

the PRACTICAL FARMER

SPRING 2025



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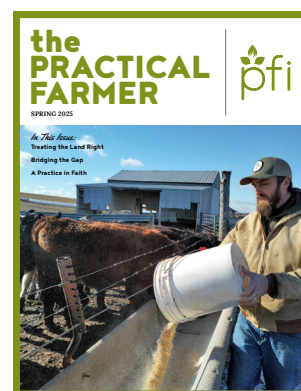
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Ryan Wallace started milling grain to fully use his diversity of crops in livestock feed. He and his wife, Ashley

Wallace, grow a range of certified organic small-grain crops as well as corn and soybeans. Find out more on page 11 about how some farmers are benefitting from milling their own livestock feed.



WHAT WE DO

Practical Farmers of Iowa was founded in 1985 as an organization for farmers. We use farmer-led investigation and information sharing to help farmers practice an agriculture that benefits both the land and people.

OUR MISSION

Practical Farmers of Iowa's mission is equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.

OUR VISION

An Iowa with healthy soil, healthy food, clean air, clean water, resilient farms and vibrant communities.

OUR VALUES

Welcoming everyone

Farmers leading the exchange of experience and knowledge

Curiosity, creativity, collaboration and community

Resilient farms now and for future generations

Stewardship of land and resources

THE PRACTICAL FARMER

The Practical Farmer is a quarterly magazine published as a benefit of membership in Practical Farmers of Iowa. Through engaging stories and photos, our aim is to share the knowledge and experiences of PFI farmers, build a strong and connected community of members and supporters and celebrate our collective efforts to build resilient farms and communities.

Back issues are available upon request. Unless otherwise noted, articles may be reprinted or adapted if credit is given. Clippings and notice are appreciated.



MAGAZINE STAFF

Several PFI staff members are involved with producing PFI's quarterly magazine.

To see the complete list of PFI staff, including contact details, visit practicalfarmers.org/staff.

Senior Editor

Tamsyn Jones

Senior Graphic Designer

Sarah Krumm

Senior Photography Editor

Sarah Krumm

Executive Director

Sally Worley

Editorial Review

Sally Worley

Christine Zrostlik

Digital Magazine

Emily Yaddof

Staff Writers

Rachel Burke

Amos Johnson

Emma Liddle

Emma Link

Martha McFarland

Vanya North

Solveig Orngard

Jacqueline Venner Senske

Contributors

Sophie Arnold

Katie Aupperle

Debra Boekholder

Rachel Deutmeyer

Liz Kolbe

CONTACT US

Practical Farmers of Iowa

1615 Golden Aspen Drive, Suite 101

Ames, IA 50010

(515) 232-5661 | practicalfarmers.org

facebook.com/practicalfarmers

instagram.com/practicalfarmer

x.com/practicalfarmer

youtube.com/pfivideos

linkedin.com/company/practical-farmers-of-iowa

BOARD MEMBERS

Please feel free to reach out to your board member at the contacts below – they would love to hear from you. To mail board members: Please send correspondence to the PFI office and we will forward to that board member.

DISTRICT 1 (NORTHWEST)

Brice Hundling

Hundling Farms
(712) 830-1134
mbhundling@gmail.com

DISTRICT 2 (NORTH CENTRAL)

Wade Dooley

Dooley Ag Stewardship
(641) 751-4016
glenwoodfarm@gmail.com

DISTRICT 3 (NORTHEAST)

Shaffer Ridgeway

Southern Goods
(319) 830-7470
southerngoodsia@gmail.com

DISTRICT 4 (SOUTHWEST)

Jon Bakehouse – Treasurer

Maple Edge Farm, Inc.
(712) 370-3629
mapleedgefarm@gmail.com

DISTRICT 5 (SOUTHEAST)

Gayle Olson – Secretary

J & G Olson Farms, Inc.
(319) 931-1351
olsongayle@gmail.com

AT-LARGE FARMERS

Alec Amundson

Green Country Farms
(641) 257-7989
amundson40@gmail.com

Carmen Black – President

Local Harvest CSA
(319) 331-3957
localharvestcsa@gmail.com

Margaret Smith

Ash Grove Farm
(641) 430-9241
mrgsmith@wmtel.net

Natasha Wilson

West Fork Farmstead
(319) 325-5097
natasha@westforkfarmstead.com

Tim Youngquist – Vice President

Youngquist Heritage Farm
(712) 269-0592
tyoungquist@gmail.com

AT-LARGE FRIENDS OF FARMERS

Kristine Lang

(515) 825-7525
kmlang2017@gmail.com

Matt Liebman

(515) 509-1355
matt.liebman@yahoo.com

CO-FOUNDERS

Larry Kallem

(515) 337-1272

The late Dick & Sharon Thompson

Boone, IA

Embracing Difference

Mark Quee raises fruits and vegetables near West Branch, Iowa, for students and staff to eat at Scattergood Friends Farm. He is known to create outdoor classrooms with the likes of hay bales and sunflower walls, and has a keen fondness for restoring prairie and habitat on the farm.

Mark also is the person who nominated Joel Gruver for PFI's 2024 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award, which we presented at our annual conference last year. Practical Farmers gives this award annually to honor someone who has been most influential in creating vibrant communities, healthful food and diverse farms. Joel is such a person.

Since 2007, Joel has worked as a professor of soil science and sustainable agriculture at Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois. His work focuses on row crop production, while Mark's focus is on fruits and vegetables. Yet Mark was inspired to nominate Joel because, Mark says, "Joel is committed to education and innovation."

At our 2025 Annual Conference, we honored Barney Bahrenfuse and Suzanne Castello with the Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award. Barney and Suzanne are long-time PFI members who do a fantastic job of living our value of welcoming everyone. For instance, Barney was one of the first people to connect with Gary Guthrie, a farmer from Nevada, Iowa, when Gary joined PFI over 30 years ago. Here's what Gary says of that experience:

"My first PFI meeting was in January 1994. My wife, Nancy, and I had just come back from working for the Mennonite Central Committee in El Salvador. I had been itching to get back into agriculture, and a family friend told me I should look into Practical Farmers of Iowa. Then someone else encouraged me to go to the PFI annual conference. I figured I'd heard about PFI twice by then, so I attended PFI's conference in Ames.

"I felt so welcomed! At lunch, Barney Bahrenfuse, who farms near Grinnell, came up to me and sat down. I found out later he would pick people he didn't know and sit down with them. That impressed me."

Barney and Suzanne operate a diversified row crop and livestock farm. In 1994, when Gary first joined PFI, he raised vegetables. But the differences in their farming enterprises didn't keep them from becoming fast friends. There are many similar stories of friendship and connection blooming across our membership. Despite differences in farm systems, production practices, markets, zip codes or political views, an open and sharing vibe is what PFI is all about.

In many parts of our lives, we spend time dissecting each other's differences, which can lead to passing judgement and fixating on these points of contrast. But at PFI, we embrace difference and find that, no matter what we raise or how, we have a lot of common ground. In addition, when we broaden our perspectives, we realize we actually have a lot to learn from each other. PFI'ers are good at heeding the advice of our late co-founder, Dick Thompson, who lived and preached the motto: "Get along, but don't go along."

This magazine is full of practical tips and perspectives from many farmers. From vegetable variety trials to farm-produced livestock feed, farms that are supporting migratory birds and farmers who are exploring new markets for small grains, there's a lot to learn from every member featured.

The arrival of spring means that field days are around the corner. As you peruse the field day guide, consider attending something outside of your usual area of interest. I bet you'll make new connections, learn new things and broaden your understanding of what's happening in food and farming.

I hope to see you on-farm,

Sally Wooley



Mark (left) presenting Joel with the award at the 2024 Annual Conference.



Gary Guthrie (center) chatting with other attendees at the 2023 Annual Conference.

Fields of Feathers

By using cover crops, rotational grazing and extended rotations, farmers are helping their soil – and making space for birds.

By Vanya North



When Aaron Lehman first noticed cars slowing down on the rural road bordering his 500-acre farm of corn, soybeans, oats and hay in northern Polk County, Iowa, he became concerned. Just what were all these drivers doing? Even his neighbors noticed and were equally stumped as cars crawled by Aaron's farm.

"It's an unfortunate reality that people come out to these rural roads to dump trash, and I was worried that was what all the strange activity was," Aaron says. "Then I noticed they seemed to be looking at the farm itself."

In spring 2018, as he was driving home, Aaron finally had a chance to approach one of these cars. Rolling down the window, he asked what the driver was seeing out in his fields, worried there may be an issue he was unaware of. The answer surprised (and delighted) him as the driver raised up his binoculars and excitedly said he was looking at all the birds on the farm. The driver even got out to show Aaron a phone app called eBird Mobile, where he and others had been recording the species they saw as they passed Aaron's farm.

"It was the funniest thing," Aaron recalls. "All that worry and curiosity and everyone was just bird-watching!"

A few hours away, in Allamakee County, Tim Welsh also operates a 500-acre farm. He purchased the first 300 acres in 1984, and added 200 adjoining acres in 2019. Originally a mix of pasture, corn, soybeans, oats and hay crops, Tim and his family have spent the last 40 years diligently converting the land to improved pasture, perennial crops and woodland. Half of the land Tim bought in 2019 was already established in the federal Conservation Reserve Program, which Tim has left in place.

"I purchased the first farm from my father's cousin, but the farm itself has been in the family since the 1870s," Tim says. "My dad's cousin originally ran mainly beef cattle, allowing them to graze widely across the pastures and woodlands. We've since established a rotational grazing practice on the pastures and removed cattle from most of the woodlands."

As part of his management, Tim has been working to re-establish oak savanna and prairie. His efforts have included planting hardwoods like walnut and oak, and improving his timber stands through selective harvesting. Forestry, he says, lets him stay involved and improve his farm when his off-farm



Aaron Lehman



Tim Welsh

career working on international agriculture projects takes him away. Since timber stands need less upkeep once established, the frequent travel doesn't impede the farm's success.

As Tim began investing in forestry practices, and more recently in pasture improvement, more types of birds started showing up. Neighbors told him they had seen more ringed-neck pheasants than ever before. And while it hasn't led to a slow parade of cars, Tim has heard from friends that they're seeing more birds too.

"Friends who visit and use various birding apps have reported several uncommon species of birds on my property," Tim says. "It's been really neat to see which species are resident or passing through the farm."

Shared Abundance

Aaron's and Tim's experiences show how farms can support both production and wildlife. Despite differences in location, management and farming practices, both their farms are havens for birds. And both illustrate that it's possible to create



“Birds on the land are a good indicator of sustainable farms.”

- Aaron Lehman

space for birds and still be profitable. Even a small investment in habitat can have a big impact.

Iowa is situated within the Mississippi Flyway, a migration route for birds that stretches from the Gulf Coast to the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. It's the largest of four major U.S. flyways, used by around half of all North American birds and 40% of the continent's shorebirds. Some of the species who travel it are familiar visitors, such as ducks and geese. But many songbirds also use it, as well as birds like owls, eagles, woodpeckers, doves, coots and cranes (among others).

As these birds travel across Iowa, they need food and shelter to sustain them on their long journeys. Finding enough habitat patches in the agricultural landscape is key. But farms don't have to make big changes, or even take land out of production, to make a difference. A 2018 study of east-central Illinois farms, published in *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, found that corn and soybean fields

with cover crops had significantly more birds in them – and species diversity – than fields without covers. These fields supported both waterfowl and songbirds, including at-risk birds like eastern meadowlarks and other grassland bird species. The researchers found that cereal rye was especially beneficial.

To encourage birds moving along the flyway, Aaron uses an extended, diverse crop rotation. Every three to five years, he swaps out crops in parts of his fields to promote soil health. He also uses small-grain cover crops, such as oats, and field peas in his rotations. These practices keep his soil and crops healthy. But they also provide food and habitat for birds.

“Our crop rotations, along with most of the farm transitioning to certified organic, has created a place for birds,” Aaron says. “We started with CRP, which we then converted to native-planting CRP. More recently, we have added wetland areas and buffers, which are great for birds – and turning equipment around!”

Tim also uses CRP, and has put wetlands in areas that were once only marginally productive. By rotationally grazing his cattle, he's supporting soil health – and habitat. “I started to become more interested in rotational grazing and all the work being done around regenerative agriculture,” he says. “So I subdivided my pastures, installed water lines and started rotating the cattle. With healthier pastures and good timber management, we've increased our stocking rate and also created good wildlife and bird habitat.”

The benefits are reciprocal. As farmers adopt practices like cover crops, extended rotations, buffers and rotational grazing to manage pastures, their soil health and farm resilience improves. The birds, in turn, provide pest control, support pollination, provide recreation – like hunting and birdwatching – and add beauty and richness to the landscape.

“Birds on the land are a good indicator of sustainable farms,” Aaron says. “I've noticed a reduction in pests like aphids, which is especially important when you're running an organic operation, and an increase in beneficial insects that improve pollination.

“Being responsible stewards and using practices that have been around for decades, and some for centuries, is a must for our farm to continue to provide habitat for all types of animals, birds included.” ■

Corn and soybean fields with cover crops had significantly more birds in them – and species diversity – than fields without covers.

Small(Grain)Successes

Small-grain producers use creativity and relationships to establish markets and build resilience.

By Solveig Orngard

When Tom Cumming's neighbor asked him to combine his rye for a large share of the seed and straw 12 years ago, Tom had no clue what he was getting himself into. As a row crop farmer since 1985, he had gotten very used to his rotation of corn, soybeans and hay. But after helping his neighbor, Tom decided to use the rye seed he had harvested to start growing his own rye – and to bale the straw so he could make the most of the crop.

Marketing straw was tricky. When Tom couldn't find local farmers to sell to near his Redfield, Iowa, farm, he reached out to local businesses. He was turned down repeatedly for months. Fortunately, Tom had time and space to brainstorm. "When you spend many hours in a tractor with no radio, you have a lot of time to think," he says. "That can be good if you're creative and bad if you're stewing on something."

Tom is the creative type, so when he persevered and dropped by one more Tractor Supply store to try to sell his straw, he had a plan. To show his investment in the market relationship, Tom offered to supply an 8-by-10-foot open-front building to house his straw in front of the store. A pallet of 60 bales could be set inside using a forklift, a far easier task than manually moving bales into the store's main storage sheds.

After seeing Tom's straw, the store manager was sold on the marketing idea and connected Tom to other Tractor Supply stores in the area. When the manager transferred to a managerial role at Bomgaars, he called Tom to see if he would add Bomgaar stores to his market network.

"Just stopping in that one time and meeting the right guy who had the need helped me scale up to 40,000 bales a year in just about six or seven years," Tom says.

As sales grew, bookkeeping became trickier to manage. Tom's wife Robin quit her job and jumped in to manage invoicing, taxes and other office work while also spending long hours cleaning rye seed in late summer. Today, Tom and Robin sell square rye straw bales at more than two dozen stores across west and central Iowa through their business, TRC Farms. They house the bales in two to four small buildings outside each store. While they don't receive rent for the structures, sales are good enough that each building is paid off.



Tom Cummings in his rye field



Robin Cummings cleaning rye seed



Straw bales housed and ready to sell outside a farm supply store.

Making Connections

Though creativity was the spark for the Cummings' market success, relationships fueled the fire. Many miles to the east, a very different small-grain operation also relies on personal connections.

Andy Hazzard grew up on a row crop farm near Pecatonica, Illinois, and raised animals for 4-H. In 2007, she decided to start Hazzard Free Farm, a vegetable CSA farm. But through the first few years, she always had a feeling that grains were what she really wanted to grow. "The vegetables were just kind of a way to get started," she says. "When the door opened for grain, I thought, 'Let's see if we can make this go!'"

In 2012, Hazzard Free Farm Grains was born when Andy bought a mill and started growing oats, wheat and corn. After two hectic years running her vegetable and grain farms as fully separate operations, she chose to focus solely on grains. Andy had already built many local relationships through her CSA, which gave her a head start finding markets for her grains. "I was already in the restaurants dropping off produce, so I

would drop off samples of the grain and say, 'Hey, I'm trying this out. What do you think?'"

Her drive to connect has kept her products on the shelves in local stores and on ingredient lists in restaurants. She has also found creative ways to market her grains. One grain buyer, a local baker, drops off bread and scones made from Andy's flour when coming to pick up more flour from the farm.

Andy says making these connections energizes her. "The more I talk to people, I find that they really want to get their hands back into nature in a different way," she says. "That connection with food offers a whole space where we can hold a hand out and say, 'Come and see. Come and experience it.'"

Building Resilience With Livestock

Even with innovative ideas and a supportive network, things often don't go as planned on a farm. For Andy, because her products are used in table food, she must be careful at each processing step to meet food-grade requirements. She cleans her grain using a gravity table before sending the grain to be

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"The more I talk to people, I find that they really want to get their hands back into nature in a different way. We can hold a hand out and say, 'Come and see. Come and experience it.'" – **Andy Hazzard**



Michael Dolan's field of oats mid-harvest.



Andy Hazzard sharing about small grains at her field day in 2024.



Michael's cattle have helped him learn about marketing products.

tested. She's also careful to ensure the grain dries thoroughly before selling.

Yet challenges still arise. "One time, there was a series of events that led to the combine picking up clods of dirt on some purple barley. I cleaned it probably four times, but I couldn't get the toxin dust out," Andy says. "That was so sad because the crop was beautiful." The toxin Andy refers to is vomitoxin, a substance made by a type of fungus that can contaminate grains like corn, wheat and barley. Guidelines for food-grade grains limit vomitoxin levels to 1 part per million or less. But Andy has learned she can feed tainted grain to livestock, as long as vomitoxin levels are under 5 ppm.

Near Spring Green, Wisconsin, Michael Dolan of Seven Seeds Organic Farm has also learned the value of raising both grains and livestock. Michael and his family focus mainly on raising 100% grass-fed cattle and marketing their beef. They first started growing small grains as feed for their cattle. As they transitioned to grass-fed, they decided to grow high-value food-grade grains.

Michael had already formed a relationship with neighboring farmer Paul Bickford. As Paul transitioned farm ownership to John and Halee Wepking, Michael formed a market relationship with them for his grains. Today, the Wepkings mill a variety of grains from their own farm and neighboring farms, including Seven Seeds. They also keep grass-fed beef cattle, which they sell to the Dolans at 18 months old.

"They have more connections and knowledge about marketing grain than we do, and we have more connections and

marketing experience to market beef than they do," Michael says. "So we have a pretty symbiotic relationship."

When grain doesn't meet food-grade standards, Michael can feed grain to his pigs and chickens. He's also willing to find another buyer in need of animal feed, even though it sells for a lot less. His wheat, for instance, can sell for \$15 to \$20 per bushel if it meets food-grade requirements. "But if it doesn't," Michael says, "it's more like \$5 to \$6 per bushel. It can be a huge financial swing." But having a foundation of pre-established relationships alleviates some of the stress when forced to shift gears.

Cultivating Respect

For Michael, Andy and the Cummings, small grains have been key to cultivating resilience on their farms. Beyond the physical crops, each has made a concerted effort to form strong connections in their community, building trust through reliability, hard work and a bit of flexibility.

"One relationship really can change everything," Robin says. "But it was Tom's personality – his willingness to work hard and get the product to the store in a timely manner – that the manager really liked."

Michael asserts that communication is key. "Reach out to your customers and receive feedback whether it's negative or positive. If it's negative, make adjustments. See what you can do."

With some ingenuity, networking, patience and a back-up plan, small grains may well lead to large gains. ■

"Reach out to your customers and receive feedback whether it's negative or positive. If it's negative, make adjustments. See what you can do." – **Michael Dolan**

It's a Grind

For some farmers, the benefits of milling their own livestock feed outweigh the extra work.

By Amos Johnson

Seeds don't want to be eaten.

Or, rather, it's more accurate to say that seeds don't want to be digested. And they've evolved ways to prevent it. Many of the seeds that make up our grain, for instance, are protected by hard exteriors called hulls. Without additional processing, up to 50% of consumed grains can pass through an animal whole, their nutrients unaccessed.

But milling takes extra work and investment. So why do some farmers bother? For many, it comes down to profitability. Others appreciate the flexibility, control and stability grinding their own grain affords.

Still, on-farm milling isn't for everyone. "If you've got access to a local mill that will make you exactly what you want, I'd say, work with them," says Earl Canfield, who farms at Canfield Family Farms near Dunkerton, Iowa. As he speaks, he's like a coiled spring oscillating between stillness and action. "But that's getting increasingly hard to find." Earl would know. Besides milling grain for his family's chickens, and occasionally for pigs, he runs an on-farm mill and direct-markets 12,000-15,000 bags of feed per year.

Earl's farm lies just off Canfield Road. His family has been farming here since the 1850s. For much of that time, most farms with livestock milled their own feed. Up until the 1970s, Earl remembers doing the same with his dad using oats they grew. But when livestock left the farm, so did the oats, and the milling stopped.

The Why

Forty years later, in 2016, Earl decided to diversify his crop rotation with oats once again. He knew the soil health benefits of an extended rotation would take years to fully manifest. To enable this long-term investment, he wanted to find a way to make his oats profitable now. He turned first to the food-grade oat market. But Earl's buyer backed out unexpectedly, and the price to sell into the feed market didn't come close to matching his costs.

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Checking the grind on a poultry mix.

Earl Canfield

Milling has given Earl's business an avenue for their other crops too – and it's made their income more stable in an otherwise volatile grain market.



Climbing onto the grinding wagon to inspect it.



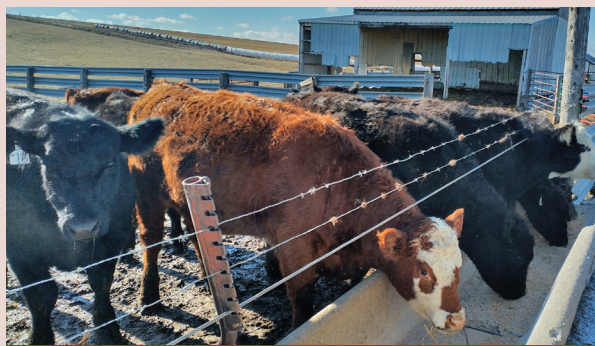
Grabbing a bin of grain to add to the mix.



Ryan shows his cattle feed.

Ryan Wallace

By feeding their animals organic feed processed on the farm, the livestock earn a better value than the grains would on their own. That makes their row crops profitable.



The cattle appreciating their bespoke meal.



Ryan's pigs dig into a fresh batch of feed.

Searching for a way to still make money from his oats, Earl and his wife quickly pivoted. “We said, ‘We really got nothing to lose. Let’s just probe the waters of direct-marketing and see what we find.’” What they found was a demand for premium locally milled feed. In 2024, Earl says over 90% of the farm’s revenue was from value-added products like feed, cracked grains and baled hay. Initially, the business was aimed just at marketing their oats. But milling has given them an avenue for their other crops too – and it’s made their income more stable in an otherwise volatile grain market.

Ryan Wallace, of RAW Farms near Luzerne, Iowa, also started milling to fully use his diversity of crops. He and his wife, Ashley Wallace, grow a range of certified organic small-grain crops, such as wheat, oats and sorghum as well as corn and soybeans. They also raise pastured pigs, cattle, sheep and chickens. “If we have the markets for the livestock,” he says, “we can make more profit putting [the grain] through the livestock and letting it walk off the farm.”

By feeding their animals organic feed processed on the farm, the livestock earn a better value than the grains would on their own. That makes their row crops profitable. In addition to direct marketing, the Wallaces sell through contracts with Niman Ranch and 99 Counties, which pay farmers premium prices for following strict protocols for animal welfare, feed requirements, land stewardship and other criteria. These livestock sales, which started just a couple of years ago, have let Ryan drop his job in town and farm full-time. The amount of ground he’s managing hasn’t changed much, but the livestock have become the value-added product for his grains.

“If I were to get rid of all the livestock and just sell the cash crop,” he says, “we would not be able to make a living off the farming operation.”

Using his livestock as his main source of income, Ryan says he’s better able to pencil out cashflow for the year and is less reliant on volatile grain markets. Plus, he simply likes livestock more. “I’ll always have nostalgia for corn,” Ryan says. “But I’m intrigued by the old way of farming – that livestock was the way they made the farm operate. They farmed to raise the livestock.”

Brice Hundling, of Hundling Family Farms near Breda, Iowa, also has a diverse rotation that influences what he feeds his equally diverse mix of livestock. Like Ryan, he also raises pigs for Niman Ranch, as well as cattle, chickens, turkeys, sheep and goats. Knocking on the side of the bins, Brice describes how the corn, bean meal, oats and pre-mix are augured into the mill, housed in the old corn crib. Grain dust from grinding 2-3 tons of feed per day has drifted onto the floor, walls and soaring rafters of the small space, coating surfaces in the fine yellow dust ubiquitous with corn milling.

Brice knows it’s a clean dust, though. It’s physically light, not sticky from oily residues or contaminated with dirt. And because

it comes from crops he raised, he knows exactly what's in it. That's important to him, having worked at co-ops where he wasn't always impressed with the quality control he saw. Plus, grinding his own feed adds a layer of biosecurity. "I know exactly what I am putting in my grinding bin," he says. "I'm the one maintaining the quality control for my pigs."

On-farm milling also adds flexibility. With limited storage space and animals of different ages (and thus feed requirements) at any given time, Brice needs multiple feed mixes at hand that change through the year. Because of the relatively small amounts he needs, ordering in bulk from an outside miller would make delivery costs unworkably expensive. With on-farm milling, Brice is able to make feed as he needs it.

Before You Start

If you're thinking about making your own livestock feed, Brice, Ryan and Earl offer the following advice.

Brice strongly recommends using an automated electric mill to save time and money. Before he got one, he was burning upwards of 50 gallons of diesel per month on a tractor-powered grinder mixer to feed half as many pigs. With the electric mill, his bill is only \$150 per month for double the hogs. He can also set it and walk away. "I know what I need for feed the next day," Brice says. "I input '6,000 pounds of ration number two,' hit enter and then come in the house for the night."

Ryan advises farmers to "really, really know your numbers." By fully understanding expenses and income – how much feed the hogs or cattle take – you'll know if one enterprise is subsidizing another and where to trim excess. He also suggests finding ways to save money on infrastructure. Using creative arrangements to share equipment, Ryan has kept his start-up costs low.

Speaking also of finances, Earl says, "If you're not going to pay someone else to do it [mill grains], you've got to be willing to absorb the cost to be able to do it yourself." He points to the financial cost of buying and maintaining equipment, which can be sizeable. There's also the labor cost of the extra time spent processing grain – which at -20 degrees and windy (Earl grinds on a wagon he rolls outside), can feel quite high. Earl also suggests using top-quality supplements (he gets his from Fertrell) and using roasted soybeans instead of bean meal. Finally, he advises paying attention to auctions and sales. By doing so, Earl and his family have pieced together their milling setup over the years while saving money.

Even with the hard work and added complexity, Earl finds milling feed rewarding. "We're very grateful," he reflects in a moment of stillness between speeding in his forklift and scaling his equipment. "I enjoy what I do. It's allowed us to continue making a living here on the farm and create some new opportunities, hopefully for our kids, but we'll see what the future holds." ■



Freshly milled pig feed.

Brice Hundling

Grinding his own feed adds a layer of biosecurity. "I know exactly what I am putting in my grinding bin," Brice says. "I'm the one maintaining the quality control for my pigs."



Brice framed by the tubes that feed the mill.



Inputting directions for a feed mix.

“Rooted in Nature and Guided by Tradition”

At NaTerra Farm, Sandro Lopes is applying Indigenous knowledge to grow food and community

By Rachel Burke

2022 was a pivotal year for Sandro Lopes.

He started a backyard garden at his house in David City, Nebraska, out of a desire to feed his family and his community. At the time, Sandro was working 12-hour days as a contractor at a corn processing plant. The work environment was dusty, hot and left him feeling uninspired.

That same year, his mother, Maria Mont Serrat, came from Brazil to live with Sandro, his wife, Michelle, and their four children. Sandro grew up in Brazil and is descended from the Indigenous Tupí people.

“My ancestors come from Itacoã-Miri, a small community in the city of Acará, in the state of Pará,” he says. “It is a place full of history.”

Portuguese colonization, which started in the 16th century, had a profound impact on Brazil’s Indigenous Peoples. Sandro notes that he’s the fourth generation of the Itacoã-Miri community that does not speak the language (Tupí is part of the Tupí-Guarani language family). “Yet, the memory of our people remains alive,” he says.

Sandro’s mother is such a knowledge-bearer. In Tupí-Guarani, she is known as an ekuñakarai, a word used for a grandmother, spiritual leader, counselor and teacher of traditions for the family. When she moved to Nebraska, Maria started teaching the Lopes family traditional Indigenous ways of growing food in raised beds. She also taught them how to make biochar, a high-carbon form of charcoal made by heating organic matter like plants or wood chips in a low-oxygen environment that can improve soil health. And she introduced them to other Indigenous cultivation practices for sustaining people and nature that she had learned growing up in the rainforest.

By 2023, Sandro had officially started NaTerra Regenerative Farm, where he is blending this ancestral knowledge with permaculture principles and adapting it to a Midwestern context. His garden now fills nearly his entire backyard – and in 2024, he expanded his farm to a nearby 3-acre plot.

Today, Sandro raises produce for a CSA, along with free-range chickens and eggs. He also has goats, ducks and quail that his

12-year-old daughter, Maria, tends and shows through 4-H. His goal with his farm is to create a unified system – one that forges a harmony between the land, the people and other beings it sustains, along with the Indigenous wisdom that has been passed down to him.



Ancestral Practices

That ancestral knowledge is evident in some of the innovative practices Sandro uses at NaTerra Farm. One practice, called *muvuka* – which means “together” in Tupí – is based on planting different species together so they can support one another, along with soil health and biodiversity. He also seeks to mimic aspects of tropical rainforest ecosystems.

In practice, because the local climate is markedly different from tropical Brazil, this means creative adaptation. “The Nebraska sun shines differently,” Sandro says. “Keeping the soil, seeds and plants moist is not a problem in the Brazilian rainforest. But in Nebraska, dry air can be a challenge.”

**“The Nebraska sun shines differently.
Keeping the soil, seeds and plants moist is
not a problem in the Brazilian rainforest.
But in Nebraska, dry air can be a challenge.”**

- Sandro Lopes

To cope, Sandro shades his plants with a custom structure he built. It consists of a wood frame topped with chicken wire. As Sandro weeds, he puts the discarded plants on top of the structure to create a natural tarp of foliage, imitating a live plant shade canopy. When the seeds emerge, he moves the tarp on a rotation. The practice lets him grow a lot of food in a small space.

Another practice uses crop rotation, ground cover and composting to enrich the soil and boost crop productivity.



Sandro's custom shade structure



Sandro's mandala farm



Sandro's daughter, Maria

The mandala embodies connections between soil, plants, people and other living beings.

Sandro is serious about building soil health at NaTerra Farm. “In the rainforest, there is no lab to test your soil. Instead, we practice bio-observation,” he says. “We learn by observing the colors. We consider red, purple, lilac, grey and black fungi signs of pathogenic microbial communities in the soil, and white, green and yellow fungi signs of beneficial microbial communities.”

To encourage the beneficial microbes, Sandro explains how some farmers in Brazil “trap” beneficial microorganisms by taking a small ball of rice, putting it in the ground next to the bacteria and covering it with leaves. “The microorganisms jump to the rice,” he says. This Native method, taught to Sandro by farmers hosting field days in Brazil, requires the rice to be left in the ground until the good bacteria multiplies. The rice ball is then transplanted into soil that’s lacking the proper nutrition to grow food.

Sandro uses other creative approaches to building soil health. A nearby landowner, who has given Sandro access to additional land to farm, regularly dredges a lake on the property and piles the silt on the shore. Sandro decided to transplant that soil to the 3-acre farm plot he started on the land, using the fish manure in the lake sediment as a nutrient source. The land is the site of Sandro’s newest endeavor: a mandala farm, which he started in 2024.

The concept – which uses a circular design – blends Indigenous agriculture and permaculture practices. Currently, the mandala plot has three concentric rings comprising around 2,900 square feet. Different types of plants grow in each circle. In Sandro’s mandala, the innermost circle is dedicated to short-cycle vegetables, medicinal plants and small flowers that attract beneficial insects. In the second circle, he plants vegetables that need a little more time to mature, as well as corn, beans and squash.

“And the third [outermost] circle is the ecological backbone of the mandala,” Sandro says. “This circle contains fruit trees, shrubs, windbreaks and plants that provide biomass and habitat for wildlife. It is a space dedicated to soil regeneration and ecosystem services.” The mandala farm will eventually grow into a forest. “That is the purpose,” he says. “We

establish a forest in the mandala, then plant more mandalas to grow more food and forests.”

Connections to Past, Present and Future

Sandro developed the mandala farm as part of a conservation fellowship program for beginning farmers through Center for Rural Affairs, which offers participants support, funding and mentorship. That genesis – and the fact that the project grew out of engagement with others – pleases Sandro. “One of the purposes of the mandalas is to farm together,” he says. “You need multiple people for it to work.”

Interconnection is a key attribute. The mandala embodies connections between soil, plants, people and other living beings. But it also reflects the layers of knowledge and relationships that have connected him to his heritage, his community – and his family.

Sandro’s daughter, Maria, for instance, will graze her chickens at the mandala to help build soil health. She is especially interested in learning Native growing methods from her grandmother, he says. Sandro uses the Tupí word *mborayvu* to describe his mother’s relationship with Maria. “It means knowledge- and tradition-sharing from one human to the next, not out of obligation, but out of generosity,” Sandro adds that his son Gui, Maria’s twin, has autism and walking the concentric circles relaxes him. “I love being at the mandala with Gui. It is something we can enjoy together.”

The concept of interconnection is also vividly illustrated in NaTerra Farm’s logo. It depicts the Lopes family’s 140-year-old house nestled within the trunk of a tree. At the tree’s center is Ceuci, the Tupí goddess of agriculture. Living soil is shown as red lines flowing underneath. “NaTerra Farm is rooted in nature and guided by tradition,” Sandro says. “We believe, in order to start a farm, you need Ceuci and she needs to be guided by the spirit of the tree.”

For Sandro, people and land are connected across space and time. As he builds his farm, he’s doing so with future generations in mind as well. “The top of one mountain is the bottom of the next,” Sandro says. He follows that up by reminding us to “keep climbing” ■

Quelling the Trials of Variety

Faced with overwhelming options, some farmers use on-farm research to guide decisions about which vegetable varieties to plant.

By Jacqueline Venner Senske

In 2017, Jill Beebout faced a dilemma.

Like other diversified vegetable farmers, lettuce was a staple crop her CSA customers valued. But as a cool-season crop, it was hard to grow in July and August during the heat of Iowa's summers. The plants tended to bolt quickly, prematurely shifting their energy from growing edible parts like leaves or roots to growing flowers and seeds. Even plants that looked marketable might have a bitter taste.

Jill has farmed for 20 years at Blue Gate Farm in Chariton, Iowa. In past years, the challenges of raising lettuce during Iowa's hot season meant she couldn't always reliably include it in her 20-week summer CSA boxes, or at her farmers market stand. In 2017, however, Jill decided to do something about it.

Hoping to learn which lettuce varieties would produce through the entire summer without bolting, she signed up for a lettuce variety trial through PFI's Cooperators' Program. The program empowers farmers to find answers to

their specific farming questions. As part of the process, farmers work with one another, and with PFI staff, to define the question, set up and carry out trials on their farms and decide the research methods they'll use to ensure a rigorous study.

That year, Jill joined five other farmers in testing three to four lettuce varieties. She took part in a second lettuce variety trial in 2018. "That trial was game-changing," Jill says. "Our goal was to have lettuce in every CSA box for all 20 weeks. For three of the last five years, we have produced a lettuce crop throughout the entire growing season. When we were at farmers market, there was a big chunk of time that we were the only farmers who still had lettuce all the way through August."

Options Overload

The trials helped Jill find some varieties that worked for her (Coastal Star, Magenta, Muir and Concept) – but it

also provided a path through a gauntlet of decisions. Farmers who raise diverse vegetables may grow anywhere from a half-dozen to two or even three dozen different crops. Jill's crop list for 2025, for instance, includes 18 different crops with two to 27 varieties of each crop, for a total of 119 unique plant varieties.

And for each crop, the farmer must choose from a sometimes dizzying array of options. Tomatoes, for example, are estimated to have upwards of 10,000 commercially available varieties. Confronting that choice can be both empowering and paralyzing. So how does one decide? Often, farmers select varieties based on their goals, their growing system and their markets.

But some vegetable farmers, like Jill, turn to PFI on-farm research trials to provide structure, focus and farm-specific data. Amid the crush of options, the trials provide focus by clearly defining a research question – like comparing one variety of spring



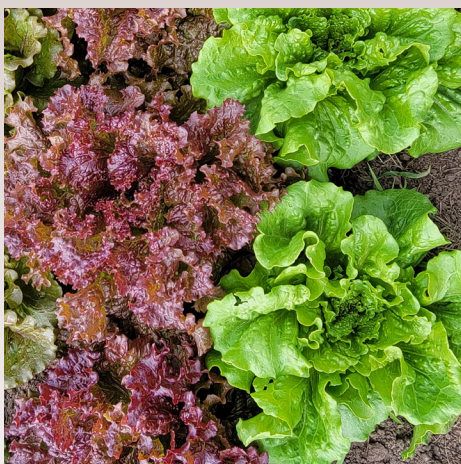
Jill Beebout



Alice McGary



Michael Pipho



Jill's lettuce



Alice's onions



Michael's peppers

radishes to another, or seeing how well different sweet peppers yield in a farmer's system.

Alice McGary of Mustard Seed Community Farm in Ames, Iowa, has taken part in variety trials for a range of crops, including summer and fall cabbage, cauliflower, sweet peppers, summer broccoli and onions. "It's important for us to be doing variety trials in Iowa because our growing conditions here are different from the places where most of the plant breeding is happening for horticultural crops," Alice says. "Things that do well other places might not perform the same here."

Michael Pipho of Rooster's Crow Farm in Dunkerton, Iowa, appreciates how participating in variety trials adds structure and science to evaluating

plant performance. "It commits you to looking at a good experiment rather than going with the flow in the moment," he says.

Farm-Specific Findings

The results for each farmer-researcher may vary, yet each one matters. Because growers value different characteristics depending on their growing systems and markets, what variety works best can be highly farm-specific. Some want to offer their customers unique colors, flavors or shapes in their produce, while others select for disease resistance or storage life.

"Usually, we're trying to solve a problem that's really hard for vegetable farmers," Alice says. "For example, broccoli doesn't like Iowa heat or Iowa cold, so learning what broccoli variety procures a marketable yield and actually works really helps my farm."

Michael appreciates how variety trials help him ground-truth whether varieties that work well for others are suitable for his farm. "My system has different soil conditions, and I use no-till practices," he says. "So sometimes that has an effect on the varieties I choose."

The pepper variety trial is one that stands out for Michael. At his farm, peppers are a specialty, with Carmen a long-time staple variety. However, seed prices for Carmen have risen, and Michael finds the seeds are sometimes hard to get. In doing the trial, conducted in 2024, his goal was to find a replacement variety. By the end of it, Michael was pleased with the peppers he tested. "With Corno di Torro, I found

"Variety trials are a bit of an encouragement to pay attention to what else is out there."

- Jill Beebout

a pepper variety that I want to continue growing as a complement to Carmen peppers," he says. "They produce for longer, so they extended my pepper season."

Because external factors can further complicate decision-making, variety trials can also help reduce the risks and barriers associated with making a change that could be beneficial. For instance, seeds for a longtime favorite variety may suddenly skyrocket in price. Varieties that were once uncommon, and thus might sell for more, may become widely available, decreasing their profit potential. More rarely, a variety may be unavailable from any source at any price due to a crop failure or disease infestation.

"I often wonder if I'm growing the best variety of everything I grow and if there are new varieties out there that I should try. Am I just growing the same varieties because I'm in a rut or out of habit?" Jill says. "Variety trials are a bit of an encouragement to pay attention to what else is out there."

And in a world of infinite choice, having the support, collaboration and science to clarify decisions is priceless. ■

Learn More

Read the results of the lettuce, broccoli and pepper trials mentioned in this story:



practicalfarmers.org/summer-lettuce-variety-trial

practicalfarmers.org/summer-lettuce-variety-trial-2



practicalfarmers.org/sweet-pepper-variety-trial



practicalfarmers.org/summer-broccoli-variety-trial

Or search for other vegetable variety trial results at practicalfarmers.org/research.

Annual Conference

January 10-11, 2025 | Des Moines, Iowa

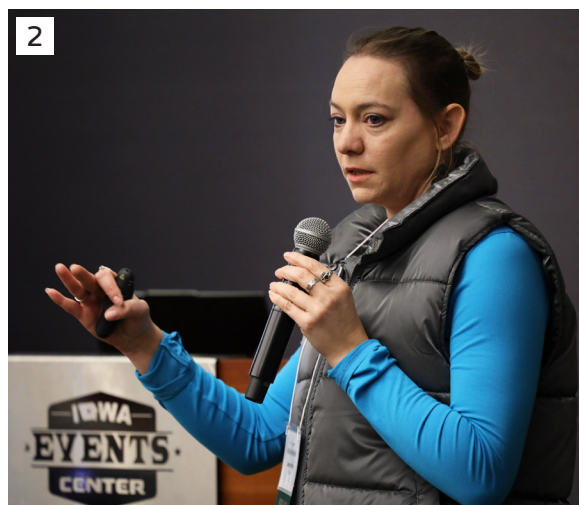
Photo Album

Thank you to 100-plus speakers, 95 exhibitors and nearly 1,200 attendees who joined us at the 2025 PFI Annual Conference! Every one of you contributes to making the conference a success. The PFI spirit of curiosity, creativity and community was evident from the first cowbell to the final goodbye. See you again in 2026!

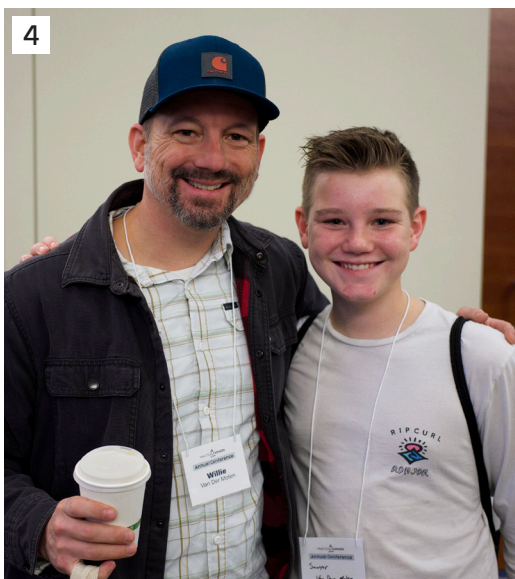


(1) Eric Lee-Mäder delivers his keynote address Saturday morning.

(2) Barney Bahrenfuse (*left*) and Suzanne Castello (*second from right*) pose for a photo with their son, Gabe, and longtime mentor John Gilbert Sr. after receiving PFI's 2025 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award.



(1) Wade Dooley gets a chuckle out of exhibitors and longtime PFI members Alix and Mary Jane Paez, who run Genetic Enterprises International. **(2)** Jennie Erwin discusses how vegetable growers can cover their acres with cover crops. **(3)** Lee Tesdell (*facing the camera*) chats during a conference break. **(4)** From left: Sara Chavira, Soid Torres, Marcela Hurtado and Victoria Chavira pose for a photo on their way out of a session. **(5)** Attendees pack the ballroom for the PFI Dinner on Friday evening, with live music by Matt Woods.



(1) Friday's program ended with Storytelling featuring stories based on the theme "The Edge." Here, Christine Ross tells her story of life on the edge when her village in South Sudan was demolished by rebels. Christine went on to found Refugee Women Farmers of Nebraska (RWON) and encouraged attendees to support refugees and their access to agriculture. **(2)** Chelsea Craigmile, Grace Clark and Isobel Hogg pause for a photo on their way through the exhibit hall. **(3)** PFI's grants manager, Bria Holthe, gets Kent Boucher from Hoskey Native Seeds set up with his name tag. **(4)** Willie (left) and Sawyer Van Der Molen pause for a photo. **(5)** James Holtz shares financial details of grazing cover crops on his farm. **(6)** Longtime PFI members Tim Landgraf and Jan Libbey enjoy the conference. Tim and Jan received PFI's Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award in 2022.



(1) Rubyana Neely (left) and Jason Johnson (right) of USDA-NRCS, chat with Srini Reddy and Sree Nilakanta. **(2)** Tessa Parks presents on Friday afternoon, discussing how she and her partner, Wyatt, have scaled their direct-to-consumer beef operation as first-generation farmers at W.T. Farms. **(3)** Attendees pack the main concourse of the exhibit hall, which featured 95 exhibitor booths. **(4)** Morgan (left) and Tyler Bruck share a laugh with Sarah Garst between sessions. **(5)** Theresa Pedretti from Albert Lea Seed chats with an attendee. **(6)** Ben Hartman, author of “The Lean Farm” and farmer at Clay Bottom Farm, presents about “Lean Composting.”



Partners in Life and Land

Barney Bahrenfuse and Suzanne Castello are transforming their midsized farm, creating greater harmony with the land.

By Elizabeth Wilhelm

Barney Bahrenfuse and Suzanne Castello's journey as a couple began at a PFI annual conference over two decades ago, where a "chance encounter" led to a lasting connection. For the past 18 years, the pair have been farming side by side, building both their lives and their farm.

Today, Barney and Suzanne, along with their teenage son, Gabe, run a 500-acre diversified crop and livestock farm near Grinnell, Iowa. Their vision for the farm is as clear as it is inspiring – to create a landscape that prioritizes diversity, nurtures the land and provides for their community.

"Diversification is key," Barney says, "both for regenerating the soil and habitat, but also as an economic safety net."

This emphasis on diversity is evident in the couple's farm enterprises, which include cattle, sheep, chickens and hogs, and certified organic corn, oats, hay and soybeans. Most of the grains they use as feed for their livestock, though they sell a portion of their organic soybeans off the farm, as well as some meat to local customers.

In January, Suzanne and Barney received PFI's 2025 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award for their dedication to innovation and sustainability. The award is given each year by PFI to an individual or couple that has shown exemplary commitment to sustainable agriculture, generously shared their knowledge with others and been influential in efforts to foster vibrant communities, diverse farms and healthy food.



John Gilbert Sr. presents PFI's 2025 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award to Suzanne, Barney and their son, Gabe.

*"I'm so happy with what we're doing with our soil.
To me, that's what means the most." - Barney Bahrenfuse*



Barney moves portable posts to build a fence for a new paddock.



Suzanne lets cows into a new paddock.

Longtime member John Gilbert presented the award. He and his family run a diversified crop and livestock farm near Iowa Falls, Iowa, and were early farming mentors to Suzanne as she sought to learn about sustainable agriculture. The two families remain close friends today.

"The meaning of sustainability has long been debated, but one aspect that rarely gets attention is the need and desire to do things the right way, even when that isn't the easiest way or the way everybody else does it," John says. "If anything should be evident about Barney and Suzanne, it's that their understanding of what is right is defined by what is best for their soil, animals, customers, community, environment and farming livelihoods."

A Commitment to Sustainability

Suzanne and Barney run a predominantly pasture-based farm. To build diversity and soil health, they plant a diversified, long rotation of oats, hay, corn, soybeans and cover crops. "Our crop ground is intentionally broken up into smaller fields, averaging about 12 acres each," Barney says. This ensures that rarely do two adjacent fields get tilled up in any one year, limiting the chance for erosion.

As part of nourishing the soil, they add green manure, a term describing crops that are worked into the soil while still green. To do this, Barney and Suzanne use a rotavator, which lets them mix large amounts of green manure into the soil with minimal disturbance. They have also experimented with "two-on-two corn," also known as skip-row planting. In this technique, two rows of corn are planted and two rows are

unplanted. In the skipped rows, they plant a cover crop to improve biodiversity and nutrient cycling.

Livestock, however, are the heartbeat of their farm – and the reason they farm. Suzanne and Barney are most proud of the mob grazing technique they use for their cattle, which mimics the natural grazing patterns of bison that once roamed the prairie. On Iowa's past landscape, large herds of bison grazed intensively in one area briefly before moving on, allowing the land to rest and recover.

To replicate this, Suzanne and Barney use temporary electric fences to concentrate their cattle into small areas. Then, by putting up new fences, they move the cattle progressively through the pasture, a couple of acres at a time, striving to maintain a 90-day rest period. Suzanne says this technique supports wildlife like grassland birds, pollinators and native prairie species. "It's a joy seeing how much the cows appreciate getting new grass," she says with a smile. "We've learned so much about our land and the species living on it by using this technique."

Throughout the years, she and Barney have tried just about every type of agricultural technique. After years of trial and error, the couple now has a set of practices they like and that work for their farm. "I am so happy with what we're doing with our soil," Barney says. "To me, that's what means the most." The pair are now working toward grass-finishing all their beef and converting more land to grass. They're also exploring ways to create more habitat on their farm, including planting trees and converting certain areas to prairie.

(Continued on page 24 →)

*“Farming the way we do is about listening and asking,
‘What does the land want?’” – Suzanne Castello*

Unexpected Beginnings

The couple's path into farming wasn't conventional. Suzanne, a California native, first fell in love with Iowa while attending Grinnell College in the 1980s. Over the next 20 years, she returned several summers to work on both produce and livestock farms. It didn't take long for her to discover that her true passion was in livestock. "I got addicted to taking care of animals," she says.

Eager to learn more, she reached out to John Gilbert and his wife, Bev, who received PFI's 2017 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award. Suzanne recalls how they took her under their wing, teaching her the art of raising pigs while sharing their expertise in sustainable crop farming and animal husbandry.

Barney grew up on the same land they farm today and had no intention of coming back after he left in the '70s. He worked in the trades, taking on a variety of jobs in plumbing, electrical work, wastewater management and more. He also spent time working on a ranch in Colorado and Wyoming. But in the early 1980s, he returned home. "I wanted to work for myself and do something different every day," he says.

When he came back, he continued the type of farming he had grown up with – long rotations that were occasionally sprayed with herbicides. Barney credits the Farm 2000 project, led by PFI member Steve Hopkins, and the larger PFI community, with opening his eyes to alternative practices. When their paths first crossed at the PFI annual conference in 2004, he and Suzanne were already PFI members. Barney was volunteering at the registration booth. When Suzanne stopped by the booth, she immediately caught his eye. "I was interested, and I pursued it," Barney chuckles. "Oh, I could tell he was smitten," Suzanne adds.



Birdsfoot trefoil, red clover and grasses in one of Suzanne and Barney's pastures.



Barney, Suzanne, their son Gabe and one of their farm dogs, Dutchess.

The chance encounter sparked a lasting connection, and the two have been farming together – and married – for 18 years. They agree they complement each other perfectly and say they have created a strong farming partnership. Barney praises Suzanne's creativity and research skills. "She's great at investigating and coming up with the different cover crop mixes, and looking into ways to improve our soil biology," he says. Suzanne, in turn, applauds Barney for his efficiency and mechanical expertise. Together, their unique skills and talents drive the success of their farm.

Leading by Example

The couple's innovative spirit and commitment to sustainability have influenced others, from neighbors to students visiting their farm. "We want to help people that are starting out or transitioning see a way they can make a living that is not just corn and soybeans on many acres," Suzanne says.

She and Barney are heartened by the experimentation of a new generation of farmers. Their advice to these farmers is to surround themselves with people who are pursuing alternative paths and aren't afraid to be different. They also note the importance of having a community in farming, and people you can call on. "Knowing that you have someone else to talk to, it's worth so much," Barney says. From hosting field days for PFI to reaching out to others to make them feel welcome and included, Suzanne and Barney have tried to be those people for others.

They also pay close attention to what's happening on their farm. "Farming the way we do is about listening and asking, 'What does the land want?'" Suzanne says. Barney agrees, adding, "It's all about diversity – diversity of people, plants and bugs. When there's more diversity, things are better." ■

Review of Eric Lee-Mäder's "The Milkweed Lands"

By Ellen Walsh-Rosmann

My pictorial memory was awakened while reading Eric Lee-Mäder's book, "The Milkweed Lands: An Epic Story of One Plant, Its Nature and Ecology." His description of the Upper Mississippi River Valley jogged my memories of playing in muddy creeks and wetlands as a kid while running through the pastures in the Driftless Region of Iowa. And as a teenager, I ran along back roads three different summers from Maine to Iowa, Oregon to Iowa and California to Iowa.

Eric's description of ditches in our country and the ecosystems they hold rings true. While thumping the pavement at age 14, my mind would wander and think about those living in them. A ditch was always on my right, and I was able to experience the vegetation close up, rather than buzzing by in a car. When I rode in the Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, I'd slow down and actually look at the Earth around us.

Along the RAGBRAI route, the nonprofit Milkweed Matters handed out seed balls for riders to throw in the ditches as they went. I loved this as a participant, and I also love that everyone can help plant milkweed in our ditches. Unfortunately, ditches are difficult habitats for milkweed to thrive, with mowing and spraying happening almost everywhere.

In "The Milkweed Lands," published in 2023, Eric Lee-Mäder brings to life stories of this plant family and its ecological significance, with captivating illustrations by Beverly Duncan – each one more beautiful than the next. As those who attended PFI's 2025 Annual

Conference recall, Eric was our keynote speaker. In his talk, he empowered us to remember the significance of various species, and the importance of creating space for them – especially milkweed. I left his talk inspired, and wondering how many fence rows we could plant with companion plants that would encourage more wildlife on our certified organic farm. How enough will never be enough.

Milkweed is a group of perennial flowering plants native to regions across the U.S. and Canada. It has many forgotten names and benefits, ranging from medicinal and fiber to habitat for beneficial insects. Some of these things I knew, but many I did not. For instance, I did not realize the vast array of milkweed varieties that exist in nature. It was overwhelming at times learning about them all. When you live in one topography for almost your entire life, you really only learn what you see. Travel humbles you in many ways; for me it's always the landscape and species of flora that I'm not familiar with.

In the book, Eric explores how so much of our culture was dictated by actions and expectations for us to get rid of weeds. This push led to a 60% decline in the population of milkweed. In just a few years, we ruined generations of ecosystems. Now, with a resurgence of interest in protecting our pollinators, many people seem to be more aware of the implications of getting rid of every "weed." I like to think a practical farmer understands this.

Reading this book, I learned how important Swamp Milkweed is to the monarch butterfly. This variety is found

in the Upper Mississippi

River Valley and is what most readers who live east of Interstate 35 are used to seeing. A 2018 Iowa State University research study showed that when given a choice, monarchs prefer the Swamp Milkweed for laying their eggs. Many of us can help these milkweeds proliferate near our farm ponds, waterways and creek beds.

When I started reading, I imagined I'd find a book full of jargon and scientific facts. Instead, I left thinking about the many ways I can incorporate milkweed habitats on our farmland, and if we're doing enough. The book is a beautiful anthology of how important milkweed is to our ecosystem, our culture and our communities. This is a great book to read at the start of spring and the growing season, as it challenges us to think about what plants are there and how to make our landscapes better. I hope all readers will enjoy "The Milkweed Lands" as much as I did. ■

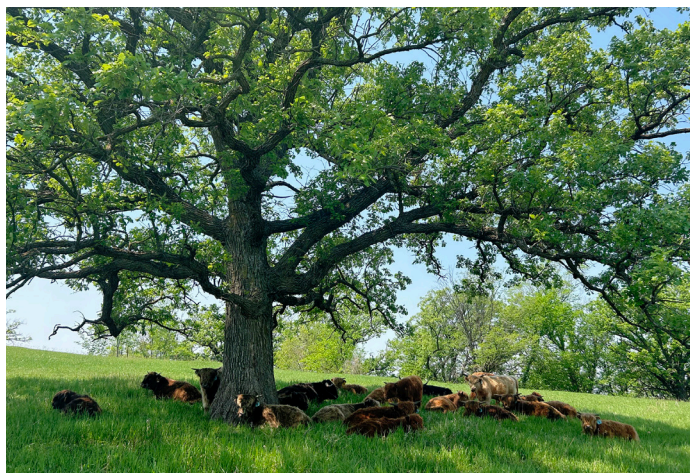
Ellen Walsh-Rosmann farms with her husband, Daniel Rosmann, their two children and Daniel's family near Harlan, Iowa. Ellen and Daniel also raise hens and sell the eggs to restaurants and grocery stores in Omaha and Des Moines. Ellen is passionate about the food system, revitalizing rural America and food justice work. She founded, owned and operated FarmTable Procurement and Delivery, a local food hub. She and Daniel also own Milk and Honey, a farm-to-table restaurant in Harlan that serves meat and eggs from their farm, as well as vegetables and dairy from local producers.



PFI MEMBER

Photo Album

This section features photos taken by PFI members. Whether you're a farmer, landowner or a non-farmer, we invite you to share your images of the everyday, the awe-inspiring or the curiously beautiful from your farm or community; we'll work to curate them into the album.



Grazing at Hitchcock Nature Center in Honey Creek, Iowa.
(Matt Vermeersch, Mud Ridge Ranch, Red Oak, Iowa)



Even the lawn is cold! (Suzan Erem, Draco Hill Nature Farm, West Branch, Iowa)



Can you spot all three kids? Triplets were born last October.
(Tracy Engel, Scarlet Maple Farm, Jefferson, Iowa)



Hanging gates with Dad. (Jocelyn Vermeersch, Mud Ridge Ranch, Red Oak, Iowa)



Early signs of spring as the magnolia tree buds. (Keith Yoder, Maryville, Tennessee)



The moon rises over Sean's parents' acreage after a long day harvesting. (Sean Dengler, Dysart, Iowa)



Another sublime Iowa sunset. (MaryAnn Mathis, Cory Family Farm, Elkhart, Iowa)



Fun in the snow with a newly adopted blue heeler after a near-record snowfall. (Gary Gadbury, Manhattan, Kansas)



A snapping turtle in brumation under glass-clear ice. (Roger Homan, Waterloo, Iowa)



Have a photo you'd like featured in the magazine?

Email it to rachel.deutmeyer@practicalfarmers.org or tag PFI on social media and let us know!

Meet the Newest Members of PFI's Team

Learn more about the PFI staff at practicalfarmers.org/staff.



Heidi Ackerman
Farm Systems Viability
Manager

Heidi gets really excited about her faith, prairie, books, puppies, knitting, homegrown strawberries, crafting and getting local produce delivered to her door. She loves being part of a big-tent organization that values Iowa's communities and natural resources.



Alexandria Atal
Senior Grants Finance
Coordinator

Alexandria lives on the east side of Des Moines with her fiancé, William, their two dogs, Cooper and Annie, and their cat Shuri. She enjoys reading, camping, crafting, constructing Lego kits and playing Animal Crossing in her free time.



Jim Kain
Finance Director

Jim lives in Ankeny, Iowa, with his wife, Leah, who works at Iowa State University. Their favorite thing to do is travel. When not travelling, you will find Jim on the golf course, playing a board game, doing his best at pub trivia or spending time with good friends.



Kaitlin Little
Senior Data & Member
Engagement Assistant

When she's not working, you can find Kaitlin at a thrift store or local coffee shop. She enjoys reading, gardening and cooking new dishes. She also loves going hiking and camping with her fiancé, John, and their dog, Fleetwood.



Sandy McAntire
Data Systems & Member
Engagement Manager

Sandy is excited to combine her past skills with her love of agriculture. When not enjoying the outdoors on the farm or experiencing a different growing system at a field day, Sandy loves taking motorcycle road trips with her daughter.



Jose Cesario Pinto
Remote Sensing Data Coordinator

Outside of work, Jose enjoys traveling, sports, live music and spending time outdoors with family and friends.



Terri Speirs
Development Director

Terri enjoys crocheting, gardening, traveling, walking and absorbing all kinds of media such as books, movies, television, podcasts, music and live shows. She especially loves spending time with her family, friends and pets.



Tylar VanPelt
Office Assistant

Tylar is a new resident of Cambridge, Iowa, along with her boyfriend, Brady, and their dog, Gus. After work, you can find Tylar baking or in the garden.

Four Farmers Join PFI's Board of Directors

Please welcome Alec Amundson of Osage, Iowa; Wade Dooley of Albion, Iowa; Brice Hundling of Breda, Iowa; and Natasha Wilson of West Chester, Iowa, to PFI's board of directors. They were elected by members in January and are starting their first three-year terms on the board. Alec and Natasha are each serving as at-large directors. Wade is serving for PFI's north-central district, and Brice is serving for PFI's northwest district.

"Being a PFI member has completely changed my farming operation and mindset for the better," Wade says. "Becoming a board member, I felt, was one way I could give back and support the organization that has been so impactful for me."

Natasha shared a similar sentiment: "PFI has been a tremendous resource for my family as we've made big changes on our farm, navigating generational transition and

implementing regenerative farming practices. I'm grateful for this wonderful community and am glad to serve and support other farmers."

The board met in February and voted on PFI's next executive committee: Carmen Black of Solon, Iowa, as president and Tim Youngquist of Zeoring, Iowa, as vice president, with Jon Bakehouse of Hastings, Iowa, and Gayle Olson of Winfield, Iowa, retaining their positions as board treasurer and secretary, respectively.

PFI's 12 board members serve in many capacities, from ensuring PFI programs remain effective and farmer-focused, to making sure PFI is fiscally sound, to providing leadership, advice and direction to staff. Learn more about board service and PFI's current board members at practicalfarmers.org/board-of-directors. ■



Alec Amundson and family



Wade Dooley



Brice Hundling and family



Natasha Wilson and family

Learn About Our Impact in 2024

If you have a hard time keeping track of all the work PFI is doing to serve members and our mission, our annual report is an excellent place to get a meaningful overview.

Our 2024 annual report, available online, shows what we did together last year – and how farmers, staff and supporters are the heart of our work equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



- Over **200 members, supporters and other subject-matter experts** were featured in the pages of this magazine, reflecting a diversity of voices and experiences.
- Our **membership grew to 9,152**, including **204 lifetime members**.
- Our operations team successfully applied for and onboarded over **31 new projects from 19 grantors and funders, securing over \$26 million** to support PFI's work over the next one to four years.

Here are a few highlights from the report:

- PFI's farmer-led education department stewarded **247 events**.
- During our field day season, **66 farms opened their gates to 2,725 attendees**, where **98% of attendees** say they increased their knowledge.
- Across Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Illinois, **67 farmers completed 100 research trials**.
- Our farm viability team supported **2,387 farmers who planted 839,484 acres of cover crops**.

As always, the annual report is filled with snapshots, photos and quotes from PFI members and examples of how farmers are leading and learning through our network. If you're curious about PFI's finances, the report shows our budget growth over the past 10 years, and how we use the money we raise from grants, donations and memberships.

Read the full 2025 annual report online at practicalfarmers.org/accountability.

Paid Farm Positions Still Open Through Labor4Learning

If you're a beginning farmer seeking hands-on training, consider applying for a paid on-farm job through Labor4Learning. This PFI program offers on-the-job training with experienced PFI farmers across Iowa – and beyond – who are committed to mentoring the next generation. Several jobs are still available for the 2025 season, representing a range of farm enterprises and job experiences.

All positions offer mentoring that goes beyond an ordinary farm job. Trainees can expect to learn in more depth about record-keeping, marketing and other skills beginning and aspiring farmers might not otherwise be exposed to. These skills are vital aspects of running

a successful farm business. But they're not a typical part of most on-farm jobs. Labor4Learning seeks to fill the gap by offering a more well-rounded job experience.

"Not a day goes by that I don't use the knowledge I learned while working for the Gilberts at Gibraltar Farms," says Stephen Riggins, a past Labor4Learning trainee. "There's no better way to learn than by doing, and the Labor4Learning program gave me that opportunity."



Stephen Riggins

Each trainer farm in the program was approved by a committee of PFI members to serve as qualified teachers. The farms represent a range of enterprises and production practices, including row crops, agroforestry, fruits and vegetables, multiple species of livestock, orcharding, organic certification and more.

All positions are paid, and most trainer farms offer competitive wages, plus other perks and benefits. Visit practicalfarmers.org/labor4learning to see the full list of open positions. For questions, contact Martha McFarland at (515) 232-5661 or martha.mcfarland@practicalfarmers.org. ■

Meet Our Newest SIP Class

In January, PFI welcomed 17 beginning farmers to join the Savings Incentive Program Class of 2026. The participants come from across Iowa, and Illinois, and together reflect a diverse cross-section of farming interests and enterprises.

Members of the SIP Class of 2016 include:

- **Chie Awumah** (Johnston, IA) – Specialty vegetables
- **Tyler & Beth Bird** (Solon, IA) – Vegetables, flowers, poultry, alpacas and sheep
- **Tyler & Morgan Bruck** (Audubon, IA) – Strawberries, sweet corn and pumpkins
- **April Clark & Parker Grimes** (Des Moines, IA) – Ducks, bees, vegetables and foraged crops
- **Justin Jackson** (Hartford, IA) – Corn, soybeans, forages, cattle and poultry
- **Leah & Curtis Maeder** (Indianola, IA) – Vegetables, fruits and flowers
- **Ryan Madison** (Gladbrook, IA) – Specialty crops
- **Catherine Schut** (Prairie City, IA) – Flowers, chickens and bees

- **Hannah Scates Kettler** (State Center, IA) – Flowers, herbs, pumpkins and vegetables
- **Ross Steinbronn** (Waterloo, IA) – Vegetables, fruits, cattle, sheep, chickens and ducks
- **Shad Swanson** (Essex, IA) – Fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices
- **Daniela Williams & Wes Hepker** (Mount Carroll, IL) – Chickens, ducks, pigs, vegetables, herbs, fruits and flowers

Since 2010, SIP has worked with over 200 beginning farmers. Throughout the two-year program, participants get business support from PFI staff, work on creating or strengthening their business plans, make valuable connections with other farmers and grow their savings. PFI matches their savings when they complete the program requirements.

"Starting a farm is a huge undertaking, so having a strong support system can make all the difference," says Savannah Laur, PFI's business viability manager. "We're excited to welcome this year's cohort and support them in building resilient, successful farm businesses."

Learn more about the program, read profiles of the latest SIP class and view profiles of past SIP participants at practicalfarmers.org/savings-incentive-program.

Does Strip-Tillage Pay Off? By Emma Link



Keaton Krueger in the field where he was comparing strip-till and no-till soybeans on Aug. 8, 2023. There were no visible differences between treatments at this point in the summer.

According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, just over half of U.S. cropland is managed using a conservation tillage practice like no-till or strip-till. Scientific understanding and conventional wisdom suggest that strip-tilled corn and soybeans generally yield a bit better than their no-tilled counterparts. Despite this, no-till is the more common practice. But farmers often wonder if strip-tilling would lead to higher corn or soybeans yields. They also wonder if it would pay for the extra labor, equipment and fuel needed for strip-tilling, resulting in higher profits.

In 2018, 2023 and 2024, PFI farmers explored these questions on their farms. They found that strip-till only sometimes pays for itself via increased yields. In corn, only one of the four trials found that strip-till corn significantly outyielded no-till corn and had higher net profits. Soybean results were similar: Only one of three trials found a significant yield advantage in strip-till.

That trial was conducted by Keaton Krueger in 2024. The result has helped him decide that, for his farm, the benefits of strip-till outweigh the extra costs and

labor. He now plans to strip-till all of his soybeans. Other farmers have decided differently. Last year, Landon Brown decided to start no-tilling all his corn after his trial showed no significant yield difference between strip-till and no-till. He says that even if he observes a 5-6 bushel per acre yield advantage from strip-tilling, the costs of fuel, owning a strip-till bar and time spent tilling cancel out any economic advantage.

In summary, PFI farmers have found that you might just have to test for yourself whether strip-till is economically better than no-till for your farm.



Want to dig deeper?

To learn even more about this and other trials going back to 1988, we encourage you to explore the research reports on our website at practicalfarmers.org/research.

Interested in scientifically testing tillage or other practices on your farm?

Contact Emma Link at emma.link@practicalfarmers.org or (515) 232-5661 to learn about joining PFI's Cooperators' Program.

This material is based in part upon work supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, under agreement number NR226114XXXXG004

Seven Farmers Receive PFI's Master Researcher Award

In December 2024, at our annual Cooperators' Meeting of on-farm researchers, PFI presented its Master Researcher Award to seven farmers from five farms to honor their extensive contributions to on-farm research and knowledge-sharing over the years. The award, established in 2013, recognizes farmers who have conducted at least 20 PFI on-farm research trials and presented at or hosted at least five PFI events.

Recipients include Meg and Dave Schmidt, of Exira, Iowa; Rob and Tammy Faux of Tripoli, Iowa; Jill Beebout of Chariton, Iowa; Jack Boyer of Reinbeck, Iowa; and Dick Sloan of Rowley, Iowa. These farms together account for more than 100 on-farm research projects and 25 educational events, which have helped others learn from their farming experiences.

"These members show the spirit of curiosity that drives PFI," says Stefan Gailans, PFI's senior research manager. "Through their dedication to on-farm research and sharing what they learn, these farmers are not only improving their own farms but also helping others adopt science-based practices."

Learn more about the award and the recipients at practicalfarmers.org/news.



From left to right, Meg and Dave Schmidt, Exira, Iowa; Rob and Tammy Faux (Tammy not pictured), Tripoli, Iowa; Jill Beebout, Chariton, Iowa; Jack Boyer, Reinbeck, Iowa; and Dick Sloan, Rowley, Iowa.



PFI Events

Registration information for all PFI events can be found at practicalfarmers.org/events, or by calling the PFI office at (515) 232-5661.



APRIL

APRIL 11 • Small Grains Shared Learning Call
Free | Online | [Register at practicalfarmers.org/shared-learning-calls](https://practicalfarmers.org/shared-learning-calls)

APRIL 15 • Winter Webinar Series:
Prepping For Land Access Meetings
Free | Online | Spanish
[Full descriptions at practicalfarmers.org/winter-webinars](https://practicalfarmers.org/winter-webinars)

EVENTS IN SPANISH

To keep up with the latest on PFI's Latino program, subscribe to Sembrando Resiliencia at practicalfarmers.org/email-newsletter-subscribe.



Find PFI At

MAY

MAY 3 • Cinco De Mayo Festival
Des Moines, IA | [Learn more at valleyjunction.com/cinco-de-mayo-festival](https://valleyjunction.com/cinco-de-mayo-festival)

JUNE

JUNE 13 • Farm & Food Celebration
Grinnell, IA | [Learn more at extension.iastate.edu/ffed/cfs-annual-event](https://extension.iastate.edu/ffed/cfs-annual-event)



PFI Current Enrollments

From April – June 2025

Habitat Incentives Program

ROLLING APPLICATION

practicalfarmers.org/habitat-incentives-program

Beneficial Insects Cost-Share

ROLLING APPLICATION

practicalfarmers.org/beneficial-insect-cost-share

Research Trials

ROLLING APPLICATION

practicalfarmers.org/open-calls-for-on-farm-research-cooperators

Grazing Consultations

ROLLING APPLICATION

practicalfarmers.org/grazing-consultations

1-on-1 Land Matching

ROLLING APPLICATION

Contact Martha McFarland at [martha.mcfarland@](mailto:martha.mcfarland@practicalfarmers.org)

practicalfarmers.org or call our office at (515) 232-5661.

Cover Crop Cost-Share

STAY TUNED FOR RE-OPENING DATE

practicalfarmers.org/cover-crop-cost-share

Cover Crop Business Accelerator

OPENS JUNE 9

practicalfarmers.org/cover-crop-business-accelerator-program

Labor4Learning On-Farm Position Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINES VARY BY FARM

practicalfarmers.org/labor4learning/trainees

N Rate Risk Protection Program

APPLICATION CLOSES APRIL 30

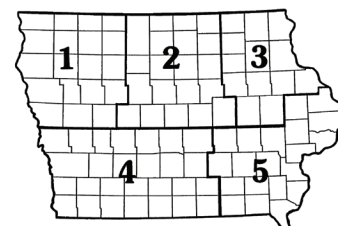
practicalfarmers.org/n-rate-risk-protection-program



PFI staff enjoyed time together for a meeting and party on March 10 in Ames.

Welcome, New Members!

From Oct. 30, 2024 through Feb. 18, 2025



DISTRICT 1 - NORTHWEST

- Dustin Ackerman – George
- Michael Anderson – Vail
- Bradley Banks – Westfield
- Kenny Bentsen – Sac City
- James Bos – Inwood
- Alex Brandt – Swea City
- Sandy Bubke – Mapleton
- Dan and Brenda Chargo – Glidden
- Kent Christensen – Spencer
- Dale Derocher – Akron
- Ryan Dittman – Orange City
- Larry Dykstra – Orange City
- Judy Erickson – Estherville
- Brad Feuerhelm – Le Mars
- Dave Folsom – Hornick
- Joe Frerk – Pocahontas
- Brennan Granstra – Hospers
- Sally Hartley – Salix
- Ted Henke – Washta
- Dennis Henrich – Le Mars
- Tod Henrich – Le Mars
- Dennis Henrichs – Rembrandt
- Carl Hoogland – Orange City
- Howard Hulshof – Ireton
- Andrew Hurd – Nemaha
- Brent Johnson – Manson
- Reuben Kamp – Ireton
- Richard Malcom – Schaller
- Steve Maurer – Larchwood
- Dick Miller – Remsen
- Ross Mogler – Alford
- Dwight and Quinn Mogler – Alford
- Tim Pudenz – Carroll
- Russ Pudenz – Carroll
- Leslie Putnam – Swea City
- Micah Rensink – Sioux Center
- Jerry Reuter – Le Mars
- Austin Richter – Paullina
- Joe Riesberg – Templeton
- Cyndi Rock-Raasch – Odebolt
- Andrew Schroeder – Le Mars
- Cody Simonsen – Aurelia
- Shannon Sindt – Rolfe

- Danny Snyder – Odebolt
- Nolan Staley – Charter Oak
- Travis Tentinger – Remsen
- Marlin Van Voorst – Hull
- Larry Vande Brake – Orange City
- Eric Vander Stouwe – Sioux Center
- Zachary VanWyhe – Ireton
- Dalton VerBeek – Rock Rapids
- Carl Vondrak – Merrill
- Robert Westra – Boyden
- John Westra – Primghar

DISTRICT 2 - NORTH CENTRAL

- John Beem – Gilman
- Richard Benson – Reinbeck
- David Birchmier – Maxwell
- John Blohm – Reinbeck
- Mike Borcharding – Latimer
- Chris Bro – Montour
- Paul Brown – New Providence
- Richard Bruns – Hanlontown
- Donald Burns – St. Ansgar
- Donald Burns – Stacyville
- Dennis Cassmann – Bristow
- Matt Cibula – Clutier
- Levi Cook – Hubbard
- Paul Cook – Hubbard
- Dona Cowman – Cambridge
- Paul Crosman – Boone
- Alan DeBerg – Dike
- Randy Dieken – Dike
- Doug Dieleman – Toledo
- McIntire Feed & Grain – St. Ansgar
- James “Patrick” Good – Ogden
- Randy Good – Ogden
- Brittney Gould – Liscomb
- Marta Grant – Ames
- Mike Gregan – Boone
- Nolan Grove – Ames
- Dustin Hadley – New Providence
- Cody Henkle – Grafton
- Joe Hoeg – Clutier
- Connie Hogelucht – Dike
- Ronald Huhn – Nevada

- Brady Juhl – Garner
- Mike Kadow – Lone Rock
- Mark Keninger – Ackley
- Frank Kisley – Osage
- Ben Knutson – Radcliffe
- David Krumwiede – Charles City
- Caroline Larson – Hardy
- Ben Mader – Nevada
- Glen Mann – Marshalltown
- Dale McBride – Thorton
- Dean Metzger – Huxley
- Zachary Meyer – Aplington
- Kudzai Mukumbi – Ames
- Julie Murphy – Algona
- James Newswanger – Nora Springs
- Scott Perisho – Zearing
- Ryan Plunkett – Maxwell
- Kristin Pyle – Colo
- Paul Risdal – Roland
- Drew Runner – Gilman
- Todd Sampson – Nevada
- Sally Sawyer – Nevada
- Lia and Andrew Schippers – Radcliffe
- Brent Schroeder – Scranton
- Michael Schrum – Ogden
- Joel Schwichtenberg – Clear Lake
- John Seiser – Blairsburg
- Dale Sigmund – Stanhope
- Mark Smeby – Joice
- Dennis Smeltzer – Woodward
- Wayne Sponheim – Osage
- David Steinberg – Osage
- Tim Teske – Eldora
- Jordan Uthe – Boone
- Dennis Vanness – Alexander
- Shane Vogeler – Clutier
- Joe and Kristin Wakeman – Nevada
- Brandon Weiland – Aredale
- Craig Welter – Nevada
- Amy Wilder – Ames
- William Wright – Scranton
- Thad Wunder – Thompson

DISTRICT 3 – NORTHEAST

- Nathan Alber – Independence
- Mike Bahl – Dubuque
- Shane Bevans – Winthrop
- Jim Boeding – Decorah
- Joe Bouska – Fort Atkinson
- Lance Bouska – Fort Atkinson
- Steven Brecht – Norway
- Russell Brincks – Decorah
- Glen Brown – Farley
- Jayden Burns – Lime Springs
- Matt Byrnes – Dorchester
- Daniel Byrnes – Waukon
- Robert Casterton – Readlyn
- Kent Coffland – Blairstown
- Matthew Corpman – Waterloo
- Burt Coulter – Cedar Falls
- James Daly – Epworth
- Joe Davidshofer – Epworth
- Rodney Degener – Cedar Falls
- Nick Dennie – Winthrop
- Joseph Dietzenbach – Cresco
- David Drape – Waverly
- Julie Dupont – Sherrill
- Randy Dupont – Sherrill
- Mike Elgin – Dubuque
- Bryan Flexsenhar – Winthrop
- Steven Foust – Zwingie
- Dale Gaul – Peosta
- Rick Goedken – Farley
- Luke Gosse – Waterloo
- Thomas Greiner – Cedar Falls
- Wesley Hageman – Decorah
- Mike Hageman – New Vienna
- Adam Hageman – Ossian
- Derek Hammerand – Dubuque
- Lynn Hanna – La Porte City
- Peggy Harbaugh – Peosta
- Elaine Harrington – Watkins
- Michael Hauber – Ridgeway
- Jordan Heit – Fredericksburg
- Devyn Hoefler – New Vienna
- John Hoefler – New Vienna
- Margaret Hogan – Earlville
- Dawn Honts – Farley
- Casey Hovey – Cresco
- Brian Hrdlicka – Elma
- Paul Hunter – Decorah
- Tom Hutchins – Cedar Rapids
- Steven Kalb – Peosta
- Brian Keehner – Bernard
- Neil Kelly – St Olaf
- David Klein – Durango
- Dave Kronlage – Dyersville
- Mark Kruse – Earlville
- Donna Kunde – Manchester
- Gene Langel – New Vienna
- Dale Langel – New Vienna
- Nathan Langreck – Cresco
- Beth Langreck – Lime Springs
- Dennis Langreck – Lime Springs
- Dominik Lensing – Center Point
- Steve Mahr – Cresco
- Travis Mahr – Lime Springs
- Jonathon Mausser – Sherrill
- Alex McCabe – Cresco
- Andrew McEvoy – Coggon
- Gary McGovern – Central City
- Alan Mensen – Dyersville
- Richard Michael – Walker
- Russell Miller – Cedar Falls
- Dan Mormann – Colesburg
- Gerald B. Nelson Trust – Cedar Falls
- Dylan Ness – Waterville
- Larry Nilges – Sumner
- Jim Ostwinkle – Worthington
- Roger Ott – Fort Atkinson
- Darwin Peterson – Oelwein
- Bill Pettlon – Manchester
- Mike Pettlon – Strawberry Point
- Jim Pfeiler – Holy Cross
- Douglas Puffett – Strawberry Point
- Tim Recker – Arlington
- Patrick Riha – Cresco
- Dean Runde – Riceville
- Mike Schares – Jesup
- Aaron Schatz – Cresco
- Zach Schmitt – Manchester
- Caleb Schnitzler – Decorah
- Richard Schuchhardt – New Hampton
- Justin Schueller – Sherrill
- Jeremy Schultz – McGregor
- Matt Shea – Lime Springs
- Larry Shover – Delhi
- Dennis Soppe – Farley
- Garry Soules – Lamont
- Shawn Stecklein – Aurora
- Brian Stortz – Waukon

- David Stout – Dunkerton
- Samuel Stroschein – Garnavillo
- Troy Tempus – Winthrop
- Ronald Then – Bernard
- James Vaske – Dyersville
- Wayne Vorwald – Varley
- Austin Vsetecka – Cresco
- Matthew Waller – Epworth
- Nolan Webster – Lawler
- James Wendel – Lime Springs
- Louis Wenthold – Cresco
- Darren West – Strawberry Point
- Trent Woltzen – West Union
- Connor Woods – Fairbank
- Gerald Wuchter – Farley
- Alan Wulfekuhle – Delhi
- Sue Wulfekuhle – New Vienna
- Mark Wynthein – Arlington
- Lacey Zuck – Westgate
- Mitch Zumbach – Coggon

DISTRICT 4 – SOUTHWEST

- Sarah Abbott – Ankeny
- Amanda Acton – Wauke
- James Algae – Peru
- Marie Andre – Des Moines
- Kathy Applegate – Oakland
- Jeremy Arkfeld – Harlan
- Chie Fred Awumah – Johnston
- Michael J. Bauer – Audubon
- Brent Bierbaum – Griswold
- Alex Broadbent – Prole
- Adam Bunge – Grimes
- Rachel Burke – Des Moines
- Jeff Caldwell – Indianola
- Brad Chalfant – Guthrie Center
- Kyle Chalfant – Guthrie Center
- Powell Chee – Milo
- Bob Christensen – Guthrie Creek
- Stacey Cole – Prole
- Danny Crom – Glenwood
- Chris Cruse – Altoona
- Jennifer Dalke – Lewis
- Brian Eddy – Osceola
- William Eddy – Osceola
- Lowell Evans – Corning
- Tanner Faaborg – Des Moines
- Tom Fagan – Casey
- M David Farrell Jr – Centerville
- David Feldman – Polk City

- Mike Feldman – Panama
- Jay Frederick – Earling
- Alan Goodson – Lenox
- Ryan Gray – Saint Charles
- Joe Gross – Harlan
- Amanda Groszkruger – Ellston
- Jeena Hall – Mondamin
- Scott Hansen – Audubon
- Matthew Harvey – Des Moines
- Phillip Hascall – Atlantic
- Joy Heckman – Johnston
- Hunter Hoffmann – Oakland
- Rex Hoppes – Van Meter
- Bret Hultman – Red Oak
- Scott Jacobs – Villisca
- Cale Jones – Shenandoah
- Linda Kerkhoff – Manning
- Coltan Ketelsen – Perry
- Randy Kreager – Adel
- James Larson – Clearfield
- John Long – Sidney
- Dave Mincer – Hamburg
- Cody Moeckly – Polk City
- Andy Montag – Grimes
- Stan Moser – Indianola
- Patrick Neuhaus – St. Charles
- Roberta Overholser – Spirit Lake
- Darcy Pacheco – Osceola
- Jed Palmer – Corning
- Pat Petersen – Exira
- Bud Petersen – Guthrie Center
- Jeff Pollard – Woodburn
- Brian Pollard – Woodburn
- Jerry Powell – Moulton
- Ryan Reimers – Woodbine
- Eathan Rethmeier – Laurel
- Evan Rethmeier – Laurel
- Tanner Rowe – Minburn
- Tyler Schaben – Earling
- Tom Scheffler – Hancock
- Richard Schwartz – Bayard
- Jim Schweizer – Centerville
- Clinton Shipley – Villisca
- Colton Siefkas – Osceola
- Charles Slayton – Adair
- Terri and Robert Speirs – Des Moines
- Douglas Steele – Anita
- Kevin Stender – Massena
- Chase Stoll – Lamoni
- Jacob Tessmer – Earlham

- David Thomson – Council Bluffs
- Harlan Tomlinson – Norwalk
- Sarah VanBeck – Des Moines
- Ben Vos – Pella
- Trelen Wilson – Des Moines
- Nicole Winebrenner – Bondurant
- Shaochen Yu – Waukee
- Abundant Design, Jeff Reiland – Waukee
- Universal Aerial Solutions LLC, Mark Archibald – Council Bluffs

DISTRICT 5 – SOUTHEAST

- Robert Achen – Mount Pleasant
- Rodney Allen – Nichols
- Donald Armstrong – Montezuma
- Robert Badtram – New Liberty
- Nick Beinhart – Keota
- Jeffrey Bell – Washington
- Michael Berg – Harper
- Mark Boshart – Mount Pleasant
- Cole Brenneman – Keota
- Mike Bretz – North Liberty
- Tim Britton – Kalona
- Tom Brockmann – Bettendorf
- Darwin Carroll – Columbus Junction
- Tom Carstensen – Charlotte
- Andy Carter – Nichols
- Ralph Danner – Muscatine
- Jared Deahr – Muscatine
- Troy DeRoos – Donnellson
- John Dumont – Ollie
- Justin Engwall – Brighton
- Nolan Ford – Tipton
- Trenton Forrest – North English
- Brandon Gingerich – Parnell
- John (Randy) Gipple – Columbus Junction
- Daniel Grove – South English
- John Helgersen – Ottumwa
- Merv Hershberger – Riverside
- Kyle Holtkamp – Donnellson
- Melinda James and Deron Jurgensen – Mechanicsville
- Nathan Kaufman – Anamosa
- Sally Kessler – Grinnell
- Ronald Kilburg – Bellevue
- Kenneth Klindt – Walcott
- Kenton Klopfenstein – Winfield
- James Knoche – Calamus
- Tyson Koehn – Bloomfield
- Anthony Kriegel – Brooklyn

- Louis Krogmeier – Mount Pleasant
- James Larew – Iowa City
- Loran Leichthy – Wayland
- Jay Martin – Bloomfield
- Seth Meyer – Marengo
- Kevin Miller – Wellman
- Chad Mostaert – Lowden
- Franz Neff – Durant
- John Pacha – Washington
- Mark Patton – Wilton
- Micah Peck – Kalona
- Art Peck – Wellman
- Larry Pidgeon – Salem
- Charles Pilling – Mediapolis
- Andy Platner – Mechanicsville
- Michael Quinn – Washington
- David Rice – Fremont
- Gary Rickels – Center Junction
- Cody Roller – Monticello
- Charlie Roller – Monticello
- James Rutherford – Davenport
- Daniel Sanders – Gibson
- Eric Sanders – Rose Hill
- Paul Schrock – Kalona
- Eugene Sieren – Harper
- Tom Sieren – Keswick
- Brian Sieren – Washington
- Don Slimmer – Bloomfield
- Craig Smith – Stanwood
- Keith Stamp – Monticello
- Rhonda Steffen – Dixon
- Donald Swanson – Ottumwa
- Dennis Tarasi – Bettendorf
- Jerod Timmerman – Bennett
- Colton Twinam – Crawfordsville
- Brendan Unkrich – Winfield
- Joy Van Wyngarden – New Sharon
- Chase Vogel – Argyle
- Sean Wejten – Williamsburg
- Cal Werner – Bettendorf
- Todd Westercamp – Oskaloosa
- John Wischmeier – Sperry
- Jesse Wollrab – Ainsworth

DISTRICT 6 – OUT OF STATE

- Al Coffin – Tucson, AZ
- Teresa Roach – Yorba Linda, CA
- Matthew Roach – Aurora, CO
- Erik Thoresen – Boulder, CO
- Milton Stubbendick – Palm Coast, FL

- Sean Sampson – Evanston, IL
- Gary Schroeder – La Harpe, IL
- Duane McClellan – Summerfield, KS
- Adam Arndt – Owatonna, MN
- Charles Beach – Stanchfield, MN
- Timothy Behrends – Hastings, MN
- Kermit Carlson – Welcome, MN
- Rye Carlson – Mora, MN
- Chris Deml – Ellendale, MN
- Dennis Deml – Ellendale, MN
- Dustin Demuth – Lynd, MN
- Paul Erickson – Balaton, MN
- John Eversman – Kellogg, MN
- Matthew Fodness – Kenneth, MN
- Ryan Gniffke – Clarkfield, MN
- Justin Haase – Geneva, MN
- Sam Halter – Revere, MN
- Ramont Harder Schrock – Mountain Lake, MN
- Jary Holst – Kellogg, MN
- Paul Huneke – Goodhue, MN
- Dean Jirousek – Ellendale, MN
- Jon Jovaag and Ruth Jovaag-Ofstedal – Austin, MN
- Cary Koel – Brownsville, MN
- Gary Krcil – Glencoe, MN
- Andrew Kreuser – New Prague, MN
- Joseph Lawler – Rochester, MN
- David Legvold – Northfield, MN
- Phillip Little – Faribault, MN
- Timothy Louwagie – Cottonwood, MN
- Dale McMullen – Mt. Lake, MN
- Nate Meyer – Elgin, MN
- Dan Miller – Spring Valley, MN
- Marty Mogensen – St Peter, MN
- Laura Munsterman – Granite Falls, MN
- Asa Nelson – Slayton, MN
- Mark Oeltjenbruns – Claremont, MN
- Mark Oftedahl – Hanley Falls, MN
- Sidnee Olson – Cottonwood, MN
- Tessa Parks – Nerstrand, MN
- Jennifer Ripp – Spring Grove, MN
- Steve Roerick – Swanville, MN
- Dennis Rossiter – Saint Peter, MN
- Patrick Scapanski – Foley, MN
- Ben Schwartz – Monticello, MN
- Paul Stellpflug – Rochester, MN
- Amy Storbakken – St. Paul, MN
- Tom Thompson – Harmony, MN
- Jacob Tippin – Bingham Lake, MN

- Trevor Tuman – Hutchinson, MN
- Dave Warner – Plymouth, MN
- Paul Wendt – Eyota, MN
- Megan Williams – Marshall, MN
- John Wolf – Kellogg, MN
- Stephen Alexander – Hopkins, MO
- David Ancell – Macon, MO
- Jeffrey and Beth Bash – Canton, MO
- Jerry Beckemeyer – Napoleon, MO
- Dustin Bodine – Paris, MO
- Danny Buckner – Humphreys, MO
- Christi Calhoun – Kearney, MO
- Gary Campbell – Eagleville, MO
- Robert Conley – Paris, MO
- Edith Contreras – Saint Joseph, MO
- Steven Cramer – Waverly, MO
- Travis Dinsdale – Maryville, MO
- Steve Dyer – Higginsville, MO
- Ronald Ginther – Stanberry, MO
- Chad Gooch – Browning, MO
- Anthony Hedges – Browning, MO
- Brandon Hodges – Pilot Grove, MO
- Bryan Hunt – Grant City, MO
- Leon James – Hurdland, MO
- Marjorie Krumpelman – Marceline, MO
- Michael Krumpelman – Marceline, MO
- Chad Leidig – Odesse, MO
- Robert Mense – Atlanta, MO
- Marvin Myers – Maryville, MO
- Justin Oaks – Harris, MO
- Garrett Oliver – Macon, MO
- Kent Oliver – Macon, MO
- Ed Oram – Gilman City, MO
- Heath Oram – Gilman City, MO
- Jonathan Oram – Gilman City, MO
- Ross Oram – Gilman City, MO
- Andrew Perry – Kirksville, MO
- Jeff Poor – Novelty, MO
- Dennis Schmitz – Parnell, MO
- Ray Schwarz – Gower, MO
- Ted Seiler – Macon, MO
- Justin Shepard – Orrick, MO
- Jay Threlkeld – Paris, MO
- Jack Thummel – Parnell, MO
- Wayne Tipton – Monroe City, MO
- Kim Triplett – Palmyra, MO
- Colin Tucker – Newtown, MO
- Greg Ward – Bethany, MO
- James Weir – Hopkins, MO
- William White – Anabel, MO

- Patrick Young – Mound City, MO
- Wayne Anderbery – Axtell, NE
- Dave Anderbery – Axtell, NE
- Ryan Anderson – Avoca, NE
- Troy Anderson – Pierce, NE
- Jerry Arnold – Gibbon, NE
- Shane Asmus – Plainview, NE
- Ben Baldwin – Norfolk, NE
- Thomas Barclay – Lincoln, NE
- Sam Barlean – David City, NE
- Dennis Bauer – Spalding, NE
- Byron Bauer – Spalding, NE
- Beau Beckwith – Albion, NE
- Preston Bodlak – Hubbard, NE
- Terry Borg – Allen, NE
- Rick Campbell – Axtell, NE
- Lyndsay Christensen – Superior, NE
- Dillon Coleman – Sargent, NE
- Andy Coppersmith – Paxton, NE
- John Creutzberg – Central City, NE
- Mark Creutzberg – Central City, NE
- Loren Davison – Auburn, NE
- Pete Dixon – Pleasanton, NE
- Matt Doerr – Bloomfield, NE
- Bruce Eberle – Grand Island, NE
- Jeff Eisenmenger – Norfolk, NE
- Eugene Ekinde – Lincoln, NE
- Alek Flesner – Pierce, NE
- Kevin Flesner – Pierce, NE
- Joe Freudenburg – Madison, NE
- Rick Funk – Clearwater, NE
- Zachery Gemelke – Wayne, NE
- Matthew Glatte – Sumner, NE
- Matthew Grimes – Minden, NE
- Jace Gubbels – Randolph, NE
- Steven Henne – Nehawka, NE
- Matthew Ickes – Page, NE
- Robert Ickes – Page, NE
- Jay Janzen – Henderson, NE
- Ricky Jessen – Bloomfield, NE
- Ben Kastl – Weston, NE
- Ryan Kegley – Kearney, NE
- Scott Keiter – Hartington, NE
- Troy Kemling – Grant, NE
- Marty Kerkman – Clearwater, NE
- David Kirschner – Pleasanton, NE
- Tim Kirschner – Pleasanton, NE
- Craig Knapp – Madison, NE
- Corinne Kolm – Filley, NE
- Jared Krause – Tekamah, NE

- Robert Krepel Jr – Creighton, NE
- Jim Krupicka – Denton, NE
- Paul Kuchar – Norfolk, NE
- Terry Lauby – Lexington, NE
- Zach Mader – Grand Island, NE
- Joe Meier – Elm Creek, NE
- Lane Meyer – Johnson, NE
- Ronald Meyer – Johnson, NE
- Tom Miriovsky – David City, NE
- Russel Moss – Burr, NE
- David Moss – Lincoln, NE
- Mark Muhlbach – Ravenna, NE
- Ryan Mullenhoff – Leigh, NE
- Amanda Murphy – Bellevue, NE
- Bryce Naber – Albion, NE
- Gene Nansel – Lexington, NE
- Dawn and John Nielsen – Blair, NE
- Timothy Obermiller – Loup City, NE
- Derek Oestreich – Pierce, NE
- David Olsen – Minden, NE
- Bruce Petska – Elyria, NE
- Ridge Petska – Ord, NE
- Greg Pippitt – Laurel, NE
- Joseph Potts – Fordyce, NE
- Garrett Reese – Pleasanton, NE
- Ronnie Reese – Pleasanton, NE
- Marvion Reichert – Elm Creek, NE
- Mary Reinke – Edgar, NE
- Riley Reinke – Beatrice, NE
- Todd Reynolds – Broken Bow, NE
- Blake Reynolds – Lexington, NE
- Cody Roberts – Funk, NE
- Nicholas Rogers – Pawnee City, NE
- Jon Root – Central City, NE
- Dustin Rowe – Cozad, NE
- Gayle Rowe – Cozad, NE
- Bryan Ruegge – Pawnee City, NE
- Gary Ruegge – Pawnee City, NE
- Michael Sauser – Plainview, NE
- Jason Schindler – Ewing, NE
- Mike Schudel – North Loup, NE
- Dirk Schultz – Pender, NE
- Dennis Schultz – Wisner, NE
- Travis Schumacher – Bloomfield, NE
- Beau Simpson – Mclean, NE
- Brayden Smith – Sumner, NE
- Kent Spader – York, NE
- Mark Spangler – Murray, NE
- Dave Stalder – Humboldt, NE
- Curtis Stallbaumer – Oconto, NE
- James Steffen – Hartington, NE
- Rob Steib – Lexington, NE
- John Stoltenberg – Cairo, NE
- Jordan Strong – Amherst, NE
- Daryl Stubbendeck – Palmyra, NE
- David Sudbeck – Coleridge, NE
- Justin Taubenheim – Amherst, NE
- Nick Uhing – Norfolk, NE
- Byron Unseld – Pierce, NE
- Jeff Veskrna – Norfolk, NE
- Brian Wehling – Diller, NE
- Dawson Welch – Moorefield, NE
- Byron Wragge – Pierce, NE
- Eastlyn Wright – Lincoln, NE
- Brian York – Creighton, NE
- Michael Zegers – Elgin, NE
- Dillan Zuhlke – Creighton, NE
- Kristin Swartzendruber – Dover, NH
- Cody Geary – Elk Point, SD
- Robert Geary – Elk Point, SD
- Tyler Gerlach – Stickney, SD
- Brandon Hope – Volga, SD
- Scott Kokesh – Scotland, SD
- Steven Rensink – Brookings, SD
- John Gaska – Waunakee, WI
- Rita Hindin – Madison, WI
- Tim Keil – Milton, WI
- Tom and Hilary Kleese – Verona, WI
- Tom Kriegel – Baraboo, WI
- Pete Moris – Mt. Hope, WI
- Trent Olson – Windsor, WI
- Paul Schaller – Verona, WI
- Anna Seaman-Gilberts – McFarland, WI
- Jeff Seward – Fall Creek, WI
- Brent Whalen – Darlington, WI
- Andrew and Greg Zwald – River Falls, WI
- Chris and Jennifer Reichert – Sheboygan Falls, WI

Thank you to our newest lifetime members!

**Virginia & Mark
Lehner-Rosmann**
Washington, D.C.

**Amanda
Murphy**
Bellevue, NE

**Kristin
Swartzendruber**
Dover, NH

**Erik
Thoresen**
Boulder, CO

**Sarah
VanBeck**
Des Moines, IA

Lifetime membership is open to anyone, and confers the same benefits as regular membership – without any renewal notices! Learn more about this option at practicalfarmers.org/lifetime-membership.

GROW YOUR FARM WITH PRACTICAL FARMERS. JOIN OR RENEW TODAY!

Want to join or renew online? Visit practicalfarmers.org/join-or-renew.

MEMBER INFORMATION

Contact Name(s)*: _____

Farm or Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____ County: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

* For Farm or Household membership, please list names of all persons included. For Organization membership, you may list up to three contact persons.

JOIN OR RENEW

1. I am joining at the level of:

- ☐ Access – \$25
☐ Individual – \$50
☐ Farm or Household – \$75
- ☐ Organization – \$150
☐ Lifetime Member* – \$1,200
 * See details at bit.ly/PFI-lifetime

2. Which category best describes you? (choose one)

- ☐ Farmer or farm operator
☐ Not farming yet, but would like to
- ☐ Farmland owner who does not actively farm myself
☐ Other: _____

3. How many years of farming experience do you have?

- ☐ 0
☐ 1–5
☐ 6–10
☐ 11 or more

4. How did you hear about PFI?

MEMBER BENEFITS

When you join our email discussion groups, you can network, build community and exchange ideas from anywhere, at any time. Sign up for as many groups as you'd like (and be sure to include your email address above)!

- ☐ Announcements
 ☐ Perspectives
 ☐ Field Crops
 ☐ Horticulture
 ☐ Livestock

Please add my farm to PFI's:

- ☐ Local Foods Directory
 ☐ Business Directory (Organization members only)

SUSTAIN PRACTICAL FARMERS WITH AN ADDITIONAL DONATION

For the sake of the long-term health and vitality of Practical Farmers of Iowa, we ask you to consider making a donation above and beyond your membership fee. Practical Farmers of Iowa is a 501(c)3 organization. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

I would like to make a one-time, tax-deductible donation to PFI in the amount of:

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

Or, make a recurring monthly or quarterly donation. This will be automatically charged to your credit card on the first day of each month or quarter.

- ☐ Yes, I would like to give \$_____
 ☐ per month
 OR
 ☐ per quarter

PAYMENT

Membership Level _____ \$_____ per year for _____ year(s) = \$_____

Additional Donation _____ = \$_____

TOTAL AMOUNT _____ = \$_____

- ☐ Check or money order is enclosed (Please make payable to "Practical Farmers of Iowa.")
☐ Credit card (Visa, MasterCard or Discover only)

Name on card _____ Number _____

Exp. Date _____ CVC# (3 digits) _____ ☐ Please automatically charge this credit card annually for membership

PRACTICAL FARMERS *of Iowa*

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Ames, IA 50010

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Always Learning

Alice McGary stands in her vegetable fields as she talks to attendees at her June 2024 field day near Ames, Iowa. Read about Alice's variety trials on page 16 and learn about other farmers who participate in and conduct research for PFT's Cooperators' Program.

