

the **Practical Farmer**

A Newsletter of Practical Farmers of Iowa • Vol. 24, #4 • Fall 2009



Crossing Family Lines 10-11

Decreasing Transaction Costs 14-15

Field Day Pictures 4-7

2010 PFI Annual Conference: "Jubilee!" 8-9

PFI Board of Directors

Correspondence to the PFI Directors is always welcome.

District 1 (Northwest)

David Haden
4458 Starling Ave
Primghar, IA 51245
(712)757-1301
highland33@tcaexpress.net
Dan Wilson, PFI Vice-President
4375 Pierce Ave.
Paullina, IA 51046
(712)448-3870
dlwilson@iowatelecom.net

District 2 (North Central)

Nina Biensen
2454 Binford Ave.
State Center, IA 50247
(641) 483-2292
biensen@marshallnet.com
Tim Landgraf, PFI President
1465 120th St.
Kanawha, IA 50447
(641)495-6367
libland@peconet.net

District 3 (Northeast)

Jeff Klinge
16609 Highway 13
Farmersburg, IA 52047
(563)536-2314
jeffkling@netins.net
Eric Franzenburg
6925 19th Ave.
Van Horne, IA 52346
(319)228-8758
efran@netins.net

District 4 (Southwest)

Earl Hafner
303 Oak Ridge Dr.
Panora, IA 50216
(641)757-0560
hafnerin@netins.net

Verlan Van Wyk, PFI Treasurer
PO Box 246
Sully, IA 50251
(641)594-2998

District 5 (Southeast)

Ann Cromwell
3303 240th St.
Williamsburg, IA 52361
(319)668-8248
anniowa@commspeed.net
Linda Grice
PO Box 86
South English, IA 52335
(319) 667-2350
agricol@netins.net

At-Large

Joyce Lock
725 54th St.
Des Moines, IA 50312
(515)277-3615
stirjoy@aol.com
Gail Hickenbottom
810 Browns Woods Dr.
West Des Moines, IA 50265
(515)256-7876

Advisory Board

Larry Kallem
12303 NW 158th Ave.
Madrid, IA 50156
(515)795-2303
Dick Thompson
2035 190th St.
Boone, IA 50036
(515)432-1560

PFI Staff

For general information and staff connections call (515)232-5661; individual extensions are listed in parentheses after each name.

Teresa Opheim (302)

Executive Director
teresa@practicalfarmers.org

Gary Huber (515)450-6812

Niche Pork, Iowa Food Cooperative
gary@practicalfarmers.org

Suzi Bernhard (301)

Membership, Youth, Poultry
suzi@practicalfarmers.org

Sally Worley (304)

Communications, Horticulture
sally@practicalfarmers.org

Sarah Carlson (305)

Field Crops, Water Monitoring
sarah@practicalfarmers.org

Luke Gran (308)

Next Generation
luke@practicalfarmers.org

Gordon Reeder (306)

Communications Assistant
gordon@practicalfarmers.org

Rick Exner, Consultant

Oat Rust, Organic Seed Treatment
(515)232-5581
dnexner@iastate.edu

Tom German, Consultant

Grazing Clusters
(712)830-3281
tagerman@netllc.net

Contents

| | |
|---|-------|
| Letter from the Director | 3 |
| Field Day Photos | 4-7 |
| "Jubilee!" 2010 PFI Annual Conference | 8-9 |
| Crossing Family Lines | 10-11 |
| Preserving Your Land | 12-13 |
| Decreasing Transaction Costs. | 14-15 |
| Storage Solutions. | 16-17 |
| Farming with Grace | 18-19 |
| PFI Cooperators | 20-21 |
| Breeding More Options | 22 |
| Continuations. | 23 |
| Calendar. | 24 |
| News | 25-26 |
| Join PFI. | 27 |

Cover: Tim Pomeroy, Steve Morrell, Kerry Pomeroy, and Earl Cornelison enjoy a hay rack tour at Earl Hafner's field day. View more snapshots of PFI's field days on page 4.



The Practical Farmer is published four times a year by Practical Farmers of Iowa at 137 Lynn Avenue, Suite 200, Ames, Iowa 50014; (515) 232-5661. A free subscription is provided to PFI supporters (see page 23). Sample copies and back issues are available.

Newsletter Editor: Sally Worley
Original Template: Michael Nash



Field Day Reflections

It's dusk, and we've just finished at a PFI Field Day. PFI Staffer Sarah Carlson and I drive slowly along a gravel road lined with tall corn, stopping every so often to jump out and pull PFI Field Day signs out of the ground. Field Day goers pass us, their car

We work with the greatest group of farmers in the country, and we do what it takes to keep them coming back to PFI.

headlights catch Sarah's neon yellow-green PFI shirt, and they honk goodbye.

This is how we spent our Saturday night: loading up the car with PFI materials, traveling across the state, shoving PFI signs into the ground, listening to farmers talk grazing, taking photos, holding the intercom for the speakers, just helping out where we could.

It struck me that *there was no better place to be that Saturday night than on a gravel road near South English, and no more important work than yanking PFI Field Day signs out of the ground.* We work with the greatest group of farmers in the country, and we do what it takes to keep them coming back to PFI.

Field Days are our members' top PFI priority. We read every Field Day evaluation as they come in, we'll debrief the Field Day season when it's over, and then talk about how to make next year's



From left: Teresa Opheim, Suzi Bernhard, Sarah Carlson, and Luke Gran pose with the most recent pick for the staff's monthly book club: *An American Dreamer: a Life of Henry A. Wallace*. Luke, forever breaking the mold, brings a different book to discuss.

season even better. The Annual Conference ranks as your second top priority, see page 8 for the lineup we've put together for you for Jan. 8-9. We will be celebrating the past 25 years and then looking to the year 2035 with four thoughtful farmers who will offer us their vision of their farms, Iowa agriculture, and the PFI they will know 25 years from now.

The PFI Board of Directors and I would also like YOUR visions for a positive future and how we'll get there. Leopold Center Distinguished Fellow Fred Kirschenmann and I invite you to join us for a conference session on **What If? Glimpses of the Future That You Can Help Shape**. We'll explore some stories of 2035 that include challenges such as high-priced oil and a volatile climate, and opportunities such as the tremendous demand for local food and differentiated products. Work with others to stretch your thinking about what our future might hold—and how we can shape it.

PFI farmers report they are seeing the rains come harder and faster than they did in the past. Researchers have verified that trend. A number of PFIs also reported that, after the 2008 floods, their farming systems held the soil in place while tons of our "black gold soil" from neighboring farms washed down the river. Practical Farmers of Iowa has just received a grant to put numbers to these members' reports.

I recently read a good definition for resilience: Some redundancy is built in, the system can adapt, and there are diverse number of species and connections between them in the farming system. There are many connections between this definition of resiliency and PFI's vision for Iowa.

See you at the annual conference, PFI's 25th year Jubilee!

Teresa Opheim
Executive Director

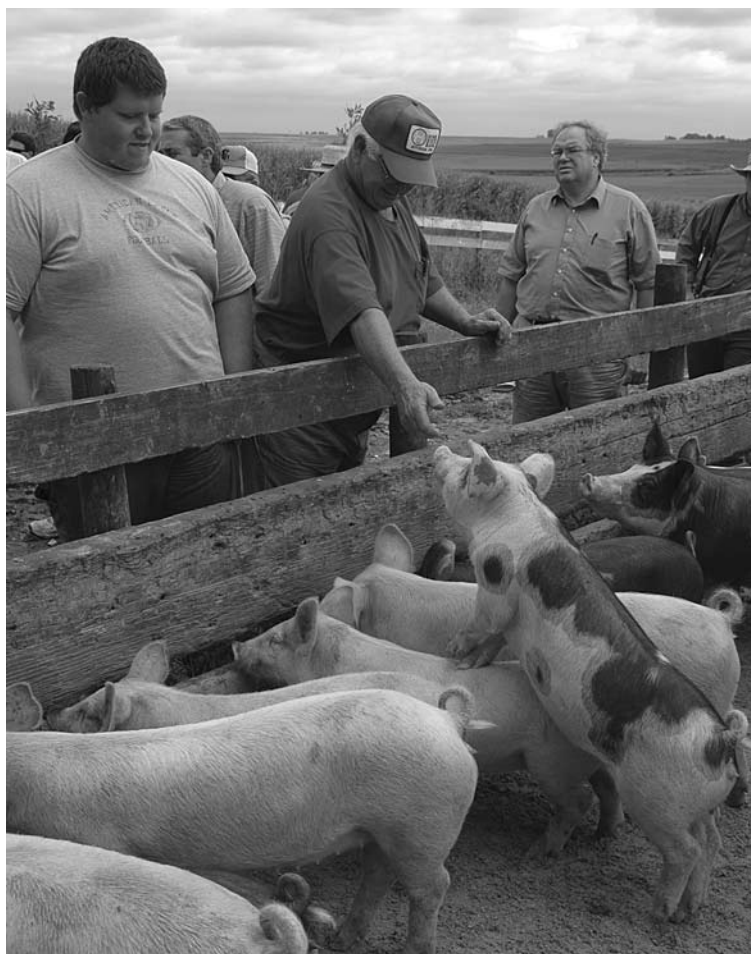


Featured farm dog: There's no better greeter than a farm dog. Here's Casey, who welcomed 65 to the Rosmann Family Field Day August 27th. Casey loves the limelight: she was featured in the London Times with John Edwards, during a campaign stop at the Rosmann Farm.

Field Days 2009



People are interested in learning about Iowa agriculture first-hand: this year over 2500 people attended PFI field days (this includes Farm Crawl attendance of 1000!). Summaries of selected field days are available on our blog at www.practicalfarmers.blogspot.com. Clockwise from top left: Fred Abels shows off the Hagie High Boy; chickens keep on rooting for food as folks congregate at the Libbey/Landgraf's; farmers discuss COMIDA, a new farmer incubator program at Marshalltown Community College; Gary Guthrie gives a contest to con people into picking potato beetles out of his field with a game; some look for tomato disease, some taste test, and some simply admire the scenery in Loyd Johnson's greenhouse.



Clockwise from top left: Guests admire the pigs at the Rosmann's; Heemstra brothers proudly display a wheel of their delicious Gouda; Dan and Erin Hanrahan enjoy themselves despite the spitting rain at Whiterock Conservancy; PFI Staffer Luke Gran woos RAGBRAI bikers; attendees admire the view atop a wagon at Tjelmeland's.

Field Days 2009



Clockwise from top left: PFI celebrity Gabriel Bahrenfuse is sheltered from the elements by Marj Stonecypher at the Frantzen field day; Norm McCoy guides goats through oak-savanna forest at Chicaqua; Teresa Opheim admires Mark Runquist's food stash; Kayla Koether and Ryan Jepsen enjoy a laugh at the Koether field day; student Caleb Smith talks chicken breeds at Scattergood Friends School.



Clockwise from top left: Friends are made at Earl Hafner's field day; the male contingent of the Corey family listen to the speaker at Bruce Carney's; Sally Hertz and Jan Libbey converse with a guest at the Libbey Landgraf field day.

Annual Conference

Jubilee!

Celebrating 25 Years of PFI

January 8-9, 2009

Marshalltown Community College

Opening Session: "Jubilee!"

PFI is celebrating 25 years of networking, cooperating, learning, and developing diverse farms, healthy food, and vibrant communities. Come celebrate! We will honor our past and look to our future. Four PFI farmers — **James Frantzen**, **Andy Johnson**, **Kayla Koether**, and **Jan Libbey** — will offer us their vision for farming in the year 2035.



James Frantzen



Andy Johnson



Kayla Koether



Jan Libbey

One Farm, The Future

Tradition, Innovation, Sustainability on the Frantzen Farm

James Frantzen grew up on an organic family farm near New Hampton, Iowa, producing pork, beef, and crops. He recently purchased a farmstead a few miles north of the home farm.

Home Place America

Working Landscapes as an Inspiring National Self-Portrait

Andy Johnson farms grass-fed meats and sustainably grown Christmas trees at Oneota Slopes Farms near Decorah.

Where the Grass is Greener

Weighing Whether to Become an Iowa Farmer

Kayla Koether is still growing up in Northeast Iowa on her family's rotational grazing operation, Koether Ranch. She also is a sophomore at Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa.

The Glacial Nature of Sustainable Agriculture

Revitalized Local and Regional Food Systems in 2035

Jan Libbey farms at One Step at a Time Gardens, a 150-member CSA that also supplies local farmers' markets, and is involved with local food development work at the state and local level.

Screening of Big River

The follow-up project to *KING CORN* is done! Friday night come to a screening of *Big River*, which explores the environmental implications of high-intensity corn production.



Seed Swap

Bring extra seeds and your wish list! This informal session will be a place for you to exchange seeds with other growers. Also, bring your supply list if you wish to find someone to partner with for a bulk order. No cash allowed.

Coffee Shops

We have two coffee shops this year! Stop in and talk one-on-one with Gary Zimmer or Gearld Fry—or both. Coffee shop will be open Saturday from 10:30 am-noon and 1:30 – 4 pm.

Babies Welcomed!

We have a childcare corner set up in the Exhibit Hall for your kids to play. (No offsite childcare provided this year).

Business Meeting

Don't miss the PFI Business Meeting on Friday, January 8 at 5 pm. Find out the latest on PFI's programming, finances, staffing and more. And offer your feedback on how we're doing.

Wanted: Posters

Member posters have a long history at the annual conference! Bring a poster about nearly anything that would interest other members—share your farm, your research and demonstration projects, your lessons learned! (No proprietary products, please.) Just check the box indicating interest, and we'll send you more information.



Friday Workshops

Getting the Most From Your Fertilizer Dollar

Gary Zimmer, Midwestern Bio-Ag

How can you position your manure dollar in the most effective way? And improve or create a good system of manure management? How does your manure management relate to available fertility and soil quality? Come explore these topics with the author of *The Biological Farmer* and *A Complete Guide to the Sustainable and Profitable Biological System of Farming*.

A Diner's Guide to Food Trends

Donna Prizgintas, Chef

Joyce Lock, Culinary Professional

Learn from two culinary professionals as they cook and chat about the changes in eating trends and what and how we'll be cooking and eating in the future. The first half of this session will be a discussion, and the second half will be a cooking demonstration with foods sourced from the Iowa Food Cooperative.

What If? Glimpses of the Future That You Can Help Shape

Fred Kirschenmann, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

Teresa Ophem, Practical Farmers of Iowa

PFI is celebrating 25 years by looking to Iowa agriculture and PFI in the year 2035. We need your help to envision a positive future and how we'll get there! In this session, we'll explore some stories of the future that include challenges such as high-priced oil and a volatile climate, and opportunities such as the tremendous demand for local food and differentiated products. Work with others to stretch your thinking about what our future might hold—and how we can shape it.

What's Your Beef?

Gearld Fry, Bovine Engineering and Consulting

According to a 2007 Colorado State University research paper, cattle producers are missing out on \$1.7 million each year in payments for quality beef. Gearld contends that every animal you raise can be high quality and sell for a premium. Learn his secrets to creating gourmet beef; he says it all comes down to selection for required genetics and program management. Learn five practices to breeding success.

To Market, to Market

Larry Cleverley, Cleverley Farms

Jill Beebout and Sean Skeehan, Blue Gate Farm

Rick Hartmann, Small Potatoes Farm

Craig Chase, Iowa State University

How to market: CSA, Restaurants, Institutions, Farmer's Markets – whew – and at what price? Hear from producers Larry Cleverley, Rick Hartmann, Jill Beebout and Sean Skeehan on the advantages and disadvantages of marketing produce in different ways. Craig Chase will present analytical data on marketing options, evaluating pricing versus margins and everything in between. Craig will also present a tool available to growers that evaluates marketing outlets for them.

Saturday Workshops

❖ Jubilee! Discussion on the Keynote Addresses

❖ Finding Success in Succession

❖ Major Pests and Solutions

❖ Writing your Farm/Garden

❖ Use of Plant Essential Oils as Seed Treatments

❖ CSA pricing: Are You Getting a Fair Payback For Your Product?

❖ Prairie Provides the Heat: An On-Farm Energy Story

❖ Between Generations: Nurturing both Aging Parents and Growing Children

❖ Dealing with the M-Word: Manure Handling and Application and Nutrient Cycles

❖ High Value Tree Crops: Opportunities in Agroforestry

❖ Learning From Our Mistakes: Managing Herbicide-Resistant Weeds

❖ Clusters!

There will be time to talk with those who share your enterprises: fruits and vegetables; beef; dairy; poultry; sheep and goats; and field crops. Also one for beginning farmers as well

❖ U-Pick is back!

To make sure we cover what you want: write your ideas on your registration form, and we will organize sessions to accommodate as many ideas as possible.

Need advice on adding the next generation to the farm?

Dave Baker from the Beginning Farmer Center will be available for private consultations on Friday afternoon and Saturday. Indicate your interest on the registration form, and Next Generation Coordinator Luke Gran will contact you to set up an appointment.

Eat: Friday chili buffet and Saturday lunch, featuring food grown by PFI farmers

Meet: Bring Iowa wine, beer, cider, Templeton Rye or other refreshments and mingle with other PFI members Friday evening in the Hospitality Room
Greg and Kathy Koether and Scott Weinberg, hospitality co-chairs



Gary Zimmer



Rick Hartmann



Mary Swander



Tom Wahl

Crossing Family Lines

How one family made the farmland transfer that needs to happen a thousand times over

Teresa Opheim

In the early 1990s, PFI member Martha Shivers Skillman started looking around for a more sustainable farmer to work the land she had inherited with her sisters. She was told not to get her hopes up. Farmers who might have been interested “were wiped out in the ‘80s,” people told her.

That was the wrong thing to tell Martha, who, like her sisters, is of determined and resourceful stock.

Jump-start to early 2009, when an excited PFI member, Jim Petersen, called the PFI office. Jim had just purchased 160 acres from Martha and her sisters to help his young adult sons start farming. How did the two families do it, come together to make the land transfer that needs to happen a thousand times over if we are to have a future of diverse farms and vibrant communities?

Martha Skillman and her sisters, Charlotte Shivers and Marietta Carr, grew up on the family’s large farm but all left after finishing high school in the 1940s, Martha to Chicago as an occupational therapist, then into horticulture with “Garden in the City.” Charlotte was teacher, then realtor, then Unitarian Universalist minister around the country. Marietta became a medical administrator in Albuquerque and now lives in Seattle.

For all three, the pull of farm and family was strong.

“I was always coming back to Iowa, mainly to visit Mother, particularly when all those trains ran back and forth from Chicago,” Martha says. Their father, John, died in 1962, and their mother died in 1990. Then the sisters had the great fortune to inherit 520 acres of good Iowa land, to agree that they wanted to keep it, and to form a partnership, “Shivers Fair Acres.”

“I took over as our sisters’ first managing partner,” Martha said. “Then in the early 1990s, I moved back to Iowa into the little house here that was originally used to house the ‘hired man.’” Charlotte and her husband, Bob Baker, moved back to the farm in 1996; they now live in the original farm house, and Charlotte is the current managing partner.

There is a large web of Shivers all over South Central Iowa, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, first and second cousins. These three sisters are descended from Celly (Marcellus) and Molly Mills Shivers, who bought the farm in 1903, complete with a big red barn labeled “Fair Acres 1882.” The girls’ father was youngest of their eight children and got the home place.

There’s an annual Shivers Picnic to help the family stay connected, and it was at this picnic sometime in the farm crisis of the

1980s that Charlotte visited with her cousin-in-law Folmer Petersen. This year Folmer didn’t answer the traditional “fine,” when asked how he was. He revealed that they were in serious financial trouble and about to lose the home farm that his son Jim so wanted to farm. Charlotte listened and suggested that they should try for a loan from her mother, Vera. Marietta advised their cousin, Norma, Folmer’s wife, the same way. And Vera Shivers got to express her passion for the family farm by loaning the necessary dollars to Folmer’s son, Jim Petersen.

“The Sellers are committed to the land ethic which came down to them from their ancestors ... and was given to them by their father, John Shivers, in these words: ‘The land isn’t ours. It’s ours to use and pass on, better than when we got it.’ Sellers know that Buyers share these ancestors and believe they share this ethic as well; that is why they have chosen them as buyers.”

-- from the sale contract of 160 acres of land from Shivers Fair Acres to Jim Petersen



Conversation flows between Jim Petersen, Charlotte Shivers, and Martha Skillman as they relax on the farm porch on a beautiful summer day.

“We got to know Jim and his wife Julie that way. They never missed the opportunity to thank us, and Jim paid the loan back just as agreed,” Martha says. “Then I discovered that Jim was trying different farming methods that we hadn’t been able to get our farm operators to do.”

The Petersen’s and Shivers started to talk: the Shivers heard more about Petersen’s farming approach, and that the two older boys, Justin and Jacob, were interested in organic agriculture. The sisters agreed that they would like to rent 160 acres to the Petersen’s to be farmed organically. Managing partner Charlotte sought advice and then worked out with the Petersen’s a lease whereby landlord and tenant shared the risks and yet had a cash rent arrangement. They learned about organic together. Perhaps the hardest part,



At PFI Field Days, Martha (center, at a DeCook field day) learned about more sustainable farming practices. “They made me feel like I was part of a community. That contact through PFI gave me the courage to talk to others who have similar ideas.”

Martha said, was, “Another set of cousins, good conventional farmers, had been farming that land, and we had to take it from them. That was a painful process. But they hadn’t done what we asked for, and we were serious about trying more eco-friendly farming.”

The Petersen’s began renting the land in 2004. Early each December Jim would report how the money had been spent and what money came in. His father, Folmer, a long-time soil and water district commissioner in Marion County, continued to help out. “He was particularly helpful in helping trace and augment tile lines,” Martha said. “The Petersen’s educated us about our land in a way that no one else had since our father’s death.” And it worked financially for all concerned.

“I discovered that Jim was trying different farming methods that we hadn’t been able to get our farm operators to do.”

Martha Skillman

Jim Petersen had been eager to buy land to help the boys get started. He eventually got up the nerve to ask the Shivers if they would consider a sale. Marietta, Martha, and Charlotte explored with their children how they would feel about parting with a portion of the farm. “Each of those children responded: ‘I love the farm, but we won’t be coming back,’” reported Martha. “Our kids were open to Jim’s request because they liked the kind of farming he was doing, and like their parents they wanted a way for the farm to continue as sustainable.”

Charlotte told Jim: Make us an offer on the 160 acres you rent. About two years later he did. “PFI’s Next Generation meetings taught me to get out and do something about getting more land. Don’t wait,” Jim says. It was actually easy to agree on a price; Jim’s banker named a number that he thought Jim could handle without

Lessons from the Shivers-Petersen’s

Be patient and persevere: It took the Shivers over 10 years to find the right renter to work toward their stewardship goals. They then rented to the Petersen’s for five years and saw good care of the land before selling them 160 acres.

Build the relationship: According to Martha, “Jim and Julie never missed an opportunity to thank us” for the loan the Shivers family gave them. Jim built trust by paying the rent on time and discussing their farming ideas with the Shivers.

Keep goals in mind: The Shivers needed income from the land, but they were willing to forego top dollar for two of their other goals: land stewardship and helping a new generation get started.

Don’t be afraid to get third-party help. “With a group of heirs, differences appear even if their goals are the same. We used a social worker for 14 years to help us negotiate our differences. It’s to our credit that we got professional help,” Martha reports.

Don’t be an “absentee” landlord: The Shivers sisters stay involved with their tenants and their land, which is easier to do because they chose to return home. “We never allowed ourselves to become the traditional removed and absent landlords with this land,” they report.

having to mortgage his home. And as Marietta said, “We don’t want that to happen.” After a diligent search, the sisters found that no one in Iowa granted conservation easements to protect farm land and give owners a tax break. So, the 160 acres went for below market value, but there were many restrictions placed in the contract in an attempt to assure good stewardship through the years.

“The most assurance comes from the fact that we trust the Petersen’s to farm in a way that puts care of land first,” Charlotte said.

This summer, Jim, Martha, and Charlotte took some time to sit on Charlotte’s front porch swing, which overlooks the Shivers’ farmland and the new Petersen land off to the southeast. One sister smiled as she told Jim, “We three can argue about how much to spend for dinner, but we were in complete agreement about this sale.” Later Martha added, “We can joke now but early on our differences weren’t funny; we found a social worker attuned to family business issues and got help.”

Together four children of Marietta, Martha, and Charlotte will inherit the remaining 360 acres of the farm. And the Petersen’s, winners of “The Way We Live” award at the State Fair this year, move forward on their new 160 acres, adding the land into their five-year crop rotation, 200 head of cattle, and 600 head of ewes. Jim works at 3M. Justin, who gravitates toward the field crops, lives at home, farms full-time, and has followed in his grandfather’s footsteps by becoming a commissioner of the soil and water conservation district. Jacob, an Iowa State student, is more interested in the livestock. Jim reports with a smile than the other Petersen children, Joshua and Jenny, may want to farm someday too.

Preserving Your Land

Together with their tenants, these PFI farmland owners are making changes that encourage conservation and beginning farmers

Teresa Opheim

Fifty-four percent of the land in Iowa is farmed under landlord-tenant agreements, and given current trends, that percentage is sure to increase. As a result, absentee landowners are playing a key role in how Iowa's land is farmed and who is farming it.

With this article, PFI presents two members who are absentee farmland owners – Helen Gunderson and Soper Farms – committed to a future of profitable and diverse farms and healthy communities. Both are busy implementing their visions

them how to farm. They knew what they were doing, and they loved farming.”

Helen also is a farmland owner, and through the years she had put some of her

lease, which states that “it is the intent of the parties that at least 60 crop acres of this farm shall be farmed organically.” Last fall, Betsy starting moving one-third of the acres to organic by planting alfalfa and oats.

Helen particularly enjoys renting to a fellow woman. “When I was growing up, girls couldn’t take shop, they couldn’t be farmers themselves. To see a young woman in charge of my land is awesome.”

Increasingly, absentee landowners are choosing cash rent arrangements, but Helen bucked that trend and went with

a crop share agreement. With crop share, the crop and certain input costs are divided between the owner and operator. With cash rent, the operator makes a cash payment for the use of the property and pays all production costs and keeps the income.

“With Betsy being a young farmer and taking on risk, I thought that would be the best way to help. Plus the tax credit [with the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit Program] I received was much more significant if I used crop share.”

For the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit Program, agricultural landowners can earn

“When I was growing up, girls couldn’t take shop, they couldn’t be farmers themselves. To see a young woman in charge of my land is awesome.”

Helen Gunderson



Betsy Dahl plants her fields

to help the next generation get started and to increase diversity on the landscape.

A Neat Match

Long-time PFI member Helen Gunderson began taking photos in Pocahontas County in 1989 for a project about her home territory, *The Road I Grew Up On*. As Helen was developing the project, she often saw Gary Dahl out working with some of the eight children he and wife Kathy have. “Sometimes his girls were out bailing with him,” Helen says. “Gary was teaching

land into the Conservation Reserve Program and made other habitat improvements. As she traveled the roads of corn and beans, though, she had often asked: Why can’t I have my land farmed sustainably?

Helen relies on farm income for her livelihood, and so she proceeded cautiously in making changes. Besides, she had longtime tenants whom she deeply respected. This year, however, she made a hard yet already satisfying choice to switch tenants and lease 220 acres (including 182 acres of tillable land) to one of the Dahl offspring, Betsy.

Helen and Betsy signed a five-year

Some Statistics and Questions

In 2007, 55 percent of the farmland in Iowa was owned by people over the age of 65, and a quarter (28 percent) of the land was owned by people over 75 years old. **How can we use the tremendous land turnover that will occur in the next decade to grow small and midsize farms?**

In 1982, leased farmland was equally divided between cash rent and crop share leases. By 2007, 77 percent of the leased land was leased using cash rent. **How can we increase the use of crop share leases to help lessen the risk for beginning farmers?**

About 48 percent of Iowa’s landowners do not operate any of the land they own. **How can we help landowners with no farm background understand the challenges of diversified farming and the need to help the new generation access land?**

-- Statistics from Duffy, Mike, *Farmland Ownership and Tenure in Iowa 2007* (ISU Extension Publication PM 1983, 2008) and the USDA, *Agricultural Economics and Land Ownership Survey*, 1999.

tax credit for leasing their land to beginning farmers. The tax credit is 5 percent of the rental income on cash rental agreements, and 15 percent of the value of the owner's share of the product on share agreements.

"This is a neat match here—I have a lot of respect for the Dahls. I have a good sense of their ability to think outside of the box. They've already transitioned 60 acres of their own to organic. This last year, Gary even paid for the family members plus their spouses to attend the PFI annual conference. There is a strong commitment to farming in that family. Plus it's not just a solo farmer, but children and in-laws interested in farming. [Like so many farm families, they could use more land to get the next generation started]. So many elements came together well here!"

Helen added, well satisfied: "Betsy wrote to me recently, 'Your land is such a treasure. The sunsets here are beautiful.'"

A Great Family Centerpiece

This past August, at Stout's Island Lodge in Wisconsin, more than 50 members spanning four generations of the Soper family traveled from Iowa, Indiana, California, and beyond to convene. They are all shareholders in Soper Family Farms and will be making decisions on the future of the farm corporation's 974 acres near Emmetsburg.

"The stockholder meeting really is equal parts family reunion and focus on the farms," according to Harn Soper, a semi-retired California businessman and President. Harn

grew up in Sioux City and Burlington, but spent the summers on the family farm. His father and aunts and uncles set up the farm corporation in 1955 as a way to support his grandmother. His father then managed the farms for 30 years.

Like many Iowa farming operations, Soper Farms used to be diversified and even supported a lamb slaughtering facility at one point. Today the land is used to grow corn and soybeans. "The land has been reduced to having no fencerows, no trees, or buildings with no room for nature," Harn says. "In early April our ground looked like a spent prize fighter, barren, exposed and exhausted, waiting for an injection of farm steroids (GMO seeds, nitrogen, Roundup) to make it through the next season."

Two years ago, Harn was elected President to manage the family side of the farm corporation. Soper Farms relies on Craig Brownlee of Brownlee Farm Management in Emmetsburg, so Harn's role could have been just writing checks and organizing the family reunion, um, stockholder's meeting. However, the family was interested in moving the farm toward sustainability, and Harn took on the task.

"The family told me to put a business plan together," Harn says. "So I've traveled around, visiting places like Blue Gate Farm [owned by PFI members Jill Beebout and Sean Skeeahan] and Hermansdorfer Farm in Bavaria, a 300-acre farm in Germany that supports 100 salaried people and includes pork production, a methane digester, restaurant, beer making facilities on site,



Harn Soper networks at the Runquist-Barnes PFI field day

and more. We signed up Joel Salatin, Jerry DeWitt from the Leopold Center and Sarah Carlson and Eric & Anne Franzenburg from PFI to attend this summer's business meeting to round out an outstanding panel to teach us about sustainable farming. It was electric!"

As a result, the family unanimously agreed to transition 400 acres of its holdings to organic production beginning this fall. Working with their farm manager, they found a father and three sons experienced in organics to work the land. The Sopers are exploring other options for the rest of the acres, including cover crops, year-round

-Continued on page 23-

Details on One Landowner's Transition to Organic

... The Fehr family from West Bend, Iowa (20 minutes from Emmetsburg) will farm the ground and keep all the records necessary to pass organic certification for the 2012 crop year. During the first two transition years, the Fehrs will be paid for their services and Soper Farms Inc. (SFI) will absorb all the expenses and own 100% of the crops grown. Year 3, the Fehrs and SFI would shift to a 50/50 crop share similar to our current contracts with our conventional farming partners. The organic rotation model being proposed for Years 3 onward is organic corn, oats, alfalfa and clover.

The Numbers – Transitional Years 1 and 2 are expected to net \$83 per acre (corn/oats/clover) sold at conventional prices. This is compared to our current conventional GMO corn & beans practice

that would expect \$174.50 per acre.

Years 3 and 4 (two-year average) selling organic corn, oats and clover are expected to net \$287.00 per acre versus \$174.50 for conventional GMO corn & beans (\$112.50 higher). With this forecast, it will take approximately 3.3 years to catch up with the profits expected from conventional farming, at which point our profits are expected to be much higher.

The Markets – Contracts are available with companies producing organic livestock and corn chips. Brokers are in Minneapolis, Omaha and New York.

Observations – Forecasts are made using current commodity pricing. Organic corn prices are approximately double conventional GMO corn. This plan assumes conventional corn at 3.50/Bu and organic corn at 7/Bu. If GMO corn increases \$.50 to \$4/Bu and organic follows with a \$1 to \$8/Bu, organic profits increase twice as much as conventional GMO corn.

Decreasing Transaction Costs

Practical Farmers of Iowa Cooperators have been instrumental in helping to decrease the transaction costs associated with adding cover crops to the landscape. The transaction costs of cover crops not only include the actual cost of growing and managing this environmentally beneficial practice but also include costs like:

- ❖ Time to find and source seed
- ❖ Availability of knowledgeable field experts
- ❖ Planning for changes to the cropping system
- ❖ Time to understand cost-share payments available
- ❖ Learning the multiple uses and benefits

Whatever the farming system, the message is clear: Cover crops are practical for all farmers who want to keep precious nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus on their fields, decrease soil erosion, control weeds, and improve water infiltration.

Cover crop profiles, written by students from Western Illinois University in Dr. Joel Gruver's class, are available in a full report at <http://www.mccc.msu.edu/innovators.html>. Here are summarized versions (Hartmanns' cover crop plan was not taken from this website, but provided by Rick Hartmann):

Karl Dallefeld, NE IA

Uses cover for: Rotational grazing

The farm: 130A forages + 120 head stocker cattle/year

| Species | Planting Date | Planting Rate |
|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Winter Wheat | Germinates as low as 38F | 60lbs/A |
| Winter Rye | Germinates as low as 34F | 56lbs/A |
| Oilseed Radish | Germinates as low as 45F | 10lbs/A |
| Annual Ryegrass | Germinates as low as 40F | 20lbs/A |
| Red Clover | Germinates as low as 41F | 10lbs/A |
| Hairy Vetch | Germinates as low as 60F | 20lbs/A |
| Oats/Rapeseed | Spring | 40lbs/A + 5lbs/A |
| Sorghum-Sudangrass | Summer | 35lbs/A |
| Teff | Summer | 5lbs/A |

Reasons: Improve soil health

Kill method: Grazed or baled

Excerpt: *Karl starting using cover crops while driving through the Midwest in the winter and he noticed that all the bare fields were just letting the soil blow. He recalled that a New Zealander once commented on how they always have something growing while we (Midwest farmers) only utilize our land for half the year.*



Karl Dallefeld amidst his cover crop



Berger farm, from top: Corn V1-V2 stage, 5/24/09; Corn v10-V11 stage, 6/24/09; Aerial seeded rye, 9/19/09

Steve Berger, SE IA

Uses cover for: Manure, no-till

The farm: 2200A no-till corn and soybeans + 15,000-head hogs/year

Species of choice: Winter rye

Variety: Non-stated and Wheeler

Reasons: Erosion control, ability to spread manure (2600 gal/A liquid swine in November with a Yetter Avenger disc) and keep nutrients on the farm

| | No-till Drilled | Aerial Seeded |
|---------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Planting Date | Behind combine of soybeans or shorter season corn | Sep. 19th into standing soybeans |
| Planting Rate | 50-56lbs/A | 53lbs/A |

Kill method: Glyphosate in April

Excerpt: *Mr. Berger believes that to successfully plant corn into cereal rye, the rye must be completely brown or dead before planting into it.*

Greg Wiley, SE IA

Uses cover for: Mixed organic & conventional crops

The farm: 320 A organic row crop + 180A conventional row crops

Species of choice: Winter rye, buckwheat, hairy vetch, oats and red clover

Reasons: Improves soil tilth, which improves row-crop production, holds fertility

Planting date: Aerial seeded following row crop harvest

Planting rate: 56lbs/A winter rye, 50lbs/A buckwheat, 20lbs/A hairy vetch, 2 bu/A oats, 10lbs/A red clover

Kill method: Spring tillage

Excerpt: *"I have used a wide range," Greg says. "I used to spread rye into standing corn in late summer. For this I purchased an old de-tasseling machine and added a seeder to it. I have used hairy vetch, buckwheat, oats, clover and even some leftover soybeans one year. I guess the best way to explain it is that the soil just smells fantastic once you turn it in."*

Rick and Stacy Hartmann, Central IA

Uses cover for: Vegetable Production

The farm: 10 acres of land, roughly three in production each year, certified organic

Reasons: Weed control, fertility

Kill method: Mowing, plowing under

Quote: "This year I increased my rates because it was so rainy and we had some weed pressure. Since I'm not taking off any of the cover crop biomass my goal is for the cover crop to provide excellent cover that competes with weeds," Rick says.



Hartmanns' complex planting schedule=covered soil

Hartmann Cover Crop Plan

| 2008 Crop | | 2009 Crop | Species | Rates | Planting Date |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|---------------|--|
| Fallow | → | Spinach, Beets, Chard | 1) Greenfix Chickling Vetch | 90lbs/A | Early, subsequent crops |
| | | Tomato/ Eggplant | 2) Plow down, then Sorghum Sudan | 35lbs/A | |
| | | Winter Squash | 3) Plow down, then plant Pea/Oat | 100lbs/A each | |
| Fallow | → | Winter Squash | 1) Greenfix Chickling Vetch | 90lbs/A | Early, subsequent crops |
| | | | 2) Plow down, then Sorghum Sudan | 35lbs/A | |
| | | | 3) Plow down, then plant Vetch/ Rye mix | 50lbs/A each | |
| Garlic/ Onion | → | Fallow | 1) Sorghum Sudan | 35lbs/A | Early harvested crop, late season cover with no early subsequent crop |
| | | | 2) Plow down, then plant Vetch/ Rye mix | 50lbs/A each | |
| Winter Squash | → | Onion | Greenfix Chickling Vetch | 90 lb/A | Early planted cover, late season crop. |
| | | | Pea/Oat | 100 lb/A each | |
| Lettuce | → | Broccoli/ Cauliflower | Buckwheat as beds come out or between crops | 60lbs/A | Early and late planted, early subsequent crop. Let late planted cover winter kill |
| Roots | | Beans/Pea | | | |
| Spinach/ Beets/ Chard | | Summer Squash/ Melon | | | |
| Lettuce | | Cucumber | | | Early and late planted, early subsequent crop. Let late planted cover winter kill. Greenfix next spring. |
| Broccoli/ Cauliflower/Greens | | Pepper | | | |
| Roots | | Fallow | | | |
| Potato | | Fallow | | | |
| Summer Squash | → | Roots/ Lettuce | Greenfix Chickling Vetch | 90 lb/A | Early planted cover, late season crop |
| Tomato/ Eggplant/ Pepper | | Garlic/ Onion | | | |
| Winter Squash | | Potato | | | Early planted cover, late season crop. Garlic planted after crop, then early (potato) subsequent crop. |
| Pea/Bean | → | Greens | Buckwheat as beds come out or between crops | 60lbs/A | Early planted, early subsequent crop. Let late planted cover winter kill. |
| | | | Pea/Oat each at end of both crops | 100lbs/A each | |

Season Extension

Storage Solutions

How Scattergood Friends Farm School ended up with a septic tank for a root cellar

Mark Quee

The quest began in 2004 when Scattergood Friends School set out to sustainably produce as much food as possible for a community of about 80 eaters. We added grass fed beef and lamb, finished feeder pigs, added a laying flock, and raised and froze a lot of broilers and turkeys. We designed vegetable production models around the time frame of the school year (mid-August to the end of May), focusing



Mark Quee shows off the finished root cellar at Scattergood's 2009 field day

on heavy fall production with an emphasis on crops that we could freeze or dry since we are not certified for canning. The limitations of this model were obvious: 80 eaters can go through a lot of food pretty fast and freezers full of meat don't leave much room for vegetables. Instead of adding more freezers and creating a larger carbon

| Root Cellar Expenses at Scattergood | |
|---|----------------|
| What | Cost |
| Wilkinson Precast Storm Shelter with 2 Vent Holes | \$4,200 |
| Excavation | \$1,700 |
| Loader Rental | \$210 |
| Labor, Electrical, Concrete and Retaining Wall | \$3,490 |
| Total: | \$9,600 |

footprint, we decided to extend our growing season by converting a small hoophouse from seedling production to vegetables (by removing a gravel floor and replacing it with raised beds), building a large new high tunnel, and in the fall of 2007 adding a root cellar to store vegetables deeper into the school's eating season. So now, each year, we make a little more progress in feeding ourselves a little more sustainably with meats, fruits and vegetables we raise right here in our gardens, orchards and pastures.

Since root cellars don't just magically appear, we needed to

Each year, we make a little more progress in feeding ourselves a little more sustainably with meats, fruits and vegetables we raise right here in our gardens, orchards and pastures.



Filling the root cellar is now the challenge of the farmers. We have successfully stored tons of squash, beets, onions, eggplant, peppers, flower bulbs, cabbages and apples, though we have not yet ramped up production enough to take any of these items deep into spring.

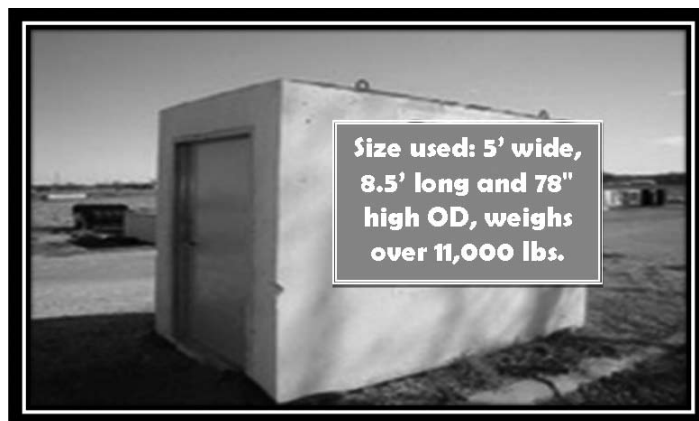
answer several big questions before we could get started: Where would the root cellar be sited? How would it be constructed? What would we put in it?

We narrowed our potential sites to two: at the farm, closer to the fields; or on campus, closer to the kitchen. Given that the campus site offered easy access for our cooks and a north facing slope that could readily be dug into, it became our easy choice.

For construction, we hired a contractor who has a long history of doing projects for the school. He had the idea of using a new septic tank with a door cut into it, and when he contacted the fabrication company, learned that they offer a similar product marketed as a storm shelter. The site was dug out, a gravel bed was added to help move water away from the structure, and the shelter was lowered into place. The door faced north, electrical was added for a light bulb, retaining walls were constructed to hold the backfill and a sidewalk was poured. Our Biology class received a grant to buy prairie dropseed plugs to plant on top of the shelter but the rains of spring 2008 washed many of the young plants away. We are still deciding how to fill the space directly above the root cellar, though the deeper sides held up by the retaining walls are being developed as perennial herb gardens for the kitchen. Another friend of the

school donated his labor to build shelves, using salvaged interior doors on 2x4 frames.

Filling the root cellar is now the challenge of the farmers. We have successfully stored tons of squash, beets, onions, eggplant, peppers, flower bulbs, cabbages and apples, though we have not yet ramped up production enough to take any of these items deep into spring. Several years ago the farm decided to avoid Colorado



Comes complete with a 4" air vent, access door 3' wide and constructed from 1/4" plate steel, with stainless steel hardware.

Door opens inward to prevent trapping. Custom door sizes made for special orders. The sides and roof of the storm shelter are a continuous, monolithic one piece design.

potato beetle problems by growing lots of sweet potatoes instead of regular potatoes. Unfortunately, our root cellar environment is too damp for storing sweet potatoes, so in 2010 we will venture back into Irish potato production with the goal of scaling up quickly to provide most of the needs of our community.

The root cellar has certainly provided Scattergood Friends School with another tool at our disposal as we continue to seek ways to sustainably produce, as much as possible, the food this community consumes.

Mark Queen is the farm manager at Scattergood Friends School near West Branch.



Farming with Grace

Gordon Reeder

TJ Family Farm is a dynamic farm just northwest of McCallsburg. Run by Mark and Connie Tjelmeland, the farm produces corn, soybeans, hay, oats, straw, as well as prairie seed. It is best known in Central Iowa for its eggs; the farm produces around 192,000 beautiful brown eggs a year that are high in omega 3 fatty acids. The eggs are laid by their flock of 750 free range chickens, and sold in five Ames grocery stores.

The flock roosts nightly in a converted hog barn and spends its days foraging several acres of pasture, some of which is reconstructed prairie. Their antibiotic-free diet is made up of corn, soybean meal, flax, and vitamins and minerals. The hens lay for a calendar year before their production begins to decline, and they are then sold to hobby farmers for a dollar a head or donated as stew hens to the Laotian community in Des Moines.

A major attribute of a successful farmer is to know yourself. For the Tjelmelands, knowing themselves meant discovering that chickens were a good fit. “It takes a certain temperament to raise chickens the way we do. Not everybody is going to enjoy them and simply have the patience to care for them, to get up and let them out first thing in the morning and shut them up late at night and be there seven days a week.”

Each April, 750 chicks arrive at TJ Farms and spend the summer rummaging in a fenced enclosure in what would otherwise be Mark and Connie’s back yard. As the pullets are ready to begin laying, the current flock of layers are taken off pasture and moved to a barn on Mark’s grandfather’s farm where his mother still lives. On the surface this process is about enabling the farm to maintain a steady production as the chicken house is cleaned and disinfected and the pullets introduced to their new home and pasture. But the action of involving his grandfather’s land involves something else as well.

As Mark says, “I have been connected with that barn for at least 50 years. As a child I used to go into that haymow and play, and it just feels good every time I go into that barn to care for the

chickens, to think about that history of my grandfather and father working there. Now our son and I also work in that barn.”

Talking to Mark and Connie, you get the sense that history is not a collection of names and dates, but rather a tool—one among many—that they use to put perspectives on their varied decisions. Decisions they make very slowly, as Connie says, “Mark and I do everything gradually. First we think and talk about a new idea for a long time. Eventually we make some decision, and then go at it in small increments. And that is how we approached the chickens as well.”

“I always knew transitioning to organics would be difficult and it is certainly meeting my expectations. It is tapping into all the skills and experiences that I have to make this successful and still we have a weedy bean field.”

Mark Tjelmeland

The Tjelmelands got into the prairie seed business because of their commitment to stewardship. (Mark’s interest in soil and water conservation dates back to the early 70’s, when he spent two years in Haiti working in reforestation and community development; he now serves on the Story County Soil and Water Conservation District.) The seed business hasn’t been too lucrative, but they have a vision about what would make the seed sales sustainable.

“We need a growing population of people who really want to seed their little odds and ends to native prairie,” Mark said. The image Mark brings to mind is of thousands of islands fit for birds, bugs, and beef but also bare feet and brand new soil. It is like standing on TJ Farms, a mixed oasis of crops and pastures and prairie and trees, each one separate and distinct but connected.

“There is so much land available that should be seeded to prairie, and there are so many people who have purchased farmsteads to live in and they have pastured areas they are not using that could be sown to prairie. If every farm had a small plot of prairie the environmental benefits would be enormous for birds, wildlife and pollinators. That is what we need, more education and more appreciation of the value, the true value of restoring or reconstructing that kind of an ecosystem.”

The Tjelmelands have made connections to education, to appreciation, and to value. The greatness of Mark’s grandfather’s barn lies in its evocation of a childhood smell of sunshine and hay, a reminder of permanence among confusion, and as a mark of lineage



Mark Tjelmeland addresses the crowd at TJ Family Farm’s field day.

“We’ve always felt that communities are a mixture of a lot of different ideas, different people, different ways of thinking about things, and that is what sustainability is: keeping that [difference] healthy, those connections really healthy. Community, like a prairie ecosystem, is born out of diversity.”

Connie Tjelmeland



TJ chickens eat a diverse and healthy diet, creating delicious eggs that are in high market demand.

for their son, John, 17. But it is also a history of change and perspective and growth.

Mark and Connie began contemplating transitioning their crop ground to organic production a number of years ago. Continuing their gradual approach the transition began in 2005. “I always knew transitioning to organics would be difficult and it is certainly meeting my expectations,” Mark said, “It is tapping into all the skills and experiences that I have to make this successful and still we have a weedy bean field.” The weeds are a real challenge but he is able to view them within a historical context, “This farm has been farmed organically for a lot longer than it has been farmed with chemicals. And so I think, ‘jeeze, if my grandfathers farmed this way why can’t we?’” Instead of accepting failure or lamenting lost knowledge (or his own limitations), he continues to probe at the question by understanding the nooks (those fertile hosts of prairie lands) of the question. “When my grandfathers were farming, they weren’t raising as many soybeans, and soybeans are where we have the big problems in weed control, so it is not a direct comparison. There are a lot of similarities though. Maybe we’ll have to drop soybeans out of our rotation and farm more like my grandfathers farmed, with corn, oats, and hay. That might be a better rotation.”

Transition is not merely about bringing the past forward, it is understanding the necessity of bridging the past and the future, the last thought with the next one. Connie says that “one of the big concerns that Mark and I have these days is our age and our slowing down. The excitement that we get from planning and doing a new project is being balanced out by gravity and our aches

and pains.” One issue, Connie continues, are their relative ages in comparison to their son. “He is too young now for us to really know what career direction he is going to take. And we’re approaching the age when we are almost too old to wait. We have talked about trying to find a young couple who would be interested in working with us, and buying into our operation. We would need to do that in such a way that we could leave our son an opening so that when he is mature enough to know what he would like to do, he could move into the operation, if he chooses to.”

When the time comes to retire, Connie seems extremely wise: “Don’t be afraid. Don’t be overly concerned about letting go and letting the next generation have their chance.. It has been important work; it has been very satisfying work. Move on. Don’t stay too tied.”

One effect that Connie has noticed is that while raising chickens and transitioning to organics, “We are a little bit different kind of farmers than most of our neighbors and, as you would expect in a rural community, that sort of sets you apart and causes people to question.” Under that circumstance, she says, she and Mark could have retreated, but they chose to stay really integrated and connected in the community. “We’ve always felt that communities are a mixture of a lot of different ideas, different people, different ways of thinking about things, and that is what sustainability is: keeping that

[difference] healthy, those connections really healthy. Community, like a prairie ecosystem, is born out of diversity.”

The diversity of fostering education among family, farmers, neighbors, students, cropping systems, prairie grasses, flowers, bees, underlines the Tjelmeland’s belief in approaching transition (life) gradually, with trust and openness. Transition has served them well and promises to adapt with them well into the future.



Connie talks with long-time friend Margaret Smith at the Tjelmeland field day

Members Work Together to Improve Operations

Every year at our Cooperators' Meeting PFI members decide which questions are most important to address. These morph into projects around the state. Here is a list and map illustrating how far these great ideas went in 2009.

Wildlife

Ron Dunphy, Creston
Bill Beaman, Bedford
Justin Staver, Murray
Francis Thicke, Fairfield
John Sellers, Corydon
Ryan Marquardt, Reasnor
Mike DeCook, Lovilia
Bill and Betty Kimble, Pella

Cover Crops

Ron Rosmann, Harlan
Wade Dooley, Albion
Fred Abels, Holland
Bruce Carney, Maxwell
Tim Landgraf, Kanawha
Mark Quee, West Branch
Wade Dooley, Albion
Eric Franzenburg, Van Horne
Vic Madsen, Audubon
Jason Jones, Pleasant Hill
Earl Hafner, Panora
Jerry Peckumn, Jefferson
Lewis Byers, Pierson
Mike Walsh, Austen
Scott Shriver, Jefferson
Paul Willis, Thornton
Rick Juchems, Plainfield
Dave Nelson, Fort Dodge
Whiterock Conservancy, Coon Rapids
Bill Buman, Harlan
Jim Funcke, Jefferson
Devan Green, Conrad
Jerry Sindt, Holstein
Rob Stout, Washington
George Schaefer, Kalona
Kelly Tobin, New Market

Water Quality

Autumn Ogden, Ankeny
Derek Carney, Maxwell
Julie Brazel & Greg Koether, McGregor
Soil Water Carbon
Tom German, Holstein
Linda Grice, South English
Ryan Herman, New Albin
Greg Koether, McGregor
Paul Mugge, Sutherland
Ron Rosmann, Harlan
Dan Specht, Giard
Francis Thicke, Fairfield
Dan Wilson, Paullina

Niche Pork

Tom and Irene Frantzen, New Hampton
Steve and Christy Howe, Thurman
John and Bernie Kenyon, Mallard
Martin Kramer, Algona
Ron Mardeson, Elliott
Tim and Delanna Roseland, Gilman
Lyle Rossiter, Newell
Dan and Lorna Wilson, Paullina

Bioenergy

Dordt College Agricultural Stewardship
Center, Sioux Center
Ellsworth Community College, Iowa Falls

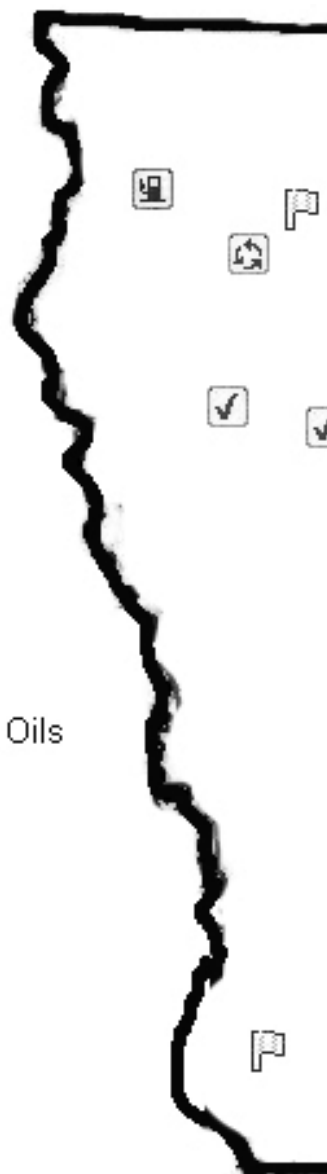
Poultry

Tammy Faux, Tripoli
Tim Daley, New Hartford
Dana Foster, West Branch

Seed Treatment

Susan Jutz, Solon
Laura Krouse, Mount Vernon

2009 PFI Cooperators by Map

- 
- Soil Quality
 - Poultry Trials
 - CSA Pricing
 - Cover Crops
 - Bioenergy
 - Seed Treatments w/ Essential Oils
 - Season Extension
 - Wildlife Habitat Improvement
 - Water Quality
 - Heirloom Tomato Grafting
 - Niche Pork
 - Corn Breeding

Gary Guthrie, Nevada
Ken Choquette, Saint Mary's
Jeff and Gayle Olson, Winfield

Corn

Don Adams, Madrid
Earl Hafner, Panora
Barney Bahrenfusse, Grinnell
Mike Natvig, Cresco
Craig Griffieon, Ankeny
Ron Brunk, Eldora
John Gilbert, Iowa Falls
Marshalltown Community College, Marshalltown

Tomato Grafting

Andy Dunham, Grinnell

Season Extension

Laura Krouse, Mount Vernon
Mark Quee, West Branch
Jill and Sean Beebout, Chariton
Ann and Eric Franzenburg, Van Horn
Dean and Judy Henry, Nevada
Stacy and Rick Hartmann, Minburn
Bill and Kathleen Eggers, Winterset

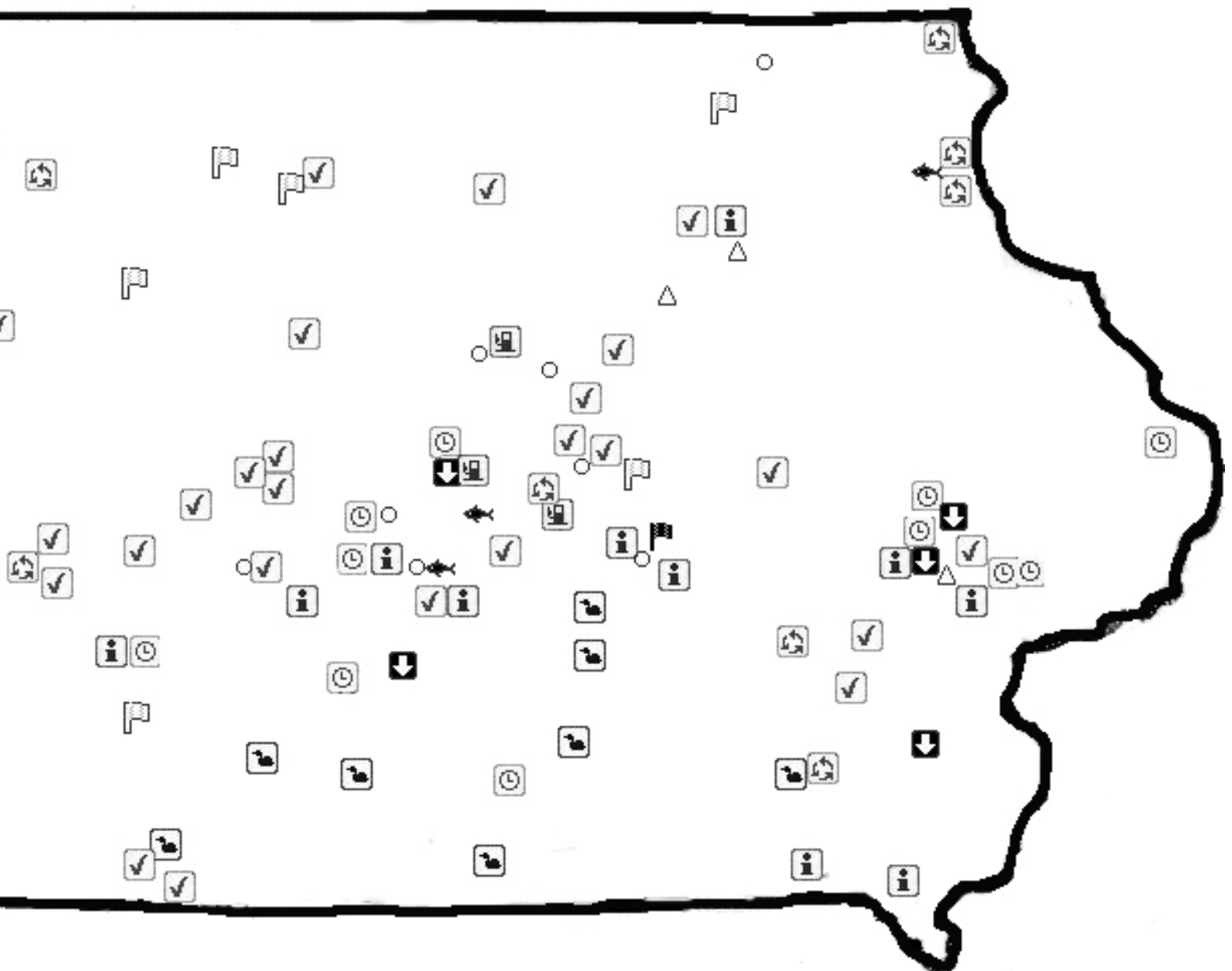
CSA Pricing

Genuine Faux Farm, Tripoli
Rolling Acres Farm, Atlantic
Raccoon Forks Farm, Redfield
The Homestead, Pleasant Hill
Turtle Farm, Granger
Bloom and Bark Farm & Dog Bakery, Keosauqua
Compass Plant CSA, Malcom

Grinnell Heritage Farm, Grinnell
Scattergood Friends School Farm, West Branch
Veggie Venture CSA, Donnellson
Local Harvest CSA, Solon

Soil Quality

Bruce Carney, Maxwell
Tom German, Holstein
Linda Grice, South English
Ryan Herman, New Albin
Greg Koether, McGregor
Paul Mugge, Sutherland
Ron Rosmann, Harlan
Dan Specht, Giard
Francis Thicke, Fairfield
Dan Wilson, Paullina



Breeding more options for the corn seed marketplace

Sarah Carlson

Lately everyone can read about the “Biotech Tug-O-War” between the giants in the seed industry. The name calling and the trading of lawsuits over whose right it is to profit from different genetic material sometimes can be distracting from reports like the *Wallace’s Farmer* article published in April 2009 “Do you really need that seed?”

It reported the increases in the cost of corn and soybean seed over the past couple years:

| Cost of Corn Seed | Cost of Soybean Seed |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 2009 \$93.90/A | 2008 \$54/A |
| 2008 \$63/A | 2007 \$32/A |
| 2007 \$54.60/A | |

What alternative seed sources for improved corn hybrids exist and are available through independent seed retailers? Several PFI farmer cooperators have been participating in the Breeding Corn for Sustainable Agriculture project with United States Department of Agriculture- Agricultural Research Service, Iowa State University and Michael Fields Agriculture Institute. Numerous farmers are interested in purchasing non-GMO seed to plant at field scale but breeders typically work with handful-sized amounts of seed. From this original participatory breeding project the US Testing Network (USTN) was created.

First, the USTN provides a multi-state rigorous testing network to evaluate germplasm being developed for the organic and non-GMO market. Second, as a network the USTN creates the opportunity for partnerships to develop and facilitate the increase of non-GMO and organic corn in the marketplace. Testing these corn hybrids across a large geographic area allows seed retailers to increase hybrids of varying characteristics which would be demanded by farmers in different regions of the US.

This bridge between breeders and independent retailers is needed now more than ever considering the consolidation in the seed marketplace and lack of funding to public breeding programs that focus on non-GMO and organic seed. This year in February, the USTN took shape bringing together public and private corn breeders and independent seed retailers as well as farmers.

One of the private breeders participating in the USTN is Genetic Enterprises International (GEI). Alix and Mary Jane Paez are breeders that founded GEI in 1993 and are located in Johnston, IA. Their breeding program focuses on developing non-GMO hybrids for the different maturity areas of the country with emphasis in the Corn Belt. “Breeders can use publicly available germplasm to develop hybrids for the various maturity zones across the Corn Belt.” Alix commented. “I believe there is enough elite, or good, germplasm publicly available to do good breeding.”

However, in the marketplace, farmers of all kinds have become concerned about lack of choice of high quality seed. Paez commented that “Seed distributors market the seed that is available; currently GMO traited corn is the largest volume in the market and there is very little non-GMO seed available, especially from the large



Mary Jane and Alix Paez amidst crop in their breeding nursery

seed companies. On the other hand, non-GMO and organic seed availability is somewhat low and expensive because of the lack of volume demand.”

Genetic Enterprises International is among a growing number of private and public breeders and small seed retailers that are looking for “new” markets and creating those options for farmers. The Paez’ are breeding conventional hybrids and also a product line of specialty hybrids that include high lysine for corn chips; Inca Maiz™ for tortillas and chips; hybrids with resistant starch that have the potential for controlling obesity; elevated pro vitamin A for eye health; whites and waxy corn and also colored corns for the food market. Paez believes that the best way to ensure that farmers have improved corn that gives them the genetics they want is for breeders to start with good and diverse germplasm. “They should test the developed hybrids in yield trials across several locations and finally have access to good seed production for quality seed distribution to the marketplace.”

USTN is working to make it easier for several small independent seed retailers, public and private breeders, and farmers to have access to improved non-GMO and organic seed in the marketplace. This fall will be the first set of data collected from this newly formed group. Below is a map of where testing locations are during this 2009 year. Look for updates or contact Sarah Carlson at sarah@practicalfarmers.org for more information.



-Decreasing Transaction Costs- continued from page 15

Earl Hafner, Central IA

Uses cover for: Organic row-crop + cow/calf + hog production

The farm: 2,000 A organic row-crop + pasture + 250 cow/calf operation + hog manure from 7800-head/yr

1,000 acres are currently planted to a mix cereal rye and vetch

Species of choice: Winter rye, hairy vetch, winter wheat, buckwheat (summer)

Variety: Small grains and hairy vetch are grown and harvested on-farm

Reasons: FLEXIBILITY—can be planted as cover or harvested for grain or hay

Planting date: After soybean harvest incorporate lime + rock phosphate with a disk before broadcasting a mix of hairy vetch and cereal rye using an 8 ton spreader

Planting rate: 50lbs of seed/A

Kill method: Tillage is used to terminate the cover crops before



Cover crop of buckwheat on Earl Hafner's farm 09/12/09

planting

Excerpt: *Most farmers don't use cover crops because "they are ill informed about them. They are not willing to learn or be innovative enough to try new things live cover crops. They just go with the flow and do what has always worked".*

Kevin Green, SW IA

Uses cover for: Feedlot roughage

The farm: 2500 A Corn and Soybean + Beef feedlot

Species of choice: Winter triticale

Reasons: Hilly area, control soil erosion and water runoff, harvests 7 tons dry matter/A for cattle

Planting method: The local fertilizer company plants triticale with air-flow fertilizer spreader

Planting rate: 2bu/A

Kill method: Baling

Excerpt: *Advice after using turnips: "It was a wet spring and they did nothing to hold the soil. The cows never really acquired a taste for them either. The cows did eat them better after the bulbs were broken up and the anhydrous was put on. One advantage was you don't have to kill turnips like you do with triticale."*

Austin Nothwehr, SW IA

Uses cover for: Summer field repairs

The farm: 1000 A corn and soybeans + cow-calf operation + 250 head of ewes

Species of choice: Forage wheat and winter rye

Reasons: Protect vulnerable land and as a double crop

Planting date: Fall using a no-till drill

Planting rate: 100lbs/A

Kill method: Harvest hay and use glyphosate in the spring

Excerpt: *They planted cover crops on Labor Day after a summer terracing project 4 years ago. The following spring had heavy rainfall events (5 – 7 in.). Many neighboring terraces failed and some developed large holes. Cover cropped terraces held up and had very little erosion. They also harvested 75 big round bales from 20A. Soybeans planted after the hay cutting did very well.*

Wade Dooley, Central IA

Uses cover for: Following corn silage + grazing

The farm: 1200 A, 75% annual crops, 25% pasture + 120 head cow-calf operation

Species of choice: Winter rye, oats, tillage radish

Reasons: Grazing, place for cattle manure

Planting date: Mid-Sept following corn silage seed

Planting rate: ~56lbs/A rye; ~80lbs/A oats; ~10lbs/A tillage radish

Kill method: Mow close to the ground followed by tillage or chemical burndown

Excerpt: *When they plant their cereal, they try to get a seed bed without clods. Then they broadcast rye and follow with a drag which covers up the seed a little bit. They do not get the best germination but he says it is the cheapest method for them, and it seems to work well enough.*

-Preserving Your Land- continued from page 13

vegetables, and pasture-raised livestock. As the current transition progresses, they hope to bring local farmers experienced in these areas to the table for discussion and potentially for collaboration.

Harn stresses that further changes will only be made with family members' blessings. "We are a cohesive family and make decisions about the farm on consensus. The farm is a business," he says, "and the numbers we've run transitioning 400 acres to an organic corn, oats and clover rotation are impressive. Our expected return after 3 years should be \$112/acre higher than our current commercial corn & beans program."

For Harn himself, his stipend as President pales in comparison to his hours spent but becoming sustainable more than compensates. "I've never enjoyed a process more. The family

farm has been a great focus for us all," he says. "The farm is the centerpiece of our family reunions, I love going back to Emmetsburg and I love my family."

For more information, Soper Farms can be contacted via email through Harn at harnsoper@gmail.com.

Do you have other stories to tell about absentee landowners who are improving Iowa's sustainability? Please contact Teresa Opheim at teresa@practicalfarmers.org or (515)232-5661.

For more information on the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit Program, see: www.iada.state.ia.us/BFTC/index.html



The Soper family enjoys some tunes at their reunion

November

Farmer Cooperatives Conference:

November 9-10, St. Paul, MN. Will explore issues and strategies such as: Risk and Uncertainty; Changing market demand; Energy; and Capitalization challenges. For more information <http://www.uwcc.wisc.edu/farmercoops09/index.html>.

Grower-Buyer Workshop:

November 12, Stillwater, MN. Meet other local producers, learn about Buy Fresh Buy Local (BFBL) partnership, and improve your marketing skills. For more information Dana Jackson at danaj@landstewardshipproject.org or (612)722-6377.

Connecting the Threads 2009:

November 13-14, Wisconsin Rapids, WI. Business, socializing, artwork and more for women in farming. For more information Kathy Schmitt (608)924-5048.

Midwest Rural and Agricultural Safety and Health Forum:

November 18-19, Johnston IA. Communicate on rural and agricultural needs, services, research, and methods for research to practice implementation. For more information Eileen Fisher (319)335-4224, eileen-fisher@uiowa.edu. <http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash/>.

Residential Renewable Energy Workshop:

November 21, Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center, Hiawatha, IA. Topics will include Residential Wind, Solar Hot Water and Residential Solar or Photovoltaic. For more information www.irenew.org.

Central Iowa Food & Beverage Expo,

November 21, Fort Dodge IA. Sip Iowa wines and beer, learn interesting facts, taste foods and observe cooking demonstrations. For more information Sue Heistand, (515) 574-1292, heistand@iowacentral.edu, <http://www.iowacentral.edu/fbe/>.

and cropping systems and business plan development. Registration is required. Contact: Linda Naeve, Value Added Agriculture Program, (515)294-8946, lnaeve@iastate.edu.

A Culture of Conservation:

January 13, Ames, IA. 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Keynote speakers include George DeVault of Seed Savers Exchange and Jerry DeWitt of the Leopold Center. For information Carol L. Brown, Iowa Learning Farm, (515)294-8912, cbrown1@iastate.edu.

Minnesota Organic Conference:

January 15-16, St. Cloud, MN. Topics range from growing organic foods and enterprise planning to human nutrition. Keynote speakers will be Alan Guebert and Angie Tagtow. For information, www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/ or call (651)201-6012.

Road to Opportunities:

January 21-22, Eau Claire, Wis. The Conference/Summit includes 36 breakout sessions in 6 themed tracks, 3 exciting keynote addresses, a tradeshow, a World Café round table forum, plenty of time for networking and delicious local food served throughout! The all new Value Added Agriculture 'College' January 20. For information www.rivercountryrctd.org/valad.html.

December

Acres U.S.A. Conference:

December 3-5, St. Paul, MN. Tap the knowledge of some of agriculture's brightest minds. Attend the pre-conference advanced learning courses offered December 1-2, 2009. For information www.acresusa.com/events/events.htm.

January

High Tunnel Production Workshop,

January 5-6, Lewis, IA. 6-9:30 p.m., Armstrong Research and Demonstration Farm. Topics include site and high tunnel selection, construction, soil management, irrigation, pest management, bed design

New PFI Members- Welcome!

District 1

Olive Wilson, *Primghar*
Torry and Erin Wilson, *Paullina*

District 2

Amber Anderson Mba, *Ames*
Kevin and Ranae Dietzel, *McCallsburg*
Luke Gran, *Ames*
Dan and Elizabeth Kemp, *Ames*
John Pokladnik and Mary Sue Kislingbury, *Mason City*
Scott Shriver, *Jefferson*
Steenhoek Environmental, Chad Steenhoek, *Ames*
Gretchen Voga, *Ames*

District 3

Hageman's Hillside Dairy, James Hageman, *Calmar*

Hurricane Hill Farm, Mike Hopkins, *Walker*
Sondra Kendrick, *Cedar Rapids*
Patty Petersen, *Independence*
Todd Rosonke, *Vinton*

District 4

Grandma's Garden, Michele and Harlan De Boer, *Pella*
Jennie Jacobs, *Des Moines*
Teresa and Bart Jensen, *Des Moines*
Heather Lintner, *Des Moines*
Dennis and Joanne Parker, *Linden*

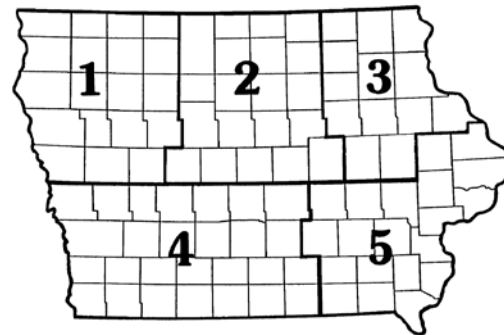
District 5

New Pioneer Food Co-op, Theresa Carbrej, *Iowa City*
Feeler Family Farm, Jani Feeler, *Muscatine*
Jason and Lyle Grimm, *North English*
Mark Hulsebus, *Donnellson*

Elisabet Humble, *Fairfield*
Midwestern Bio-Ag, Firman Hershberger, *Kalona*
Eric and Christine Rumsey, *Iowa City*
Gary Wenger, *Wayland*

District 6 (Outside of Iowa)

Eric Cleveland, *Hilo, HI*



Webinars to Run Through December 22

Practical Farmers of Iowa and the Beginning Farmer Center will host eight webinars in the post-harvest season on succession planning and enterprise development. Please contact Luke Gran at luke@practicalfarmers.org for more information.

November 3: Whole Farm Planning

November 10: Legal Issues in Succession Planning

November 17: Succession or Estate Planning

November 24: Fitting New Enterprises into the Whole Farm

December 1: Which Enterprise? Doing Basic Research to Identify Markets

December 8: Enterprise Budgets: Can I produce enough? What other considerations are there?

December 15: Farmers Speak on Products, Pricing, Placement, Promotion

December 22: Financing Your Enterprise: Which governmental programs can help?

Support for the webinars is provided by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the Wallace Genetic Foundation.

PFI budget approaches \$800,000 mark

On September 30, the PFI Executive Committee approved a budget for Fiscal Year 2010 of \$790,791. "The 2010 budget is up 73 percent since Fiscal Year 2007. Despite tough financial times, PFI continues to grow because of its strong grassroots constituency of farmers and the nonfarmers who support them. Funders see a critical need to support diversified farming," according to Executive Director Teresa Opheim.

PFI Executive Committee Members Tim Landgraf, Dan Wilson, Ann Cromwell, and Verlan Van Wyk approved the budget, which includes a donation goal of \$55,000 and membership goal of \$27,000. In the Fiscal Year just completed, PFI raised almost \$52,000 in unrestricted funds and \$24,780 in membership support.

The budget also includes strong support from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, a number of federal programs and the following private foundations: Walton Family Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, the Ceres Foundation, Wallace Genetic Foundation, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Join PFI's NxtGen Retreat!

It was two weeks before Christmas and all thru the farm not a creature was stirring - because everyone was at PFI's December NxtGen Retreat!

- ❖ **December 11-12th**
- ❖ **Friday 3PM till Saturday 3PM**
- ❖ **Pilgrim Heights Retreat Center**
- ❖ **3005 E Avenue, Montour, IA**
- ❖ **120 Acre Woodland with 60 Acre Lake**
- ❖ **Located between Ames and Cedar Rapids on Hwy 30**

If you have farmed 10 years or less: Come develop on-farm indicators with the developers of the Sustainability Indicators Tool

If you want to farm: Come hone your vision and goals, and learn from those who've already started

Network over Good Food and Entertainment - farm/food film, who knows what else...Pinochle, Bridge, anyone?

For more information, contact Luke Gran at luke@practicalfarmers.org or (515)232-5661. Or check Facebook.

Farm Aid in St. Louis

Suzi Bernhard



Musicians aren't the only celebrities at FarmAid: a star-charged panel listen intently as an Organic Valley farmer talks about his operation.

I don't know that there is a better way to spend the first weekend in October than spending the day outside telling people all about PFI. I got that opportunity on October 3-5, by being an exhibitor at the 2009 Farm Aid concert in St. Louis, MO. However, this was no ordinary exhibit. Because most of the concert goers were not farmers, or didn't have much if any interest or background in agriculture, it was interesting trying to explain PFI in terms that they would understand.

After exhibiting, however, we all spoke the same language. While sitting on a large upward sloping lawn, listening to musical greats like Willie Nelson, Neal Young, and Dave Matthews, we all came together towards the goal of supporting and promoting good food and family farms. Good music, good food, and great people!

Buy online!

PFI now accepts credit cards online for:

- ❖ Merchandise sales
- ❖ Membership
- ❖ Donations
- ❖ Event registrations

Visit us at

www.practicalfarmers.org

to take advantage of these new tech abilities.

As always, thanks for your support!

You are always welcome

to call Suzi and she can take your information over the phone, too: (515)232-5661.



PFI caps make great Christmas presents for that farmer on your list

Board Update

The Board met in Ames on August 26. The Board reviewed the financial status of PFI for fiscal year 2009 (which ended September 30) and got a preview of the budget for fy2010. Thanks to the efforts of the PFI staff, fy2009 was on track to finish with a positive balance for the year! The preview of the fy2010 Budget outlined continued growth of programming within PFI, and the need for some additional part-time staff to carry out the programming. The Executive Committee was asked to meet prior to October 1 to approve the fy2010 Budget once it was finalized. The Board heard staff updates from Sarah Carlson and Luke Gran, as each outlined the work that they are responsible for on behalf of PFI. And finally, the Board got a sneak peek at the programming for the Annual Conference in January, 2010. The event will mark the 25th Anniversary of the founding of PFI - hence the theme of "Jubilee!" Watch for more details on the big party - and come to the Annual Conference to witness a few surprises!!

Next Generation campaign reaches \$9,000 mark

PFI's campaign to raise funds for the Next Generation is \$1,000 below its goal of \$10,000. The funds will be used for PFI's Dec. 11-12 retreat and other webinars and get-togethers in 2010. Contact Teresa Opheim or Luke Gran if you're interested in donating: 515/232-5661 Help us make our goal!

THANK YOU to the following Next Generation donors:

Fred and Vicki Abels
Paul and Nancy Ackley
Teresa Adams Tomka
Leigh and Ed Adcock
Jonathan Andelson
Linda Appelgate
John and Shelly Appelgate
Father Marvin Boes
Lee and Lori Burras
Sarah Burras
Bruce and Connie Carney
Stephen Carney
Ann Cromwell
Simone Delaty
Kamyar Enshayan
James and Martha Fifield
Peter and Eileen Fisher
Tom and Irene Frantzen
Eric and Ann Franzenburg
David Haden
Anders Hagberg
Gail Hickenbottom
Diane Horn
Charlotte Hubbell
Jon Jensen and Rachel Sandhorst
Larry and Donna Kallem

Bill and Betty Kimble
Tim Landgraf and Jan Libbey
Joyce Locke
Connie Mutel
Doug Opheim
Teresa Opheim and Rich Schuler

Rosemary Partridge
Dave and Jere Scar
Gene and Lorraine Smith
Federick and Margie Steinbron
Angie and Kelly Tagtow
Jonathan and Emily Taiber
Roger and Barbara Thompson

Wapello Co. SWCD
Steve and June Weis
Ann Whitney Sanford
Total donated: \$9000 from 40 people
Goal: \$10,000 from 50 people



Ann Cromwell (pictured here with her next generation Katy and Ted) contributed to PFI's Next Generation campaign. Please join her in supporting PFI's Next Generation program!

Support Our Efforts ~ Sustain Our Work

This annual membership is a:

- ☐ new membership
- ☐ renewal

I am joining at the level of:

- ☐ Student—\$15
- ☐ Individual—\$35
- ☐ Farm or Household—\$45
- ☐ Organization (including businesses, agencies, not-for-profit groups)—\$75

My interest in joining PFI is primarily as a:

- ☐ farmer/grower
- ☐ non-farmer (You will have the opportunity to expand upon this when you receive your membership information form.)

Each membership includes one vote and one subscription to *The Practical Farmer*.

Sustain PFI

For the sake of the long term health and vitality of PFI, we ask you to consider making a donation above and beyond your membership fee.

I would like to make a tax deductible donation to PFI in the amount of:

☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$_____

JOIN OUR GIFT OF THE MONTH CLUB

The Gift of the Month Club is an easy way to support Practical Farmers of Iowa! Send in your pledge with your credit card information, and we will automatically deduct your donation the first of each month.

YES! I would like to give _____ per month to PFI, to be automatically charged to my credit card the first of the month. (\$10 per month minimum)

Practical Farmers of Iowa is a 501©3 organization Your gift is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Thank you!

Individual or Farm or Organization Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Primary Phone (with area code): _____

Alternate Phone (with area code): _____

E-mail: _____

*For Farm/Household membership, please list names of persons included.

*For Organization membership, please list one or two contact persons.

Payment:

Total: \$_____ = \$_____ membership + \$_____ donation + \$_____ merchandise (from opposite page)

- ☐ Check or money order enclosed. (Please make payable to "Practical Farmers of Iowa.")
- ☐ Credit Card ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____ Signature _____





Practical Farmers of Iowa

137 Lynn Avenue, Suite 200

Ames, IA. 50014

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Waterloo, IA
Permit No. 901

Our Vision for Iowa



Food that is celebrated
for its freshness
and flavor
and connection
to local farmers
to seasons
to hard work
and good stewardship



Farms that are prized
for their diversity
of crops and livestock
their wildlife and healthy soils
their innovations, beauty and productivity
their connection to a rich past
and a fulfilling present
where individuals and families
are earning a good living



Communities that are alive
with diverse connections
between farmers and non-farmers;
places where commerce, cooperation, creativity
and spirituality are thriving;
places where the working landscape, the fresh air
and the clear water remind us of all that is good about Iowa

Healthy Food, Diverse Farms, Vibrant Communities