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Contact:

Steve Carlson | Beginning Farmer and Program Associate | Practical Farmers of Iowa | (515) 232-5661 | steve@practicalfarmers.org

Practical Farmers of Iowa announces on-farm job opportunities for aspiring farmers

AMES, Iowa – Practical Farmers of Iowa is once again partnering with experienced farmers across Iowa to offer aspiring farmers several on-farm job opportunities through Practical Farmers' Labor4Learning program.

Having sufficient on-farm work experience is vital to the success of new farmers just starting on their own. Most on-farm employment opportunities, however, are limited in scope and don't expose employees to the full range of skills needed to successfully run a farm business

Practical Farmers of Iowa's Labor4Learning program helps fill this need by connecting aspiring farmers seeking paid on-farm training with experienced farmers looking for eager employees. Those in the program also receive additional training on topics such as finances, marketing and other skills vital to running a farm business.

This season, 14 experienced farmers from around the state have signed on to hire an employee through the program and to provide that additional training. At the start of employment, the trainer and trainee will agree on a set of learning outcomes they will address during the course of employment, beyond the normal job-related work activities. Each Labor4Learning trainer farm was approved by a committee of Practical Farmers of Iowa members to serve as qualified teachers.

The jobs are found across the state and encompass diverse enterprises, such as greenhouse production, livestock, dairies, produce and row crops. Each job opening in the program varies in duration, hours, work activities and compensation. A list of participating farms is included below, and complete job descriptions and program details can be found at <http://practicalfarmers.org/labor4learning>.

To qualify as a trainee, applicants must have a strong desire to learn; apply to and be hired by a trainer farm; and be or become a member of Practical Farmers of Iowa.

Entering its fifth year, Labor4Learning has proven to be beneficial for both parties: Experienced farmers find high-quality, motivated workers; aspiring farmers find employment on a reputable farm, gain additional training beyond their wage-earning activities and build a network of beginning and experienced farmers through PFI.

"I've found that formalized instruction educates the teacher as much as the student," says Jill Beebout, of Blue Gate Farm in Marion County. "The opportunity to help beginning farmers, along with continuing to improve our own journey on the farm, seems to be a wonderful way to propagate small farms."

2017 Labor4Learning Trainer Farms:

- Francis Blake – Blake Family Organic Farms – **Allamakee County** (Waukon) – Certified organic beef, dairy, laying hens, row crops, hay
- Mike Salama – Salama Greenhouse – **Boone County** (Boone) – Greenhouse production of ornamentals and vegetables
- Denise O'Brien and Larry Harris – Rolling Acres Farm – **Cass County** (Atlantic) – Produce, cover crops, poultry

- Jeff and Earl Hafner – Hafner Inc. – **Guthrie County** (Panora) – Cow-calf operation, hogs, aquaponics, eggs, organic small grains and row crops, organic flour mill, seed cleaning
- John C. and Sarah Gilbert – Gibraltar Farms – **Hardin County** (Iowa Falls) – Dairy, farrow-to-finish hogs, corn, beans, small grains, hay
- Donna Warhover – Morning Glory LLC – **Linn County** (Mount Vernon) – Produce, eggs
- Jill Beebout and Sean Skeeahan – Blue Gate Farm – **Marion County** (Chariton) – Produce, poultry, alpacas, honey bees, fruit trees, value added products, hay
- Jon Bakehouse – Maple Edge Farm – **Mills County** (Hastings) – Corn, soy, alfalfa, beef cattle, pasture, small grains
- Andrew and Melissa Dunham – Grinnell Heritage Farm – **Poweshiek County** (Grinnell) – Certified organic produce, chestnuts, cattle, hay, poultry
- John Wesselius – The Cornucopia – **Sioux County** (Sioux Center) – Produce, poultry, pork
- Paul and Nancy Ackley – **Taylor County** (Bedford) – Beef cattle, corn, soybeans, small grains, hair sheep
- James Nisly – Organic Greens – **Washington County** (Kalona) – Certified organic produce, mini-greens, micro-greens, asparagus, cabbage, sweet potatoes
- Dan and Bonnie Beard – Canoe Creek Dairy – **Winneshiek County** (Decorah) – Certified organic dairy, pasture, hay, small grains, corn and sweet corn, syrup, timber
- Erik Sessions – Patchwork Green Farm – **Winneshiek County** (Decorah) – Naturally grown fruits, vegetables, herbs and cut flowers

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Practical Farmers of Iowa strengthens farms and communities through farmer-led investigation and information-sharing. Our values include: welcoming everyone; creativity, collaboration and community; viable farms now and for future generations; and stewardship and ecology. Founded in 1985, farmers in our network raise corn, soybeans, livestock, hay, fruits and vegetables, and more. To learn more, visit <http://practicalfarmers.org>.