxter and served by Arlene’s family.

In other activities, members Del Moen, Kent Solberg and Dave Evert have begun an effort to reach out to those farmers affected by the recent tornado that hit Wadena and Ottertail Counties. Though it is uncertain where this is headed, the need is great and the Board feels we need to help if we can.

We plan to continue with the 100 Orchards Project with a fall harvest tour. This project has been very successful and is close to reaching its goal of assisting 100 orchards. Does that mean we need to change the name to 1000 Orchards? Finally, the Central Chapter recently completed the process of dissolving its non-profit status and is now officially operating under the statewide SFA 501c3 non-profit umbrella. The Board feels this is a good move that will save money and provide a strong cohesive image for SFA.

Lake Superior Chapter

By Nicole Wilde

The Lake Superior Chapter launched our annual spring membership and fund drive this May. Donations and membership renewals can be made online at www.lssfa.org.

On April 29, area producers, food service directors, and health professionals established some important initial contacts at the Farm to Cafeteria Workshop held in Cloquet. With growing public interest in expanding local foods into more institutional settings, the participants had a chance to learn about some of the pricing and supply considerations, health and licensing regulations, and the potential benefits of developing this kind of food supply chain. Many were pleasantly surprised to discover so many public school food service directors are committed to pursuing this goal.

The Lake Superior Chapter will host numerous public events throughout the region for both consumers and producers this summer. One such event is the Natural Resources Enterprise workshop will be held on Saturday, August 7 at the Greener Pastures Dairy, Carlton. This event will show how to create additional income from family farm and forest enterprises. This Lake Superior SFA/U of M Extension event will cover holistic resource management, planning and financial assistance, markets and marketing, home businesses, and more.

Other events include the Farm Frolic on Saturday, August 7. Farm Frolic is a Lake Superior Farm Beginnings fundraiser and graduation celebration, as well as a community event celebrating local food and farming. The event will include a potluck-style local foods feast with Lake Superior fish fry, kids and adult activities, farmers market, and live music with the Kettle River Band.

The 17th Annual Harvest Festival and Energy Fair will be held this year on Saturday, September 11, 2010 at Duluth’s Bayfront Park. Registration and sponsorship applications can be downloaded at www.theharvestfestival.org.

For other upcoming events visit www.lssfa.org.

Renewing the Countryside needs Volunteers at the State Fair!

Calling all local foods junkies! We need your help to make the Healthy Local Foods exhibit at the State Fair’s EcoExperience a success!

Volunteers are needed to help with food samples, cooking demos, etc. No special experience is necessary. Volunteer shifts are 4.5 hours long. Enjoy free fair admission and meet other local food lovers. If you have any questions, or to sign up for a shift, please contact Jonathan Beutler, Renewing the Countryside, at 612-871-1541 or jonathan@rtcinfo.org.

www.sfa-mn.org Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota ::
State Board Members

Chris Kudrna
At large
Chair
St. Cloud, MN
(320) 202-1708
ckudrna@charter.net

John Ostgarden
Cannon River Chapter
Vice Chair
Medford, MN
(507) 446-8045
farmerjohn@clintonfallsfarm.com

Mary Hanks
At large
Secretary
Northfield, MN
(651) 201-6277 (w)
Mary.Hanks@state.mn.us

Chris Barnier
Central Chapter
Treasurer
Little Falls, MN
(320) 632-4691
cbarnier@wildblue.net

Barth Anderson
At Large
Minneapolis, MN
612-296-1867
barthanderson@earthlink.net

Karola Dalen
Lake Superior Chapter
Wrenshall, MN
(218) 384-9779
karoladalen@yahoo.com

Jamie DeRosier
Lake Agassiz Chapter
Red Lake Falls, MN
218-253-2861
derosier@gvtel.com

Jerry Ford
Crow River Chapter
Howard Lake, MN
(320) 543-3394
jerry@marienne.com

Kelly Firkens
South Central Chapter
Delavan, MN
(715) 896-5629
contact@delablufarms.com

Bruce Johnson
Coteau Ridge Chapter
Walnut Grove, MN
507-859-2139
evergreen@redred.com

Andy Olson
Southeast Chapter
Utica, MN
507-523-2047
olso1703@umn.edu

John Sluss
Western Chapter
Brooten, MN
(320) 346-2538
jsluss@tds.net

We asked, you told us.

By John Mesko, Executive Director

If you participated in the recent SFA Member Survey, we want to thank you for helping us to get a better picture of the interests and needs of our group. We learned quite a bit.

- Just over half of the respondents consider themselves farmers; and most of those are not full time farmers.
- These farmer members value the opportunity to connect with other farmers through SFA.
- 73% of respondents consider themselves members of SFA.
- 15% of respondents are active in their chapters. Respondents consider the SFA Annual Conference our most important activity.
- Over 60% of respondents prefer electronic newsletters to learn new information, third behind workshops and field days.

If you would like to see more survey results, please feel free to check them out at the following link: http://tinyurl.com/sfasurvey

In the coming weeks and months, we will be incorporating what we’ve learned about our group into the types of programs we conduct and the way we communicate. We would love to have your input. While the survey mentioned above is now closed, we’d love to have your input into these topics at any time. Please contact me at john@sfa-mn.org with any comments or suggestions you would have.
CARL & BETTY ZIEBARTH:
SFA’s 2010 Sustainable Farmer Emeriti

By Mary Ellen Frame

Last winter Carl and Betty Ziebarth received the Sustainable Farmer Emeritus award at the SFA’s 19th Annual Conference. I visited them on a rainy June afternoon, to talk about their lives. We sat in the cheerful and cozy kitchen of the beautiful house they and their children built themselves in about 1975.

Growing up in Wrenshaw, Carl intended to become “the best dairy farmer in the state of Minnesota.” The great forests of that area had been cut years before, and when the trees were gone the lumbermen moved on, leaving huge stumps. The farmers who came after them dug up around the stumps and planted rutabagas. Birch and poplar were the second growth; Carl claims he never saw the sun until he went to school at six years old. However, there must have been enough sun to raise vegetables. Besides the dairy operation, his family raised potatoes, carrots and cabbage, as well as rutabagas, which they sold in Duluth. Sometimes truckers would come from the Twin Cities for their vegetables, too. There were nine children in the family, which included three sets of twins. Carl was one of the twins. His father also worked off the farm, in the local brickyard, to supplement their income.

After high school, World War II came along and Carl was drafted. “Five years later I limped home,” he said. The wounds earned him three purple hearts, but cost him his dream of being a dairy farmer. A counselor told him to find something he could do. He was able to go to college on the GI Bill, and then became a vocational ag teacher in 1949. This was the beginning of the era of using chemicals in farming, so that’s the kind of farming he taught. He says, “If you have to use those things [chemicals], use them reasonably. I spent a lot of time calibrating sprayers—that was part of my job.”

Carl was teaching in Belgrade when he met Betty, who was an elementary teacher in the same school. They were married in 1951, and had three children: Ann, who teaches and does research in rural housing at the University of Minnesota, John, who’s an anesthetist in Aitkin and Matthew, who teaches school in Hartford, WI. They also have three grandchildren.

Betty was born in Kintyre, ND, where her father was a banker until the bank closed in the depression. Then the family moved a lot; she went to seventeen different schools in the twelve years of school. After high school, she went to a two-year college in Saint Cloud, and started her practice teaching in a one-room school when she was eighteen. After only three days, the regular teacher got sick. The principal called her and told her, “Now you’re the teacher,” so that was it for practice teaching. There was one eighth-grade boy who was much bigger than her and kind of scared her, but he turned out to be very gentle and helpful. In spite of the fact that this was his third year in eighth grade, he still couldn’t read. Because of her experience with him, she eventually became a reading specialist. Later, she went for an additional two years to the University of Minnesota, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree.

Ziebarth’s continued on page 8
Carl and Betty remember the depression well. Carl said “Everyone was barefoot and hungry at the same time; not for long, but we all experienced that together.”

Carl spent his whole career teaching Vocational Agriculture, first in several high schools, and then for fifteen year at the Faribault Vocational –Technical Institute. Of teaching he said “I’m proud of what I did; I did a good job.” Most of his students became farmers, and he’s in touch with many of them, which gives him a lot of satisfaction. Most are in conventional farming. Carl said, “Once you’re into it, you play the game….people that are farming now, they can’t change. They go to the bank and say they need $50,000 to put in a crop. The banker says okay, but you have to do it my way. The farmer becomes a hired man to all these folks: seed salesmen, chemical company, bank, people he contracts his crop to, and the government is involved. That’s conventional farming today…. Also, you get into one of those combines with a thirty-foot head on it; it makes you feel pretty good.”

Carl and Betty were two of the founding members of the Cannon River Chapter of SFA. At age 93 he’s still farming. They live on a sixty-five acre farm near Faribault, half woods and half tillable. He grows a rotation of wheat, barley, oats, corn and alfalfa without the use of chemicals. He and his brother love fixing old machinery so are able to keep everything running. He also raises a big garden “Our specialties are sweet corn (that’s very popular) pickles, sauerkraut, and maple syrup…. I spend about a week, full time, making maple syrup,” he said. “About three weeks,” Betty interjected. They give the entire surplus away, to family, friends and neighbors. Betty freezes a lot of sweet corn for winter eating, family, and holiday meals.

While I was visiting with them, a neighbor came by with a couple of quarts of strawberries, and asked to borrow a cultivator; then he stayed to join the conversation and drink a cup of tea.

Carl drove me in his pickup out to see the gardens and fields. Right outside the door is Betty’s herb and flower garden. As I was admiring it, a hummingbird visited some of the flowers. A little further on stands a lovely greenhouse, which they had built with stones and lumber from the farm, and old recycled storm windows. Except for the woods down by the Straight River, which borders their land, they’ve planted most of the trees on the place. Everything was lush and green with the recent rain. You could see the succession planting in the corn patch, with the varying heights of the plants. The rolling hills are well suited to small grains and hay.

I asked Carl why he thought that he and Betty had received the Sustainable Farmer Emeriti award. “I haven’t a clue,” he said. “Just getting old, I guess.” Speaking of sustainable agriculture he said, “It’s growing. More people are interested in the food they eat, and the growers are educating them.” Will this trend last? “It’ll last because this time it happened for a different reason; it’s an energy thing...There’s been tremendous progress.” Of their own farm he said, “We’re going to leave the land better than it was when we started. It’s what you ought to do.”

A scene from Grazefest at the Mill City Farmers Market on Saturday, June 19, 2010. A cooking demo featuring cheese from Shepherd’s Way Farms. (L-R) Lori Valenziano of Lucia’s Restaurant and Mary Jane Miller, chef wrangler.

*Photo taken by Anne Borgendale*
ENVISIONING A BRIGHT FUTURE:
Mary Jo Forbord honored with SFA’s Distinguished Service Award

By Anne Borgendale

On a bright and sunny day in early June, my sister and I went to Prairie Horizons Farm to catch up with Mary Jo Forbord. Mary Jo’s husband, Luverne, greeted us at the door. During our visit, we were served a delicious local and seasonal lunch; given a tour of their new market garden; chatted with the interns who are living at Prairie Horizons this summer while working on the farm and for Morris Healthy Eating; visited Joraan Forbord’s Memorial Orchard; and chatted with Mary Jo. For me, it was a great way to spend a summer day, but it was a typical day in the life of Mary Jo: helping manage her family’s farm, engaging with young people, nourishing her family and friends, gracefully dealing with the challenges of raising a teenager and caring for elderly family members (at the same time), and building her community one step at a time.

I’ve been fortunate enough to spend many days with Mary Jo and the Forbord family over the last 6 years. However, it only takes one day to see why Mary Jo was presented with the 2010 Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Distinguished Service Award, which honors a farmer or non-farmer who has shown a high level of dedication, commitment, service and perseverance in support of sustainable farming in Minnesota. Mary Jo is the personification of dedication, commitment, service and perseverance.

From 2003 through June 2009, Mary Jo was the Executive Director of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. Since the mid-1980s Mary Jo and Luverne have farmed and lived at Prairie Horizons Farm between Benson and Starbuck. In the early 2000s, Prairie Horizons Farm transitioned from being a production-oriented, conventional dairy farm to an organic grass-based beef operation that produces much more than just food. Mary Jo and Luverne raised three children on the farm as well: Meriah, Joraan and Jaiden. In addition to farming, parenting, and running SFA, Mary Jo worked extensively in the nutrition community as well.

After leaving SFA, Mary Jo started a new job with Morris Healthy Eating (MHE) based at the University of Minnesota, Morris (UMM). MHE is a college health coalition working to expand access to and availability of fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods on the UMM campus, within greater Morris, and in Stevens County. In her new position, Mary Jo is working with the community and with UMM students to tackle the questions of “What is healthy eating” and “How do you eat healthy.”

While MHE may seem to be very different than SFA, they share a link: that sustainable farming has no future without a next generation, and this next generation needs to be engaged and shown attention. This connection was Mary Jo continued on page 10
Mary Jo cont from page 9 illuminated at SFA’s 2006 strategic planning retreat at Prairie Horizons Farm.

For Mary Jo, this link is exemplified by the SFA and Gustavus Adolphus College documentary Farming Forward. She explained, “After seeing it people say, ‘I could be part of this. I could grow food. I could be part of this rural renaissance.’”

With MHE there is a great energy from community members and college students imagining what the future of farming, eating and rural communities can look like. According to Mary Jo, this wouldn’t be possible without the students: “Younger people are better able to envision what we can do. I can envision the future better around young people.” She continued, “Students have quickly absorbed what it took us (older people) a long time to learn.”

While MHE is a new venture for Mary Jo, it is also a homecoming to her educational roots and the work she did while with SFA. She remarked, “MHE is also a bit of a return to my nutrition degree and dietetics experience. It is a marriage of farming and food, linking health, land, agriculture, people and environment.” Through MHE, Mary Jo is able to share these vital links with students – “They (students) need education and experience, but they also need the spark through experiential learning.” She also remarked, “Nothing is more fun and rewarding than connecting people to the land. MHE does fortunately make that connection to the land.” She also feels that SFA is an organization that makes these connections, leading to a hopeful future.

Some of MHE’s connections to the land and area farms include reviving the UMM student garden and revitalizing the Morris Area Farmers’ Market. It is also working to improve the accessibility and affordability of local foods, connecting the farmers’ market and the food shelf.

Another area of MHE that excites Mary Jo is cooking: “People want to know more about how to cook and cook economically.” It is also tackling long-held viewpoints about what people eat and why. Mary Jo commented, “Older people say that young people don’t want to eat healthy food. Younger people contradict this and see a much wider range of things and questions to ask about what makes something healthy, such as local, fair trade, minimal processing, labor, etc.”

She continued, “College students are really asking this question: ‘What is healthy eating?’ They are asking, ‘How can you minimally process to extend the season?’ We have a generation that is asking the right questions.”

A few years ago, Mary Jo wrote an article for the CornerPost about the U.S. food system entitled “Speed. Price. Quality. Pick two.” She is now more optimistic about the decisions people are starting to make about their food. She explained, “We are in an era where we are re-evaluating these choices. People are starting to pick quality more often. The future is more hopeful when we have a generation thinking about food. All communities, especially rural communities, will benefit from this.” All of these things allow Mary Jo to view the future of food and farming in a positive light.

It has been a difficult year for the Forbord family. In January, Mary Jo and Luverne’s son, Joraan, passed away at the age of 22 after a yearlong battle with cancer. They continue to celebrate his life everyday through the farm and their work.

An orchard Joraan started before he became ill is now

Mary Jo continued on page 12
CONVERSATIONS WITH THE LAND: *New Life*

By Jim Van Der Pol

*This article originally appeared in Graze magazine. You can get a sample copy of Graze at: PO Box 48, Belleville, WI 53508; graze@ticon.net, (608) 455-3311.*

I stepped out on the deck at dawn one morning in March and walked across it to check the temperature. It hadn’t frozen all night for the first time this spring and the world smelled of wet cedar deck boards and mud. A pair of geese honked their way across the southern sky over pastures nearly half covered with standing water. Shreds of mist trailed up from the water as the morning fog began to develop.

There is a power that rises in the spring from the very earth itself. It is the foundation of a lot of human hope, some of it foolish to be sure, but much of it necessary. For me it is a constant source of amazement that it expresses itself in my own body and spirit; that while I stretch old tightening muscles and settle with the pain in over used joints, I can feel the upwelling of the new strength from the earth in my own body. I need less sleep, generally dropping from eight to nine hours toward seven or even six. I am more observant, more alive to the world. But the primary element is the desire to push, to work at something, to make something happen. It is the expression of a primary life force, akin to joy. It is amazing to me that I feel it in my sixties.

Later in April the cows lean on the lot fence, gazing longingly at the first faint blush of green over the hills. Through the dead grass, last year’s killdeer nests can be seen tucked into the smallest bump or groove in the earth. The western meadowlarks sound their melodious multi noted call from the tops of fence posts and small trees, and the vague stirrings of life begin to resolve themselves into work. There is the water system to repair and start, fence wires to renail, machines to service for the coming crop work, a mountain of manure to haul, seeds to be purchased or cleaned. The days are longer now and we race to get the necessary things done. Cattle are turned to grass, and then the gestating sows. Pasture work gives way to oats seeding, then corn planting.

Soon we are doing weed control with drag and cultivator and the sun hangs in the sky for what seems forever each day as we cut and make the hay in the heat, exhausted well before the end of the daylight, but knowing full well that if we quit, it is we who will suffer the consequences. Farmer knowledge is direct and simple. Work needing to be done in April is not good enough done in May. This is true whether the delay is caused by weather, or a machine breakdown, or by the farmer not getting out of bed early enough.

When the sun reaches its zenith in summer and seems to hold there for weeks, the power felt since the first stirrings of spring begins to wane and is eventually replaced by something akin to fear. Soon fear will drive the work. It is a fear that the days will not be long enough to get the work done, that the frost will come before the crop is ready, that the harvest will not be brought in before the winter, that the animals will not have the time to put on adequate body reserves to make it through the winter, that the buildings will not hold out the prairie winds in January, that the house will not stay warm enough at 30 below. And so the animals are watched closely as they begin to lay on the weight from the grasses and forages that are full of the entire season’s sun. Buildings are repaired, sometimes with patches on patches. Hay is stacked where it can be accessed through the coming snowdrifts. Feed is harvested or purchased ahead if need be.

If there is extra time in this season of getting ready, it is often invested in getting ready for the next season. Seed is located and new pasture subdivision fences built. Time is spent looking at the new gilts saved as replacements from the summer litters and speculating about how they will change, and it is hoped, improve the sow herd. The last few days of August and the month of September are often a temporary reprieve from the primary agricultural drivers, as it seems that much of what will soon happen has already been put into place and must now be lived with. It is no accident that this is the time for county and state fairs.

Winter, when it comes with its frozen land and short days, is for regret and/or relaxation. If the prior seasons have gone tolerably well, and if we are reasonably pleased with most of our own efforts it can be a blessed relief from constant work, a time for vacation, or just days off.

New Life continued on page 12
New Life continued from page 11
for ice fishing, for breakfast in town, for visiting children, for sleeping in. It is also, inevitably, I suppose, a time for planning. For there seems to be no help for the fact that farmers live in “next year country”.

All of this cycle seems natural and acceptable to me, if occasionally harsh and unforgiving. I have been a farmer, after all, since I wore diapers, and will be until I wear them again. What I find increasingly difficult to understand as I age is the life I am surrounded with. I do not understand “thank goodness it’s Friday”, or “pretty good for a Monday”. I don’t understand how anyone could think that anything precious on this earth could ever be protected by “insurance”. I don’t get how vast numbers of people that have never spent any time creating anything can participate in “recreation”. I can’t understand the meaning of the word “celebrity” or the idea that “education” should equal easy money. It amazes me that in the age of Bear Stearns and Bernie Madoff, folks still seem to accept the idea of money as a scorecard in measuring life. I don’t understand the vileness I hear all around from the television and radio airwaves about people with a different opinion or belief.

Farmers are the tiniest minority in the United States. So we don’t make much of a blip on the radar of the larger culture. All the things we could teach about connection to the universe that come through our close and yet conflicted relationship with nature and the land is unintelligible to folks on the outside. It will continue to be to everyone who does not have the presence of mind to ask. But I don’t know how I would communicate the feeling of power and drive that I get every spring to a non-farmer. I am not sure it can be done.

Mary Jo continued from page 10
a memorial to him. It expanded this spring when friends and family planted a variety of new fruit trees to honor him. The orchard captures his spirit and life. Mary Jo stated, “Our whole family believes that Joraan is around us at the farm and the orchard…he wanted to be there and he is.” She continued, “People feel like they can come to the orchard. It is a place that he helped to start.”

For Mary Jo, losing Joraan has significantly influenced her desire to work more closely with young people, to learn from them and share what she knows. She commented, “I love the energy of the 20-something age group because it reminds me of all that Joraan would have done with us.”

Joraan touched many lives and left an indelible impression on those that knew and loved him. Mary Jo reflected, “He taught me a lot and he was a lot like me. He loved to cook and loved to grow things. He was really into community and hospitality. He loved people.” She continued, “He strengthened my resolve to build community around food and build connections with the land. That is what Joraan would have been doing.” Mary Jo also saw Joraan express immense gratitude in the face of overwhelming challenges. She explained, “Joraan taught me to be grateful no matter what happens.”

Mary Jo is very honored to have received the SFA Distinguished Service Award from her peers in the sustainable farming community. However, she was quick to point out that the work she has done wouldn’t be possible without the support of her family. She commented, “Luverne is the unsung hero; whatever the job I get he helps with, without recognition or pay. He is as deserving of the award as I am.”

We can often put people like Mary Jo on a pedestal, but that undermines them and gives the rest of us an out. Instead, we need to remember that they are all too human and face the same challenges as the rest of us. However, if we all bring some of their dedication, commitment, service and perseverance into our daily lives, the future of sustainable farming, our food system and rural communities will be brighter. And that is the best way to recognize the distinguished daily service of someone like Mary Jo. Mary Jo, we are all trying a little harder because of your example – thank you.
The state’s most fragrant and family friendly event, Minnesota Garlic Festival, will permeate the McLeod County Fairgrounds in Hutchinson on August 14, 2010, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

A statewide event sponsored by the Crow River Chapter, it’s a fun day for all, with celebrity chefs demonstrating specialty garlic fare, and a variety of unique entertainment, including Japanese drummers, costumed characters, music and dance. And, of course, you can stock up on locally grown goods and environmentally friendly products at this zero-waste event.

Garlic laced specialties will be served at The Great ‘Scape Cafe, our chef-studded restaurant, managed by SFA’s own Greg Reynolds. Greg, along with Chef Wrangler Mary Jane Miller (culinary consultant to the Governor’s Residence), have put together an impressive roster of Minnesota chefs for the cafe and the cooking demonstrations on the main stage, including Alex Roberts of Restaurant Alma and Brasa, Tracy Singleton and Marshall Paulsen of The Birchwood Cafe, Mike Phillips of The Craftsman, Danny Schwartzman of Common Roots, Phillip Becht of The Modern, Jenny Breen of Good Life Catering, and Gina Coburn from The Three Crows in Delano.

And what garlic festival would be complete without the infamous garlic ice cream, created by Dave and Florence Minar of Cedar Summit Creamery?

An impressive roster of kid’s activities includes kite making and flying, vegetable bowling, mask making, playing onstage with Charlie McGuire, and other diversions that mean a fun and affordable family-friendly affair.

Sustainable farmers and environmentally-friendly products will be showcased, along with “Ask the Expert” presenters who will answer questions about a wide variety of subjects, from gardening tips to helping the environment, to natural health care, and, of course, growing and using the King of Herbs: garlic.

Thirteen of the state’s best garlic growers will be there with the first of the season’s gourmet garlic. All of these growers carefully cure their crop to insure the best tasting and longest storing garlic available. If you store it properly at home (find out how at the festival!), it can keep for up to nine months.

The entertainment schedule has been announced, and you can get all the details at www.mngarlicfest.com. The Mu Community Taiko Drummers will rock the tent with Japanese drumming; Minnesota folk legend Charlie Mcguire leads the Culinary Orchestra; Light of the Moon Band gets your toes tapping; and, of course, Mariënne Kreitlow’s songs of Garlic and Garlic Festival continued on page 15
New Feature at the Minnesota Garlic Festival

★

YFAV is a highly interactive place at the festival where young people, farmers and the “agricurious” can connect with each other and Minnesota’s sustainability organizations.

★

In the Exhibitor/Vendor Building

★

Be sure your organization is included! Contact: Jerry Ford, jerry@sfa-mn.org 320-543-3394

★

Connecting people to farmers, farmers to resources and young people to the land.

MINNESOTA GARLIC FESTIVAL

★ MN Garlic Festival is an ALL WEATHER EVENT. We have a plan for moving vendors, exhibits and attractions into the large buildings at the fairgrounds, and the chefs’ demos and concert stage are inside the big tent.

★ DATE: Saturday August 14, 2020

★ TIMES: 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

★ LOCATION: McLeod County Fairgrounds in Hutchinson. Hutchinson is just over an hour from the Metro area via Highway 7. Turn South on Hwy.15 and go through town, and the McLeod County Fairgrounds are two blocks east on Century Avenue. You can’t miss it, just follow the smell.

★ ADMISSION: $5 for adults and $3 for kids under 12. Babies get in free, and there’s no charge for parking. Costumes are encouraged! No pets, please.

★ WHAT TO BRING: Sunscreen, the kids, money to stock up on several months’ supply of great local garlic and other MN items, a big appetite.

www.mngarlicfest.com

Produced by the Crow River Chapter, Sustainable Farming Association of MN
Garlic Festival continued from page 13
Other Forces of Nature. New to the festival this year are The Narren of New Ulm, an entire village of intricately costumed “fools”.

The “Peculiar Pragmatic Promenade” returns this year, commencing at precisely at 12:37 p.m. All are welcome to enter, no prior registration is required, and fabulous prizes will be awarded.

Admission is $5 for adults and $3.00 for kids under 12. Babies get in free, and there’s no charge for parking. Costumes are encouraged! No pets, please.

The festival is an all-weather event – we can move the whole thing indoors without missing a beat!

Be sure to reserve August 14 for a trip to the Minnesota Garlic Festival in Hutchinson, just over an hour from the Metro area via Highway 7. Turn South on Hwy.15 and go through town, and the McLeod County Fairgrounds are two blocks east on Century Avenue. For further information and updates on the 2010 festival, please visit www.mngarlicfest.com.

Farming Forward continued from page 17
value was almost intoxicating. It was fast-paced and thrilling, and it took us along for the ride. What it lacked was personality. The personality of Farming Forward is alive not only in its farmers’ relationship with their food, but in their relationship with us.

As Chuck Waibel of Garden Goddess Produce puts it, this is “the whole great structure, the big dance.” The film ends on this note, leading us to recall that we are part of the dance, and part of the spirituality that pervades it. Farming Forward will not shock you or cause you to shake your fist in the faces of greedy and irresponsible industrial food corporations. But it won’t allow you to stay sitting either, as it modestly reminds you that if you are human, you eat. And if you eat, you must think about your food and its relationship with the people who grew it and the land they grew it on. Your very humanity requires you to move forward.
The SDSU Dairy Plant Begins Expansion!

By Jeremy Lanctot

In the last two issues of the CornerPost, I’ve written about local dairy pilot plants. I was hoping to include some detailed information about the South Dakota State University (SDSU) Dairy Plant, but wasn’t able to get the information in time for that issue. Since then, I’ve received more information from Howard Bonnemann, the plant manager.

Howard Bonnemann is the present manager of the SDSU Dairy Plant located in Brookings, SD. The dairy plant has been in existence since shortly after World War I. “We moved into our current location in 1961 and are currently in the construction phase of a new and renovated facility that will be completed in July of 2011,” states Bonnemann.

“I am the third Dairy Plant Manager since the current building and plant were completed in 1961,” Bonnemann continues. “My predecessors were Shirley Seas from 1954 until 1986, and Kirk Baldwin from 1987 until 1997. I have been with the Department for 13 years and will be beginning instruction for my 14th academic year this fall. I also received my B.S. and M.S. from the Dairy Science Department in the Dairy Manufacturing program, as did Shirley (B.S. and M.S) and Kirk (M.S.). I worked in Quality Control, Research and Development, and Dairy Processing for 10 years prior to my return to the University.”

During my discourse with Bonnemann, I learned that the SDSU Dairy Plant has begun a significant renovation and expansion. This is welcome news since there are many more farmers looking into developing their own dairy products. As mentioned in previous articles, it is very difficult to market a product you haven’t produced yet. The customer needs to see and taste before they will be sure they want to commit to buying a new dairy product. Many of the first on-farm processors took educated guesses about markets and prices and invested, in some cases, hundreds of thousands of dollars and years of their time to develop, produce and market farmstead products. This is a very risky proposition that I seldom recommend pursuing. Given the existence of excellent pilot plants at the St. Paul Campus of the University of Minnesota and South Dakota State University in Brookings, SD, farmers do not need to design their own on-farm plants before developing a winning dairy product. Let experts help you get that initial product perfected. Then, these market-ready products can be taken to your prospective customers taking the guesswork out of what they will receive in the future.

“The primary function of the SDSU Dairy Plant is to serve as a teaching laboratory for students pursuing a degree in Dairy Manufacturing,” expounds Bonnemann. “To accomplish this mission, the plant manufactures ice cream, cheese, and butter for commercial use and packages bulk pasteurized milk for the campus food service outlets. From a research standpoint, we have the capabilities to separate and fractionate milk utilizing centrifugal separation, membrane filtration (UF, MF, RO and NF), hard and processed cheese manufacture, vacuum thermal evaporation and spray drying. These research capabilities, especially the dry ingredients processing, will be expanded with the new facility.”

“Through the years, many dairy processes have been researched in this facility. Projects range from pre-concentrating milk prior to cheese manufacture utilizing vacuum thermal evaporation and/or ultra-filtration, thus reducing milk fat levels in finished products, to elevating the amount of CLA present through dietary changes, to fortification of milk and cheeses with Vitamin D and many other projects to numerous to mention.”

The SDSU Dairy Plant sells dairy products they produce at their on-campus store called the Dairy Sales Bar. The milk for these products is primarily sourced from the University’s herd of Holstein and Brown Swiss cows. They have also produced products from milk supplied from goats and grass-fed organic cows. To-date, they have not produced any products using milk from sheep or other species of animals.

For Minnesota producers, there are regulations for transporting milk across state lines that they need to be aware of.

“Any product transportation is up to the individuals conducting the trials,” explains Bonnemann. “Transportation of raw milk must be in a vessel approved by your local Department of Agriculture inspector and the vessel will also be examined by the SD Department of Agriculture inspectors upon arrival. The SDSU Dairy Plant is a regulated Grade “A” facility and we must gain approval for any exceptions before allowing the product to be expanded with the new facility.”

SDSU Dairy continued on page 22
FARMING FORWARD

Now available for sale - Get your copy today!

Farming Forward is a positive and inspiring look at sustainable farming in Minnesota. Directed by Martin Lang and Ethan Marxhausen in collaboration with the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, this new documentary paints an intimate portrait of the state’s burgeoning diversity of small family farms, from the rural to the urban, from multi-generational farms to new immigrant operations, from organic to local (or both!) and every point in between. Meet the people, young and old, from interns to elders, who grow your food and are passionate about reestablishing the links between people, the land and their food.

All proceeds from sales of the film will benefit Minnesota’s sustainable farms.

Order your copy at www.createspace.com/287888

Copies will also be available for sale at the Minnesota Garlic Festival.

The Humanity of Farming Forward: Thoughts from an SFA Intern

By Isabel Gregersen, Grazefest Intern 2010

Not much. The people of Farming Forward speak to us directly about the importance of the simple values of beauty, hard work, stewardship, wholesome food. As intern Jaclyne Thiers says, “Good food is wonderful. It’s more than just a trend, it can enrich your whole life.” And as farmer Jerry Ford says, with his traditional scythe in hand, “This is dignified work. What’s more dignified and important than producing food for people?” These statements and many others are welcoming in their simplicity and honesty. The film invites its audience in with them—allows us to envision ourselves as part of a sustainable food system. Rather than focusing on the barriers, it focuses on the hope and passion that fuel this system—instead of on the fossil fuel that does not.

Smoothly interweaving farmers’ words with peaceful shots of their land and livestock, the cinematography is as basic and refreshing as sustainable farming itself. The pace is slow, and the camera lingers on pastures, flowers, and cows; “living art,” as Marienne Kreitlow calls it. We are encouraged to listen carefully and think seriously. Remember Food, Inc., produced in 2009? Replete with dramatic visual effects and staggering statistics, its shock...
Friday & Saturday, September 10-11 • www.sfa-mn.org

Winona County Fairgrounds, St. Charles, MN

Friday: 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. • Saturday: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Featured Topics:

• **Fairground sessions will cover:**
  - Watering and fencing systems
  - Grass-fed dairy and beef
  - Direct marketing

• **The on-farm tour will cover:**
  - Pasture health and maintenance
  - Preparing for fall and winter
  - Cover crops
  - Watering Systems
  - Riparian area

Featuring experts from our own backyard, including:

- John Mesko, *Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, Executive Director*
- Wayne Monsen, *Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Grazing Specialist*
- Laura Paine, *Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Grazing & Organic Agriculture Specialist*
- Dean Thomas, *Fillmore County Soil and Water Conservation District, Grazing Specialist*
- Nathan Redalen, *Olmsted County Grazier*
- John Zinn, *Natural Resources Conservation Service, Grazing Specialist*

Grazefest Minnesota 2010 is being hosted by the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota and co-sponsored by Fillmore County Soil and Water Conservation District, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and University of Minnesota Extension. Other sponsors include: Land Stewardship Project, Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service, Minnesota Farmers Union, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE), and Wisconsin Department of Agriculture.

For more info visit: [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org) or contact Anne with the SFA at 320-226-6318 or communications@sfa-mn.org.
REGISTRATION FORM
Register online at www.sfa-mn.org

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10-11 ★ WINONA COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, ST. CHARLES, MN

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**EARLY BIRD**
Postmarked before August 27

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| SFA MEMBERSHIP        | (To become a member of SFA or to renew your membership please use the form on the back of this page) | $30 |

**SFA MEMBERSHIP**

Please send a check payable to: SFA of MN, 7356 Cable Road, Little Falls, MN 56345-5433.
Questions? Contact Anne with SFA at communications@sfa-mn.org or 320-226-6318.

Please list all names of family and/or farm members attending.

NAME(S): 

ADDRESS: 

CITY/STATE/ZIP: 

PHONE: __________________ EMAIL: __________________

Total $$ Enclosed:
# Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota

**Membership Form**

www.sfa-mn.org

<table>
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| **SFA Annual Membership (for a family)** | $30 | *(Not Tax Deductible)* |
| **SFA Annual Youth/Student Membership (for one student)** | $10 |

| **Name 1:** | First | Last |
| **Name 2:** | First | Last |

| **Farm/Business/Organization:** |
| **Address:** |
| **Address Line 2:** |
| **City:** | State: | Zip: |
| **Country:** |
| **Home Phone:** | Work Phone: |
| **Mobile Phone:** |
| **Email:** |
| **Website:** |

| **Chapter:** |
| Central | Cannon River | South Central | Unspecified |
| Coteau Ridge | Lake Agassiz | Southeast |
| Crow River | Lake Superior | Western |

| **Would you like to receive SFA’s biweekly Events Email?** | Yes | No |

---

**Please make your check payable to:** SFA of MN. Mail form & check to:

SFA of MN, 7356 Cable Rd, Little Falls, MN 56345-5433

Thank you!

---

**Member Interests (Optional):**

- Chef/Cooking
- Consumer
- Crafts
- Distribution
- Education
- Energy Production
- Entrepreneur
- Environment
- Events
- Exhibitor
- Farmer
- Food Production
- Garlic Festival
- GrazeFest
- Health
- Marketing
- Other
- Policy
- Processing
- Sponsor
- Youth
Sustaining Contributions:  
A Fundraising Message from SFA

Wow, it’s hard to believe we are already into the new fiscal year at SFA! Thanks to the generous support of many of you, we made our financial commitments in FY2010. Fiscal Year 2011 will be no less challenging, and fundraising will continue to be at the front of our efforts.

This year, we have a special advantage. The Otto Bremer Foundation has recognized SFA is a strong organization with a great mission. They’ve offered to match all contributions between now and March 26, 2011 dollar for dollar up to $20,000! If you would like to make your contribution double, now is the time!

You can donate online at www.sfa-mn.org and click on the piggy bank! You can also use the form below.

Thanks for your support,
John Mesko, Executive Director

Support SFA with a Sustaining Contribution

☐ $50   ☐ $100   ☐ $250   ☐ $500   ☐ $1000   ☐ Other: __________

Name:__________________________________________ Business/Org/Farm: ____________________________
Address & City: ___________________________________________________________ State: ________ Zip: __________
Phone: __________________________Email: ____________________________________________

Please make checks payable to: SFA of MN. Mail the form and check to: SFA of MN, 7356 Cable Rd, Little Falls, MN  56345-5433
You can also contribute online at www.sfa-mn.org. Just click on the piggy bank.

Thank You!
SDSU Dairy continued from page 16 into our facility. Transportation or shipping of the finished product is also up to the individual parties conducting the trials.”

Bonnemann can explain the details of costs associated with services supplied by the SDSU Dairy Plant. He states, “The facility is currently available for a base rental fee that allows access to all equipment plus one operator. This fee structure will be changing as we move into the new facility.”

Be sure to contact the facility for the latest information about pricing, facility availability and regulations. Until the new facility is completed next year, there are going to be potential scheduling and space problems.

Bonnemann explains, “The new facility is scheduled for completion in July of 2011. Until that time we will limit the amount of trial work being done because of construction schedules and phasing of areas under renovation.”

“Our capacity for frozen desserts will be approximately quadrupled in the new facility. We will also have increased flexibility with regard to types of cheese making equipment and the ability to utilize separate areas for research and production, which should increase the flexibility in scheduling projects. We will not be gaining much refrigerated storage capacity so the maximum amount of time that a product, produced on trial within the facility, will be able to be stored is one month. We will not have storage space available for rent.”

“Minimum process volumes for scalable development work would be about 20 gallons of product,” Bonnemann adds. “Smaller batches can be done but repeatability is questionable.”

If a farm is considering a pilot plant to help them do product research, they may want to begin planning on-farm finished product storage capabilities first. One of the cheapest ways of setting up on-farm storage facilities might be through the purchase of a decent, used, refrigerated reefer trailer with diesel and electric powered configurations. A larger reefer trailer can be partitioned to provide multiple temperature rooms from deep-freezing to slightly chilled. Another possibility might be a similarly configured small, enclosed trailer that can be towed with a standard pickup truck and utilized for both storage and delivery.

When you are ready to work on a new dairy product, you can contact Howard Bonnemann at 605-688-5420. For pictures of the facility and to see how they are progressing on the expansion, visit their website at:


If you would like to visit the facility in-person, Howard has included the following directions.

Directions: from the North or South – Take Exit 133 from Interstate 29 and proceed west on the Highway 14 By-pass for 1 and ½ miles to Medary Avenue (a stop light). Turn left (South) about ¼ mile to North Campus Drive. Turn left on North Campus Drive and proceed east until the 3-way stop with Rotunda Lane North. Turn Right (South) and proceed about two blocks past a parking lot, a set of greenhouses, and another parking lot. Turn into the second lot (Dairy Microbiology Building) (during construction this lot is serving as the staging area for materials and equipment so it has limited access)

Directions from the East or West – Take U.S. Highway 14 to the Highway 14 By-pass and proceed to the light at Medary Avenue. The remaining directions are the same.

A scene from Grazefest at the Mill City Farmers Market on Saturday, June 19, 2010. Joe Hatch Surisook, owner of Sen Yai Sen Lek grilling up Lighthouse Farm ribeye steaks for an Asian salad.

Photo taken by Anne Borgendale
Nature or Technology?
An Intern’s Impressions of A.I.

By Isabel Gregersen, Grazefest Intern 2010

Attending an Artificial Insemination training is a bit like attending a 5 hour driver’s ed class. For a couple of hours an expert talks at you, redundantly referring to a thick booklet, directing you to Chapter 4, Section 3. You are told what to do, what not to do, what to look for, and what to do when you don’t know what to do. Then comes the instructional video to cement the lecture and the booklet. And finally, you leave the classroom and do the real thing: drive. Or, stick your arm into a cow’s rectum.

“Getting pregnant is the name of the game.” This was what the leader of the Artificial Insemination training told us as I, along with fifteen dairy and beef farmers gathered in a makeshift classroom on a farm in Faribault, MN. We were here to learn the rules of the “game,” to learn how to “work” a cow in order to breed her effectively. After being lectured on the reproductive anatomy of a cow, the manipulation of the cervix, and the correct location for semen deposition; after scanning sections in my A.I. Management Manual and watching a video on semen handling and straw insemination, I began to realize that “working” a cow was a highly intricate procedure. The multitude of detailed instructions and the simplicity of “reproduction” as I understood it seemed to be at odds. Was this nature or was this technology?

Before discovering that in the first few days of my 10-week internship I would get the experience to trail after my hosts to an A.I. training, I had different ideas as to what cattle breeding meant. As an entirely ignorant fledgling intern, I had subconsciously assumed that it meant SEX, the old-fashioned primitive way. As the A.I. manual explained in one brief paragraph, “During natural service, the penis deposits semen within the vagina of the female.” So far, so good. This was information familiar to me from my middle school sex-ed classes. “When the mounting bull thrusts his penis into the cow’s vagina…the nervous system triggers the nearly instantaneous discharge of semen (sperm and fluids) called ejaculation.” Ok, not quite the same as what I learned in sex-ed class, but what seemed to be an apt description of simple and routine animal sex.

But “natural service” was not the subject of the day’s training. For who needs to be trained to watch a bull mount a cow in heat? I didn’t inquire why the cows didn’t just have sex; it seemed like too silly a question, and old-fashioned sex was too simple an answer. And as I learned later, owning a bull is no fun at all. So the practical truth of it was, bulls don’t mount cows anymore, human beings “work” them. And working a cow sounded an awful lot to me like working a piece of machinery, while the training for the “work” resembled learning the wheres and hows of a new piece of complex technology. Except that this technology was composed of familiar-sounding parts: a rectum, a vagina, a cervix, and a uterus. As I soon discovered, I felt no more at ease “working” the parts of a cow than I would have working the parts of a car engine.

Just like in driver’s ed, we soon left behind the classroom with its instructional manuals and videos and headed down the road to test our knowledge on the technology itself: the cow. About twelve Holsteins were lined up in a pen, waiting for us. I stuffed some paper towels in the pocket of my coveralls, slipped a pink shoulder-length plastic glove onto my left arm, lubed up, and found myself face-to-face with my first rectum, terrified. This was entirely alien territory, and my arm was not an intrepid explorer. But everybody else was already in elbow-deep, so I pushed aside my fear of A.I. continued on page 30
SFA’s Future Communications

By John Mesko, Executive Director

As SFA grows and matures, we seek to meet the needs of our members in the best way possible, while all the while maintaining the organizational infrastructure and funding such that we can continue to meet our long-range mission and strategic plan. Currently, there are several forces working on us as an organization that require us to re-think and adapt our communications tools to best accomplish these goals:

• Interactive, web-based communications tools such as, e-newsletters and social media, as well as improved technology have developed in recent years which can greatly enhance the overall impact SFA has as we seek to reach more of Minnesota farmers and non-farmers with sustainable agriculture programming.

• Use of these tools can provide immediate feedback to us as an organization, which is very useful in keeping us at the forefront of sustainable agriculture in Minnesota, and can help ensure we are meeting the needs of members.

• Electronic communication is more timely, interactive and dynamic rather than static.

• Costs of production and distribution of paper-based communication is rising dramatically. Additionally, as static pieces of information, they have a limited-time relevance.

• Specifically, our printed quarterly newsletter, CornerPost, is costing us about $30/year per paid subscription to produce and mail. Members currently pay $5/year subscription fee to SFA for CornerPost.

• Our bi-weekly SFA Events Email consistently rates as highly valued in our survey of members, and our respondents indicate they like electronic means of communication for new information.

• As more of our revenue as an organization must come from direct fundraising activities, it is clear that electronic communications are generally more cost effective.

• More and more non-profit organizations like SFA are using these tools for communication and fundraising, and our audiences are expecting it from us as well.

In light of all these forces, SFA will be making the following changes to our communications in the next few months. These changes will be phased in over time, and will be fully implemented by the 2011 SFA Annual Conference in February 2011.

• Starting in November, CornerPost will become an annual newsletter to our paid members. The content will remain largely the same, with annual chapter reviews, and a look ahead to the next year for SFA.

• The current bi-weekly Events Email will evolve into an e-newsletter, which will be interactive, with links to a broad base of information and events.

• Our website: www.sfa-mn.org will undergo a revision and be live by February 2011. Details of this will emerge as the branding project moves forward.

Should you have any questions or comments about these changes, please contact me directly at: 763-260-0209, or email john@sfa-mn.org

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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.
Do your students know where their lunch comes from?

The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota is now offering farm tours for urban and suburban school groups.

Let us know
Where you are located
The grade and subject of the class
What kind of farm you are interested in touring (vegetable growers, dairies, pasture raised meat, orchards...etc.)
When you would like to take the tour
What size your group is

We will match you with the ideal sustainable farmer in your area and then arrange for a tour of the farm.

Your students
Will be better informed in how to make healthy and sustainable food choices
Will gain a greater understanding of sustainable agriculture
Will better understand their role in our complex food system

Interested? ... please contact SFA-MN Events and Youth Outreach Committee, Jerry Ford, at kreitlow@cmgate.com or (320) 543-3394
If you are interested in an academic program in sustainable food production, you might want to check into a new one-year diploma program offered by M State Fergus Falls, a community college in west central Minnesota.

This program is dedicated to bringing about a renaissance in American agriculture. It draws on the principles developed by leaders in the sustainable agriculture movement, Wes Jackson of the Land Institute, Joel Salatin of Polyface Farm, Greg Judy and others. The program is heavily field-based and hands on and all instructors are food producers as well as educators.

All courses are block scheduled Thursday through Saturday. For individuals who need it, two modes of on-campus housing are available. One is full-time, traditional housing with a meal plan. The other is part-time, Wednesday through Saturday nights, throughout the term. Fall semester begins August 23, 2010.

For more information, contact Sue Wika, the program director, at sue.wika@minnesota.edu and check out the website at Minnesota.edu/sustainable.

The course list includes:

**SFP 1100 Principles of Sustainability** — This course is a study of sustainability utilizing the principles of permaculture and holistic resource management. 3 credits, Fall.

**SFP 1200 Farm Ecology** — This course will provide an analysis of natural ecosystem sustainability, relative to farms and food production. Nutrient cycling, energy flows, biodiversity and population control will be covered. 3 credits, Fall.

**SFP 1301 Artisan Food and Value-added Agriculture** — This course introduces students to a variety of artisan food crafts and the evolving trend of gastropreneurism. Students will investigate a variety of value-added agricultural enterprises. 3 credits, Fall.

**SFP 1302 Forage and Crop Systems** — This course introduces students to sustainable soil fertility management practices and strategies, such as cover cropping, crop rotation, conservation tillage and cultivation, compost production and use, and animal stacking. The course will also cover the foundations of plant science and forage plant identification. 5 credits, Fall.

**SFP 1304 Practical Farm Skills** — This course prepares students for the evaluation and practice of safe tractor and agricultural equipment operation. The proper techniques for the maintenance of agricultural equipment will be discussed. Students will learn livestock husbandry, including fencing and animal handling. 2 credits, Fall.

**SFP 1303 Grass-based Livestock Systems** — This course presents the foundations of animal science and the principles of grazing for multi-species animal systems. 4 credits, Spring.

**Soc 2222 Sociology of Agriculture** — The central theme of this course is to understand the institutions and processes critical to farm success. Students will utilize sociological perspectives to study the many aspects of a local food system. Meets MNTC Goal Area 5. 3 credits, Spring.

**SFP 1400 Farm Marketing and Management** — This course is an introduction to concepts, strategies and technology for farm planning, economic accounting systems, and marketing techniques. 3 credits, Spring.

**SFP 1500 Internship** — The Sustainable Food Production Internship is supervised employment of students that extends classroom learning to the farm and relates to the students’ educational or occupational goal. Students must complete the 26 SFP program credits to enroll. 4 credits, Spring-Summer.

Course instructors: Mark Boen, MA. Owner, Bluebird Gardens, Ryan Pesch, MURP. Owner, Lida Farm, Regional Extension Educator, Community Economics. Kent Solberg, MS. Owner, Seven Pines Farm and Fence, Sue Wika, PhD. Owner, Paradox Farm, grass-based livestock farm. Sociologist at M State Fergus Falls. Tom Prieve, DVM. Food animal veterinarian and farmer. Equine science instructor at M State Fergus Falls.
“New McDonald had a Farm”

By Rachel Bösl, Fergus Falls, MN

SFA's 2010 Youth Sustainability Writing Competition
Category: College Journalism, Winner

Vertical stacking, animal and plant diversity, agroforestry, and local economies: These words describe the “New” McDonald. This is in direct contrast to the specialization and monoculture of the farms of past decades, which raise only one type of animal or grow one type of crop. Kent and Linda Solberg’s Seven Pines farm near Verndale, MN. is working to make diversity an advantage instead of a disadvantage. Solberg’s main goal is to become a sustainable farmer and to protect the land for future generations by grazing his cattle and using the same land for varied purposes.

“On this farm he had a cow”

Grazing cows or animals is not a new practice. Before the inventions of the tractor and the plow, animals always grazed. When the tractor and plow became standard farm equipment this allowed for the expansion of crops such as, corn, soybeans, and wheat in large quantities. So why doesn’t Solberg use this technology? He uses a tractor and plow, but not to plant row crops. He uses them to improve his pastures that support his livelihood. As a grazing dairy farmer, Solberg says he works to improve “water quality, to protect the land base, and to improve soil quality.”

Solberg grazes his cows primarily because he does not have enough land to raise the row crops to support enough cows to make a living. He owns 80 acres and rents 100 acres of land. To make a living on such a small amount of land, he uses what is called stacking. Solberg defines stacking as “diversifying a farm by adding different types of animals to use the ground in different ways.” He says he is “producing more pounds of food per acre by stacking” than if he was to try to grow a lot of row crops.

An advantage to grazing is Solberg’s cows live long lives. The average cow in a free stall barn lives less than four years, while, grazing cows live an average of thirteen years. “Many believe the reason the cows live longer, is they sleep better,” Solberg said. This correlates to better economics because the cows will give more milk in their lifetimes and research from the University of Minnesota is beginning to support this. Solberg said that for many years, “production, production, production, has been the motto of the agriculture industry; however, the industry is quickly learning that increasing production, costs too much and the money maybe should be used for something else.”

“With a moo moo here”

The most important animal on Solberg’s farm is the cow. He also has chickens and pigs, but the cows are his main source of income. He has several different breeds represented in his herd, including Milking Shorthorn, Ayrshire, and Scandinavian Red. These breeds are more suited to Minnesota’s colder winters because they are smaller and use grass more efficiently. His cows eat about 45 pounds of dry matter a day, which equates to about 90 pounds of grass. If the pasture cannot grow the amount of grass needed to feed the cows, Solberg would need to buy other feed.

In order to ensure they have healthy food available, he uses different pasturing techniques. One technique Solberg uses to help keep his pastures healthy is to rotate the cows to entirely different areas to give parts of or an entire pasture a rest. Solberg’s cows spend the majority of their time grazing in one of his larger pastures, which is seeded with Italian Rye. He sections it off and uses portable electric fencing to move the cows to fresh grass. The fencing is like “the steering and accelerator” of his operation said Solberg. It helps to “steer” the cows where he wants them and at the speed he wants them to move.

In this pasture he also uses an irrigation system to help keep it in top condition. “Even this has a very sustainable application. For every one inch of organic matter that is added to the soil about one inch of water is added back to the soil,” said Solberg. Without the irrigation system, the pasture could end up going backward, resulting in a loss of organic matter. When this pasture needs a rest, he uses agroforestry, which is mixing livestock and forest on the same piece of land. He has a pine plantation the cows graze through about three times in the summer.

The key to agroforestry is to limit the amount of time the cows spend among the trees because they will destroy them. This forest also provides a windbreak in the winter for the cows. A large issue with grazing cows 365 days a New McDonald continued on page 30
Summer Events Calendar

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

Aug 2 WEI’s Organic Farm School Lecture – “What is Organic” – Minneapolis, MN. For more info, call WEI at 651-583-0705 or visit www.w-e-i.org.

Aug 7 Natural Resources Enterprise Wksp – GreenPastures Dairy, Carlton, MN. For more info at www.lssfa.org.

Aug 7 Farm Frolic a Lake Superior Farm Beginnings Fundraiser & Graduation. For more info at www.lssfa.org.

Aug 7 Minnesota Food Association Community Work Day – Big River Farms, Marine on St. Croix, MN. Contact Joci Tilsen at jtilsen@mnfoodassociation.org or Glen Hill glenhill@mnfoodassociation.org or call 651-433-3676.

Aug 7 Cedar Summit Farm Tour – Cedar Summit Farm, New Prague, MN. To RSVP contact Nick Olson nicko@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-269-2105.

Aug 8 Post-Harvest Handling of Vegetables Field Day – Hogsback Farm, Arkansaw, WI. To RSVP contact Nick Olson nicko@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-269-2105.

Aug 9 WEI’s Organic Farm School Lecture – Minneapolis, MN. For more info, call WEI at 651-583-0705 or visit www.w-e-i.org.

Aug 12 Central Lakes College – Energy Day, Staples, MN. Contact Robert Schafer with Central Lakes College at rschafer@clcmn.edu or 218-894-5160.

Aug 12 Central Lakes College – Horticulture Day, Staples, MN. Contact Robert Schafer with Central Lakes College at rschafer@clcmn.edu or 218-894-5160.


Aug 14 Insalada Verde, A Slow Food Event – Northern Harvest Farm, Wrenshall, MN. More info at slowfoodlakesuperior@gmail.com, Jamie at 218-728-2687.

Aug 14 Managed Grazing Design and Assistance Pasture Walk – Stuedemann Farm, Belle Plaine, MN.

Aug 15 Big River Farms In-Field Training Sessions – Composting Systems and Mulching Techniques – Big River Farms, Marine on St. Croix, MN. For info contact Katie Kubovcik at katie@mnfoodassociation.org or 651-433-3676 or visit www.mnfoodassociation.org.

Aug 16 Prairie Establishment for Biofuels and Wildlife – EcoSun Prairie Farms. Contact Craig Novotny, EcoSun Prairie Farms at 605-695-0090 or Jill Sackett, UM Extension/Rural Advantage, sacke032@umn.edu or 507-238-5449.

Aug 16 WEI’s Organic Farm School Lecture – “The Future of Alternative Farming and Food Justice in Minnesota” – Minneapolis, MN. For more info, call WEI at 651.583.0705 or visit www.w-e-i.org.

Aug 16-17 2nd Annual Midwest Rural Assembly, South Sioux City, NE. For more info visit www.midwestruralassembly.org or, contact midwestruralassembly@iatp.org or call 612-870-3429.


Aug 18-19 MARC&D Summer Conference, Warroad, MN. Contact Pembina Trail RC&D at 218-253-2646 Ext. 103 or pembinatrail@yahoo.com.

Aug 19 U of M Rosemount – Research and Outreach Center Open House. Call UMORE Park 651-423-2455.

Aug 20 Agroecology Summit – Willow Lake Farm, Windom, MN. For info contact Tony Thompson, Willow Lake Farm, at 507-381-3483.

Aug 22  The Homegrown Experience – Nicollet Island Pavilion, Minneapolis. Contact Heather Ocel at hocel@minneapolisparks.org or 612-230-6415.

Aug 23  Cover Crops and Alfalfa Mulch – EcoSun Prairie Farms, Colman, SD. Contacts for this event: Craig Novotny, EcoSun Prairie Farms, 605-695-0090 & Jill Sackett, UM Extension/Rural Advantage, sacke032@umn.edu or 507-238-5449.


Aug 24  Exploring Late Season Cover Crops and Rotations Field Day – Riverbend Farm, Delano, MN. To RSVP contact Nick Olson at nicko@landstewardshipproject.org or 320-269-2105.

Aug 29  Big River Farms In-Field Training Sessions – Cover Cropping and Putting Fields to Rest – Big River Farms, Marine on St. Croix, MN. For info contact Katie Kubovcik at katie@mnfoodassociation.org or 651-433-3676 or visit www.mnfoodassociation.org.

Sep 1  Registration deadline for 2010-2011 session of Land Stewardship Project’s Farm Beginnings program. For more info visit www.farmbeginnings.org or call 507-523-3366.

Sep 10  Grazefest MN Graziers’ Panel & Supper – Winona County Fairgrounds, St. Charles, MN. More info at www.sfa-mn.org or contact SFA at communications@sfa-mn.org or 320-226-6318.

Sep 11  Grazefest MN 2010 – Winona County Fairgrounds, St. Charles, MN. More info at www.sfa-mn.org or contact SFA at communications@sfa-mn.org or 320-226-6318.

Sep 11  17th Annual Harvest Festival and Energy Fair – Duluth Bayfront Park. For more info visit http://lssfa.org, email info@theharvestfestival.org or call 218-393-3276.

Sep 11  Backyard Homesteading: Farm Tour, Potluck, & Produce Exchange - Winsted, MN. For more info at www.doitgreen.org/workshops

Sep 11  Minnesota Food Association Community Work Day – Big River Farms, Marine on St. Croix, MN. Contact Joci Tilsen at jtilsen@mnfoodassociation.org or Glen Hill glenhill@mnfoodassociation.org or call 651-433-3676.

Sep 12  “Nourishing our Children” - First Presbyterian Church, Albert Lea, MN. Contact Al Wagner at 507-256-7569 or alw@dmbroadband.com.

Sep 16  U of M Southern Research and Outreach Center Open House – Waseca, MN. For more info contact Jeanette Williams, University of MN - SROC, 507-837-5612

Sep 19  Perennials for Biomass – U of M SROC, Waseca, MN. Contact Dr. Gregg Johnson, UM-SROC-Waseca, 507-837-5617, Jill Sackett, UM Extension/Rural Advantage, at sacke032@umn.edu or 507-238-5449.

Sep 26  Big River Farms In-Field Training Sessions – Hoophouse Production and Season Extension – Big River Farms, Marine on St. Croix, MN. For info contact Katie Kubovcik at katie@mnfoodassociation.org or 651-433-3676.

Oct 2  Minnesota Food Association Community Work Day – Big River Farms, Marine on St. Croix, MN. Contact Joci Tilsen at jtilsen@mnfoodassociation.org or Glen Hill glenhill@mnfoodassociation.org or call 651-433-3676.

Oct 9  Hazelnut Field Day – Lake City, MN. Contact for this event is Jeff Jensen, Rural Advantage, 507-238-5449.

Oct 16  Minnesota Food Association’s Fall Harvest Party – Big River Farms, Marine on St. Croix, MN. Contact Joci Tilsen at jtilsen@mnfoodassociation.org or Glen Hill glenhill@mnfoodassociation.org or call 651-433-3676.

Oct 24  Cannon River Chapter Farm Tour at Singing Hills Goat Dairy, Nerstrand, MN. Contact Kathy Zeman at kzeman@kmwb.net or (507) 664-9446.

Nov 2  Minnesota Food Association Community Work Day at Big River Farms – Putting the Farm to Beds for the Winter, Marine on St. Croix, MN. Contact Joci Tilsen at jtilsen@mnfoodassociation.org or Glen Hill glenhill@mnfoodassociation.org or call 651-433-3676.
New McDonalds continued from page 27
year in this area, is winter. Solberg uses a Swedish Deep Straw bedding pack in the winter, to keep his cows warm and comfortable. This is a large pack of straw that helps to keep the cows warm. In the summer he lets his pigs go through it and make it into compost.

Another way Solberg keeps his pastures in top condition is by using a technique called “out-wintering.” In out-wintering large round hay bales are pre-placed so the cows will stand around them, eat them and then fertilize the area around them. The result is thicker more nutritious grass in the spring. This year because of the lack of rain at certain times, the grass did not grow as well as Solberg would have hoped. He said that “farming is all about timing.” Solberg is planning on placing the bales in the same place again to see if he gets a better result.

A final technique he uses is a “sacrifice area.” This is when a pasture goes dormant because of lack of moisture. Solberg allows calves to demolish the area and use their manure to fertilize it. He then reseeds the area for the next year. One plant he puts into his pastures is red clover, a legume that puts nitrogen into the soil. This helps to keep the soil healthy.

Solberg milks 40 cows twice a day in his pit parlor. When he began dairy farming, Solberg had no buildings or equipment for milking. He built his parlor and acquired his equipment for about $27,000. He did a lot of dumpster diving, in order to be able to build his entire operation for this amount. “The sustainable farmer is creative and innovative,” Solberg said. It takes him about an hour to milk and 15 to 20 minutes to clean up. Every other day, a milk truck comes to collect the milk from the bulk tank and deliver it to the closest plant, which is in Perham, MN.

“And a moo moo there”
Solberg uses a bull to naturally breed the cows. The breeding windows are April to May and September to October. The bull calves are sold, and the heifer calves are housed in their own individual grassy pens. This allows them to walk around and learn to graze at an early age. At 12 weeks of age, they are moved together in a small pasture and eventually they are blended into his larger milking herd.

“On this farm he had a chicken and a pig”
Diversity is also important on Solberg’s farm. Solberg’s laying hen flock follows the dairy herd across the pasture, scratching the cow pats to find insects, which distributes the nutrient-rich organic matter. Linda, his wife, markets the prized eggs in local towns where she’s known as the “egg lady.”

Three sows and their piglets top off the animal diversity on Solberg’s farm. The sows turn the cows’ wintering area into rich compost with their “pigerating” activities, says Solberg. The growing piglets harvest acorns and roots in the woods behind the house. “All I need for entertainment is to come out to watch the pigs digging and playing,” chuckles Solberg.

“Ee-i-ee-i-oo”
Being part of a local economy, land stewardship, and making a living are the main focus on today’s sustainable farm. Many would call Solberg an innovator, perhaps even a pioneer, but Solberg says, “I wouldn’t say pioneer, I would say copier. I do a lot of reading and research. If I see something that is applicable, I will take a stab at it.” Solberg has turned Old McDonald into the New McDonald of the 21st century.

A.I. continued from page 23
warm, unseen places full of manure, pushed aside the tail of #267, and plunged my hand in.

I was promptly and utterly lost. My left hand searched for the cervix through the rectal wall but it was nowhere to be found. I scraped out some manure to avoid confusion, but sadly, the organ remained elusive. After failing to locate the cervix in several more cows, let alone successfully maneuvering the A.I. gun through the cervix into the uterus, I surrendered to the mystery of bovine anatomy and stood back to observe the others, hoping to see some similar struggles.

Lined up along the backsides of the cows were mostly men and a couple of women. Arms deep inside the cows, they were straining and sweating to locate the cervix and manipulate their A.I. guns through it and into the target zone for insemination: the junction of the cervix and the body of the uterus. What an ordeal.

In my mind’s eye, the trainees transformed into bulls and began to mount the cows, promptly depositing their semen directly into the vagina and backing off. Easy. Natural. But what I was actually witnessing wasn’t easy or natural at all. A cow is a piece of technology just as much as it is a living, breathing, feeling animal. In order to work it, you need a manual, you need to be trained, and you need to learn exactly how the technology works in order for it to benefit you. Of course this wasn’t nature; this was technology. What a silly question.
Meet Katharine Plowman

I first heard about SFA during college when I participated in a semester program via the Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs (HECUA). One of our field trips was a tour of Mary Jo Forbord’s farm when she was still Executive Director of SFA. Mary Jo was an inspiration and prompted me to delve further into the organization, leading to volunteer work and attending various farm tours.

When I was growing up my grandparents owned a small farm until I was 10. My fondest memories are those of picking asparagus and strawberries and of my brother and I harvesting raspberries into pie tins. My grandmother would give two tins to us with the intent that we would probably end up consuming at least one of the tins. My Mother was and still is an amazing gardener and would always have our table brimming with our homegrown tomatoes and cucumbers. My favorite summer pastime was eating our garden tomatoes in sandwiches after a morning spent constructing mini canoes from overgrown zucchinis.

I’m originally from Hutchinson, and currently have about a half-acre of vegetables, herbs, fruits and medicinals in production there. My mother is an amazing plant starter for all my vegetable seedlings. Baby tomatoes have never been tended with so much individualized care. I’ve also gotten my dad to be a pretty mean tomato stake pounder.

Since January 2010 I have been residing in Montevideo at Moonstone Farm, a diversified perennial polyculture, under the guidance of Audrey Arner and Richard Handeen. Moonstone is a rotationally grazed, grass-fed beef operation, where I am involved in animal husbandry, agroforestry, viticulture, vegetable production, ecosystems monitoring, agritourism, and community work. The previous summer I worked at Loon Organics in Hutchinson learning CSA vegetable production. Have you heard about their electric tractor?

Next season I would like to work for a farm and have my own side project marketing vegetables wholesale or directly to customers, potentially through a farmstand CSA. Further out I would like to delve into growing and processing medicinal herbs for market and wholesale. In the short term I am brainstorming how I will support myself financially through the winter. Wherever I do eventually lay down my roots, however, I will frenziedly begin establishing a community base and perennials—two components I feel are critical in achieving the quality of life I am looking to live.

What I have found in my three years within sustainable agriculture circles is that it’s all about connections. If you are a beginning farmer, I would find people and communities you like and immerse yourself. Get to know communities and build relationships within those communities. I’ve never met a nicer group of individuals, or collective for that matter, than those I have happened upon whether it was through a farmstay, interning, attending conferences, volunteering, etc. People are just so warm, welcoming and willing to share information. Even if you know nothing, delve in. Goodness knows where it will take you but it’s bound to be somewhere good and undoubtedly with some tasty food!
**Mission:** we support the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education and farmer-to-farmer networking.