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2009 Annual Meeting A Great Success

By Karola Dalen

The Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association held its Annual Meeting at the Peace Church in Duluth on Saturday, January 21st. It was an exciting day of learning, discussing local foods, and anticipating the upcoming growing season. We were hoping for 50 people to attend, we planned for 60, and over 70 people participated in the workshops, business meeting, soup and bread dinner, and keynote talk by Randy Hanson, “On Bee’s Wings: Growing A Community Food System”.

The day started with four exciting and informative workshops. Many people had a difficult time choosing only one. A popular workshop was John Fisher-Merritt’s “Interpreting Soil Test Results for Organic Soil Management.” Somehow in 60 minutes John was able to discuss interpreting soil test results and rehearse a photosynthesis themed song with the class. The song was later performed for all to enjoy during dinner. Deb Shubat led the workshop “Seed and Vegetative Plant Propagation.” Starting plants is a tricky business and Deb has the skills to help us reduce the risk of propagation failure. John and Deb are both farmers and LSSFA board members. Farmer and LSSFA member Mark Thell led the workshop “Direct Marketing Meat and Poultry: Opportunities and Challenges.” The partici-

pants in the class proved that interest in producing local meats is growing. Cree Bradley led the “Lake Superior Farm Beginnings” workshop to inform LSSFA members and prospective students about this new LSSFA program. Cree Bradley wears many hats. She is the Lake Superior Farm Beginnings facilitator, a LSSFA board member, and also a farmer. From the bubbling discussions following the workshops, I believe everyone learned something valuable.

After the workshops, we all gathered upstairs for the business meeting. The business meeting is an opportunity to reflect on the past year of LSSFA activities and events and for members to approve the annual budget. Accomplishments include another successful Harvest Festival and starting the Lake Superior Farm Beginnings program. Losses include the passing of LSSFA founder and long time member Ken Peterson. We said goodbye to board members Katie Hanson and Paula Williams. We wish them the best in their life’s next steps. We welcomed new board member Barb Adams; welcome Barb! We also were able to say thank you to LSSFA coordinator Joel Rosen for a fantastic job this past year. Joel has given a tremendous amount of his time and energy as a long time LSSFA board member, state SFA board member, and coordinator. During the

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LSSFA MISSION

The Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association supports the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through innovation, demonstration, education, and farmer-to-farmer networking. The organization is a participating regional chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

Towards a Local Healthy Food System

By Kelly Smith

Some of you who attended the keynote at our annual meeting a month ago might have had the same reaction I had—this is a watershed moment for

LSSFA. After years of piecemeal (but vital) efforts at building a local food system, here is the organizational tool we need to focus our efforts and get things rolling. Randy Hansen presented the need for and how to of making a Locally Adapted Food System happen.

He presented the need. The current Corporate/Industrial Food System (CIFS) has been at the root of many of the world's biggest problems: climate change, peak oil, desertification, ground water depletion, starvation, obesity, diabetes, cancer, unaffordable health care, collapsing ecosystems ... CIFS is also vulnerable to its effects. Corporate/Industrial food production, for instance, is highly dependent on nitrogen fertilizer, which in the US is made from natural gas, future supplies of which are certain to diminish. Corporate/Industrial food travels an average of 1,500 miles, and that's excluding imports. CIFS requires cheap, always available fossil fuel.

A Locally Adapted Food System (LAFS) would provide all residents with affordable, safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable food produced in an environmentally and community sustainable way. To create a LAFS we:

Name it. What is our region and what foods grow well here? The Western Lake Superior Bioregion could be known for parsnips, fish, wild rice, venison (let's eat those varmints!), potatoes, goat's milk, fava beans, oats, rhubarb, currents, flax, chevon, maple syrup, spinach, and much more.

Frame it. To get support we must speak in the languages of stakeholder groups. In economic terms, northern MN and WI contain about 700,000 people who average \$2453/person/year on food purchases, or \$1.6 billion/year. If local growers supplied 10% of the region's food needs, that's \$160 million/year, most of which would remain in our region rather than be drained off to far away corporations. Include a 3 – 5 x multiplier effect of dollars spent by small businesses such as farmers, processors, and retailers, and we have a very significant economic development program. In health terms, obesity, diabetes, cancer, and depression can largely be eliminated by the growing of (it's gonna take many more hands on the land) and eating of whole foods. In national security terms, CIFS is a big risk. According to an article at culturechange.org/go.html?328 "The world is heading for a drop in agricultural production of 20 to 40 percent, depending on the severity and length of

Randy Hanson presents "On Bee's Wings: Growing a Community Food System." He discussed ways to take advantage of our existing food system and move into a Locally Adapted Food System.



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Towards a Local Food System (Continued from page 2)

the current global droughts. Food producing nations are imposing food export restrictions. Food prices will soar, and, in poor countries with food deficits, millions will starve." For food security reasons, we need to look beyond CIFS.

Research it. We need to quantify the region's food needs, current local production, and potential sustainable food yields of our local lands and waters. We need to determine the current food infrastructure (growing, processing, serving, storing, composting) and the future needs. We need to name the bottlenecks, the current biggie being a dearth of local food growers, and learn how to remove them. What are we already doing towards our goal? What do we already have in place? Quite a bit, with our Farm Beginnings Program right out front.

Join it. We need to pull in stakeholder groups such as local politicians, hunger activists and non-profits, health professionals, haberdashers and hoteliers, and economic development people. A Food Council is forming to begin the process.

Build it. This will include incentives for farmers, and reskilling of producers, processors, and consumers. Building local relationships and infrastructure has already begun, with Harvest Fest, Superior Grown, CSAs, farmers markets, and the Chicken Bus.

Enjoy it! An excerpt from a Hopi poem goes: "This could be a good time! There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore. They will feel they are being torn apart, and they will suffer greatly. Know the river has its destination. The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above the water. See who is in there with you and celebrate. At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally, least of all ourselves. For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey comes to a halt. The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves! Banish the word struggle from your attitude and your vocabulary. All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration. We are the ones we have been waiting for."

Become a Member...or Renew Your Membership Today!

By becoming a member of the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association (LSSFA) you will be supporting the work of the Association to create a more sustainable food and farming system for our region. You will receive the *Farm & Market News*—a quarterly newsletter of LSSFA to "keep you posted" about sustainable agriculture events and happenings in our region. You will also receive the State of MN Sustainable Farming Association Newsletter, *The CornerPost*.

One Year Membership - \$30

CONSIDER A TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION

Already a member and want to further help build LSSFA's capacity—consider giving a tax-deductible contribution of \$250, \$100, \$50, \$25 to help LSSFA fulfill its mission.

Gifts of any size are welcome and appreciated.

Name

Farm/Business/Organization (please list products produced if applicable)

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone

Email

I would like to be contacted about volunteer opportunities with LSSFA.

Annual Membership (\$30) \$ **30**

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business meeting, Joel passed the torch to new coordinator Nicole Wilde; welcome Nicole!

A dinner of winter soups, homemade bread, and homemade desserts followed. A big thanks to Joel who made ten gallons of venison stew, ginger squash, and borsch soup. Thanks to Bob Waselovich for the many loaves of bread he baked. Another big thanks to Deb Shubat, Kelly Smith, Candance Kirkedahlen, Paula Williams, Katie Hanson, Jane Fisher-Merrit, Dave Hanlon and all the others who contributed food to our wonderful meal. It could not have been as fantastic as it was without you. Katie and Scott Hanson ran the kitchen beautifully. The service was excellent.

The night ended with Randy Hanson's keynote "On Bee's Wings: Growing A Community Food System". It was an exciting talk on ways we can take advantage of the existing food system we have and move into a Locally Adapted Food System. It was good to hear Randy mention the many ways LSSFA has initiated many of these opportunities such as farmer-to-farmer networking and consumer-to-farmer networking. For more on Randy's keynote, read the article "Towards a Local, Healthy Food System" by Kelly Smith. Needless to say this conversation will continue as LSSFA works with communities and other organizations to grow a local food system.

Thank you to all who helped set up, take down, and clean up during the meeting. The board invites all LSSFA members and their family and friends to join us next winter for another fantastic Annual Meeting. Have a wonderful spring!

Time to Get Ready For the 2009 Farmers Market Season!

The UMD Farmers Market is gearing up for its 2009 season. The market is open every Wednesday from 2:00—4:30 pm, May 20th and runs through September. Set-up for growers is at 1:30 pm. The UMD Farmers Market is located outside Kirby Plaza at 1028 Kirby Drive on the UMD campus. All growers interested in selling products at the UMD market should contact Deb Shubat at 218-525-3063 or shub@shubatfruits.com. Vendors wishing to sell crafts or musicians wishing to perform, contact Terri Glemben 218-726-6507. The 4th Street Duluth Farmers Market is scheduled to start May 9th and run through the month of October. The market is open every Saturday and Wednesday from 7am-noon. Contact Lois Hoffbauer 218-624-4159 to learn more.

Welcome LSSFA New Board Member **Barb Adams** and Coordinator **Nicole Wilde**

In May of 2007 **Barb and Steve Adams** moved to a beautiful little piece of land that was part of a larger farm in the past. As well as having large fruit and vegetable gardens, they began their little enterprise with two Alpine dairy goats and laying chickens in order to sell goats' milk products and eggs. They now have five goats - three does pregnant, a registered buck, and a wether kept as a companion for the buck (and everyone else) - and 29 laying hens.



*New Board Member
Barb Adams with Dream's
doeling, Alba.*

Barb and Steve were members of the Food Farm CSA for 14 years and Barb's interest in locally grown, high quality foods grew with her friendship and admiration for the Fisher-Merritts and other farmers she has met thru the SFA. Now retired from the Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program, Barb still dreams of a day when Federal and State food programs seek more than a token of local, high quality foods for their clients as well as a day when everyone can afford to pay a fair price for good local food.



*Nicole Wilde exploring the
Northshore — cut from the
photo is Taconite Bob.*

Nicole Wilde joined LSSFA as coordinator in February. Originally from Milwaukee, she moved to Duluth in 2007, after living in the Chequamegon Bay for nearly a decade. She holds an MBA in Entrepreneurship and Marketing from UW-Milwaukee, has served as both a

Peace Corps and Americorps volunteer and brings experience working with non-profit organizations and private firms. Her consulting company Wilde Growth specializes in advancing social and environmental organization missions through social ventures, marketing and strategic alliances. Nicole will oversee the coordination of Harvest Festival and support the work of the program and membership committees.

Lake Superior Farm Beginnings Update

By Cree Bradley

Holistic Management with farmer presenter Jane Fisher-Merritt teaching.



It is hard to believe that Lake Superior Farm Beginnings (LSFB) is halfway through its program! Three years of volunteer time and effort was dedicated to bringing the Farm Beginnings program to the Lake Superior region. Now that the program is under way, I can hardly believe how fast this year-long farmer-taught training and support program is passing by. Nearly six fall and winter months are spent in nine classroom sessions with beginning and experienced farmers developing skills in business planning, goal-setting, financial management, decision-making, marketing, record-keeping and Holistic Management. Saturday, March 7 marks our last winter session; an exciting session in which participants share their farm goals in the form of a business plan, a marketing idea, a financial analysis, a Holistic Goal, a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and/or a conceptual model. Experienced farmers will be joining this session to provide presenters feedback and encouragement!

Shortly after March 7, when spring settles into the landscape a bit more, the LSFB classroom moves out into the fields! Six months of training continues throughout the spring and summer with on-farm field sessions. Participants learn production methods, skill-sets and are exposed to multiple enterprises throughout the region. Field sessions are based on the particular interests of the participants in the class. And the interests are varied! We will

visit a diverse mix of twelve sustainable farms throughout the region;

participants are excited and looking forward to these classes. While business planning and the more process-oriented work of the winter sessions is the backbone of any successful farm, often the more exciting part is the hands-on and how-to skills of being a farmer!

At this mid-point of the LSFB program, I would like to share some truly remarkable highlights:

- LSFB successfully launched a 2009-2010 Lake Superior Farm Beginnings (LSFB) program with 22 farm units and 43 energetic individuals in attendance, ages 22 to approximately 60 (our registration goal was 20; a registration covers family members and business partners).
- LSFB has had to date a terrific pool of professional farmer presenters / educators who matched the curriculum and FB message very well! With help and direction from members of the LSFB steering committee and some personal history with many of our farmer presenters, we fortunately connected with such wonderful and appropriate resources!

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THANK YOU TO THESE FARMERS AND EDUCATORS WHO HAVE JOINED THE LAKE SUPERIOR FARM BEGINNINGS PROGRAM TO DATE!

Jane Fisher-Merritt, Food Farm, Wrenshall MN — **Doug Gunnink**, Holistic Management Educator, Gaylord MN — **Mark and Terri Thell**, 4-Quarters Holding, Wrenshall MN — **Bryan Jon Machewski**, Business Professor, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College in Cloquet MN — **Karola Dalen**, Northern Harvest Farm, Wrenshall MN — **Doug and Diane Finke**, Finke's Berry Farm, Carlton MN — **Rick Dale**, Highland Valley Farm, Bayfield WI — **Landis and Steven Spickerman**, Hermit Creek Farm, Highbridge WI — **Charlie and Tzeitel Kersey**, LaFinca CSA, Bruno MN — **Chris Duke**, Great Oak Farm, Mason WI — **David and Lise Abazs**, Round River Farm, Finland MN — **Tom Galazen**, Northwind Farm, Bayfield WI — **Tom Cogger**, Maple Hill Farm, Washburn WI — **Janaki Fisher-Merritt**, Food Farm, Wrenshall MN — **Barb Adams**, MeadowWild Farm, Barnum MN — **John Fisher-Merritt**, Food Farm, Wrenshall MN — **Jason Fischbach**, Wild Hollow Farm, Ashland WI — **Katie Hanson**, Boreal Scapes CSA, Superior WI — **Okey Ukaga**, Executive Director NE MN Sustainable Development Partnership.

- Student - Jillian Forte has completed an impressive amount of work in developing her farm goals and business plan. Jillian is interested in specializing in herbs; edible herbs as her more immediate cash crop and value-added, medicinal herbs as a future enterprise. She would like to sell to the Whole Foods Co-op, various restaurants, and other retail buyers. For Jillian's final presentation, she shared her completed business plan with financial information, her Holistic Goal and a SWOT analysis. Jillian shared information about her land situation and the resources it has provided her (she is part of a community cooperative outside of South Range, WI). In addition, she shared how she has used the Northeast Entrepreneur Fund (one resource of many that LSFb nurtures participants to take advantage of) and Duluth's FAIM program to assist her in reaching her goals through cost-sharing of education and equipment related to her business.

- LSFb has developed work and funding partnerships that have been and will continue to be very helpful! Partnerships include: Laurentian and Onanegozie RC&D Councils, Carlton County Extension, Ashland and Bayfield County Extension; Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Kiwanis Club of Cloquet, Rotary Club #25 of Duluth, Northeast MN Sustainable Development Partnership, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE), Carlton County Economic Development Council, Land Stewardship Project and the Farm Beginnings National Collaborative.

“It's nice to hear encouragement from people outside of the group about what we and I are doing. It [LSFB presentation and business planning] is a huge project and sometimes I wonder if I am crazy. But the classes have helped to inspire and focus what I need to do. I feel really good about having the business plan and a Holistic Goal. The last piece I want to do (it can be really motivating to have a deadline!) is my goals, tasks and a possible timeline.”

~ Jillian Forte, LSFb Student

- LSFb got through a winter schedule in NE MN and NW WI (with long distances traveled throughout the region by participants living as far as Embarrass, Grand Marais, Foxboro, and Cook) without being stormed out once!!

While I share mid-season highlights, it is also important to note that LSFb, despite being a year-long program, truly has no beginning or end. LSSFA has identified that we need more farmers on the landscape and that we are committed to providing sound education that will expose beginning farmers to the myriad skills they need to be viable farmers who can sustain a good quality of life. Though LSFb has formal activities that occur within a year's timeframe, the on-going support for today's and future students continues long after the formal program ends. If this is year one of LSFb, then year two to five are critical for these potential farmers. During this time, many will be considering land purchases, writing business plans, plowing fields, buying livestock, and beginning

their farm enterprises. LSSFA and the LSFb program are working hard to build our capacity and infrastructure to effectively support and mentor this next generation of farmers. This is the Farm Beginnings vision and an exciting and critical role that LSSFA can play!

If our Lake Superior agricultural heritage and supporting beginning farmers is close to your heart, please contact Cree Bradley, LSFb Facilitator, to discuss ways in which you can help! The LSFb program is expensive and comprehensive. Your help is appreciated! Contact Cree at 218.834.0846 or email cree@lakesuperiorfarming.org for more information. Thanks!

Grant Award to LSSFA for Season Extension Technology Education

LSSFA was awarded a \$450 grant from the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and the Sow the Seeds Fund to do a field day workshop on season extension. The workshop will commence sometime in 2009 (funding needs to be used this year) and will explore performance, return-on-investment and other details on various season extension technologies such as fiber covers, plastic mulches, low tunnels and high tunnels. More details coming soon! Or email LSFb for an update at cree@lakesuperiorfarming.org.

State SFA Winter Conference Report

By Joel Rosen

The Minnesota Sustainable Farming Association held its annual winter conference on Saturday, February 21 in Northfield. Held in Buntrock Commons at St. Olaf College, the event featured a keynote by well-known grass farmer/livestock producer Joel Salatin, a variety of workshops, exhibits by farm equipment and supply vendors, displays by sustainable ag-related non-profits, a luncheon of primarily local foods, an awards ceremony, and a reception following the keynote.

The wet snow that fell overnight and through the morning created some tricky driving conditions in the southern half of Minnesota and adjacent portions of Wisconsin, and quite a few members arrived one or two hours later than expected. Once the late registration and parking scramble had subsided, the day went off almost seamlessly. As the crowd continued to stream into the Black and Gold Ballroom, SFA Executive Director Mary Jo Forbord delivered the welcoming address. Laura and Marvin Bihl, long-time grass-based beef producers from the Crow River Chapter were presented with the Sustainable Farmer Emeritus award. Chris Barnier, Central Chapter member and State Board Treasurer was presented with the SFA Distinguished Service Award.

A variety of excellent workshops were held at 10am and 11am and at the mid-day break, attendees had the opportunity to marvel at the diversity and quality of food available to St. Olaf students on a regular basis. There were several SFA member's products being dispensed at the buffet style luncheon. Following the luncheon was the final sessions of workshops.

At 3pm a crowd of more than 400 packed the Black and Gold Ballroom for the much anticipated keynote, "Everything I Want to Do Is Illegal", delivered by Joel Salatin. Mixing humor and philosophy interspersed with excerpts of some of his well-known innovative farm production and marketing ideas, Salatin presented a withering critique of conventional food policy in the U.S. as brought to us by the corporate food conglomerates and the USDA. Food safety, and the misguided efforts to "sanitize" our food supply was one of the main themes of the talk. Although it was mid-afternoon, no one in the overflow crowd was spotted napping, and at the end of the talk, Mr. Salatin received a standing ovation.

On the day before the conference, the State Board of Directors met for their quarterly meeting and elected new officers. Chris Kudrna from Central Chapter has replaced Lake Superior's Joel Rosen as president, and Mary Hanks and Chris Barnier are continuing as secretary and treasurer. With the vacancy created by Jerry Ford's departure, the board decided to wait until the next meeting before electing a vice-president. The most time-consuming and controversial item on the agenda was adoption of steering committee's recommendations for by-laws revisions defining status of chapters. The majority of chapters will be operating under the financial and legal protection of the state organization. Those few chapters that declared themselves as 501c3 independents, including our own Lake Superior Chapter, will need to clarify that status by June or revert to being one of the dependent chapters.



Dan Webster and his family at the 2007 Harvest Festival where he received the Farmer's Voice Award. Dan's wife Margaret is not pictured here, as she was busy speaking at another engagement on the Iron Range.

Remembering LSSFA Leader Dan Webster

Long-time Lake Superior SFA member Dan Webster passed away last month. Dan taught agriculture in high school for many years before retiring to a farm near Wright. Despite losing a leg in a farm equipment accident as a young man, Dan always radiated optimism and faith in the future of sustainable farming and the environment. In addition to his involvement with SFA, Dan's most recent adopted causes included promoting native grass bio-fuels and preventing the spread of non-ferrous sulfide mining in his home area.

Dan was one of the early founders of the SFA Northeast Chapter and a long-time promoter of the Harvest Festival. In 2007, he and his wife Margaret were honored at the Harvest Festival with the Farmer's Voice Award. Despite declining health, Dan held down an extra long shift at one of the donation stations at the 2008 Harvest Festival, and his team brought in the highest number of donations. At Dan's funeral at the Holy Family Catholic Church in McGregor, his life was celebrated by a number of friends and family members, revealing a humorous side not all of his acquaintances knew. We will all miss him.

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The date on your mailing label indicates the expiration date of your membership. If there is no date, you have received a complementary copy and we ask you to consider joining our membership to help fulfill our mission.

**See PAGE 3 for a
membership &
donation form.**

Farmers Take the Stage

A Garden Variety Talent Show Benefiting Lake Superior SFA 7PM - Saturday, March 27th @ Amazing Grace Café and Bakery

Join the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota for a fun-filled night of music, variety acts and contests at *Farmers Take the Stage - A Garden Variety Show*. This family-oriented evening of music, storytelling, contests and entertainment will take place on Friday, March 27, 2009, from 7:00 – 9:30 pm at Amazing Grace Bakery and Cafe, located in Duluth's Canal Park in the basement of the Dewitt-Seitz building at 394 South Lake Avenue. The night features a show packed full of unique and unexpected talent from farmers and eaters who live throughout the Lake Superior region. Additionally, participants will have an opportunity to compete for the dubious honor of Deepest Squint Lines and Most Worn Out Farmer's Outfit Accessory – so don't forget to dust off and bring your old boot, hat or worn out gloves to have a chance to win. A suggested admission donation of \$15 will benefit the Lake Superior Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association. Children under age 10 will be admitted free.

Calling Talent—If you are interested in performing please contact Talent Manager—Joel Rosen: 218-389-3306.

