

Grassroots

A Bi-Monthly Newsletter
from the Iowa Farmers Union

June - July 2011



Teenagers in the AgCulture Youth Food and Farm Program, Ames

Getting Youth to Garden

Sue DeBlieck

My mother tells me, that as a child, I hated taking out the compost. I would wait until the “yuck bucket” was brimming before I grudgingly pulled it outside. Today I count myself lucky because I also learned how to feed turkeys, weed strawberries, and eat fresh spinach as a child. Unfortunately, many children do not have those opportunities.

This year the Iowa Farmers Union Education Foundation is working to educate children about agriculture through hands-on activities and by giving support to teachers.

In early June, the IFUEF is holding a day camp at Onion Creek Farm in Ames. The youth (grades 3-6) will get to observe worms, taste spinach, and pull a few weeds. They will explore the vegetable field, chicken pen, prairie, creek, and woods.

When school starts up again, the IFUEF will be working with teachers to help them educate youth about growing and eating fresh food. Teachers will get in-class support and have access to materials so as to better provide lessons about

agriculture. School staff will also have the opportunity to gain some horticultural skills in School Garden 101. I developed the course in rural Maine with Marjorie Peronto after hearing teachers and school cooks voice interest in learning about gardening. This evening course will be offered in spring 2012 to help teachers plan, create, and educate with a school garden.

School gardens are a great place for teaching youth school subjects with hands-on examples. Math teachers can get youth to measure beds and calculate how many seeds to buy. Or English teachers can ask students to write poems about vegetables. These activities will make sure that more youth look closely at plants, get dirty, know that potatoes grow underground, and have the satisfaction of eating something that they started from seed.

My mother may be surprised that I have chosen to compost, garden, and raise chickens as an adult, but I am not. Though I may have complained at the time, I was also developing fond memories – thrashing oats on the driveway to feed to my ever-growing rabbit, smelling the sweet scent of baby turkeys, and dreaming as my dog and I walked to the compost pile.

The mission of the Iowa Farmers Union is to strengthen the independent family farm through education, legislation, and cooperation.

Our goal is to achieve sustainable production, safe foods, a clean environment, and healthy communities.



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Grassroots is the official publication of the Iowa Farmers Union. It is published six times a year as a service to its members. Annual membership is \$50.

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with the subject line "request e-mail copy."

Hello everyone,

Spring has been slow in coming which has frustrated a lot of people. Farmers want to get their crops planted and are suffering from delayed growth, but with some above average daily heat units plants can make up for lost time.



The grain markets are volatile with wide swings from speculation gone wild. Fact is most of the crops are in with very good soil conditions. Speculators make their living by guessing but we have to base ours on facts!

The guessing game is also being played in the rest of the economy. There are questions about how high it can go. Gas and land prices are surging fueled by investors who focus on making a fast buck. This wild speculating in an economy far from being recovered takes a toll on folks from all walks of life and occupations.

Higher land prices raise each cost borne by the farmer and increases food prices for the consumer. And the gas prices affect all of us filling tractor, truck, and car gas tanks. I think we all need to ask the politicians about these issues in the upcoming election.

We may be building up to round two of a false economy and economic crash. The people who caused it have cashed in, bailed out and are busy with their new fortunes playing golf and enjoying their lives. Meanwhile, the rest of us work through the fallout, worrying about everything financial including the future for our children.

Our families of hardworking people have built this country, fought its wars, and created an economic powerhouse. It's time to stand our ground together!

Sincerely,

Chris Petersen, IFU President

Membership (circle one)

\$50 for one year

\$80 for two years

\$150 for four years

\$25 for one year Friend of the Family Farmer**

\$15 for one year Student* (ages 16 years and up through university)

*non-voting, limited benefit membership

Mail form and check or cash payment to:
Iowa Farmers Union, PO Box 8988,
Ames, IA 50014

Pay by credit card or PayPal at our website:
www.iowafarmersunion.org



Support the Farmers Union
in working to protect the family farm,
integrity of our food supply, and
landscape by becoming a member!

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

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Would you like to receive Grassroots by e-mail? _____

Membership Update

The IFU has over 1,200 members;
We're glad you are one of them!

Please help us this fall as we start a membership drive – talk to your friends and neighbors about the importance of making policy change for family farms, renewable energy, and local food.

Thank you for your support!



Stan Harpole, Ames

Paula Herrera, Ames

Joe Lynch &

Lonna Nachtigal, Ames

Anita Schepers, Maquoketa

Coming Home to Farm

Midwest veterans and active duty military personnel interested in exploring careers in agriculture can attend for “Coming Home to Farm,” a hands-on organic farming retreat in Ames, Iowa July 14–16. The event is free of charge and is offered by the Farmer-Veteran Coalition. The weekend includes farm tours of sustainable grain, vegetable, and livestock operations, as well as presentations on organic certification, production techniques, and marketing. The event is sponsored by Blue River Hybrids of Kelley, Iowa and the Risk Management Agency of the United States Department of Agriculture. The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) in Des Moines is coordinating the farm tours, logistics, and presentations.

“We are excited to offer a farmer-veteran retreat in America’s heartland,” says Michael O’Gorman, executive director of the Farmer-Veteran

Coalition. “Vets are already accustomed to hard work, discipline and dedication, and are in a unique position to strengthen Midwest family farms, the sustainable farming movement, and local and regional food systems.”

More than 40 percent of America’s men and woman in uniform are from rural communities. When veterans receive training and secure agricultural employment in those communities, rural America is strengthened.

A Community Partners project, the Farmer-Veteran Coalition (FVC) connects returning veterans with employment, training, and places to heal on America’s farms. Mobilizing farming communities to help create viable futures for America’s veterans, puts returning military in a unique position to contribute to the green economy, rebuild rural communities, and secure a safe and healthy food supply.

Continued on page 5



photo by Rich Dana

Part Two: Your On-Farm Renewable Energy System

Gregg Heide, Vice President

In the last edition of Grassroots, I covered the first six steps that you should take to start your on-farm renewable energy system. This month, I want to offer more things to consider due to the popularity of this issue and the amount of available information.

These days, you might be asking yourself whether to choose solar photovoltaics (PV), a wind turbine, or both as an energy source.

Solar PV is increasingly popular among farmers, though a small wind turbine might have a higher efficiency rating. If your farm site is restricting placement of a wind turbine due to tree and building obstructions, zoning, or other issues, solar PV may be a fit. Consider that some solar panel warranties guarantee electricity production up to 25 years. Ease of maintenance due to lack of moving parts and not having to climb towers are other benefits to consider.

That said, many of us have an excellent wind resource available at our farms – you have probably



Prairiewoods, Hiawatha, IA; from IA Energy Corps

noticed your wind potential during March and April. If you have a site clear of obstructions, and zoning that allows placement of a tower, a wind turbine might be in your plans. There are many excellent wind turbines available. However, warranty periods are usually shorter than those offered for solar PV. Also, small wind turbines do not always guarantee electric production. You may want to visit the website of The Small Wind Certification Council – an independent testing body that evaluates wind turbines to insure they meet or exceed the requirements of the AWEA Small Wind Turbine Performance and Safety Standard. Go to: www.smallwindcertification.org

Be sure to plan carefully and enlist the help of qualified installers. Also consider that your utility policy concerning small generators may stop you before you start. IFU has been hard at work to help make Iowa a friendly place to generate your own electricity.

What's in the future for small scale generation? Many companies are experimenting with farm-scale combined heat and power systems that will generate electricity and heat your buildings. So stay tuned as distributed energy production will continue to innovate and gain acceptance.

IFU Student Snapshots

This summer, we are featuring IFU student members. These bright young leaders are graduate students at Iowa State University. Welcome to this great addition to the Iowa Farmers Union!



Stefans Gailans,
PhD student in Agronomy, minor
in Sustainable Agriculture

Stefans' interests revolve around the effects of alternative cropping systems on the landscape. He studies how the incorporation of alternative oilseed crops, such as flax and canola, and cover crops, such as clovers and winter annual grains, in crop rotations affects both yields of traditional crops and vital ecosystem services such as pest and soil management.

The IFU is another venue for him to meet and interact with farmers. Through this, Stefans is kept alert about what farmers across this state value and what governmental policies most effect the agricultural system.

This summer you'll find Stefans in a canola field!



Angie Carter,
Masters student in Sustainable
Agriculture and Sociology

A fifth-generation Iowan, Angie returned to Iowa from Austin, TX. She joined the Iowa Farmer's Union this winter because she wanted to work toward a sustainable agriculture future through education, cooperation, and community activism. As a child, Carter accompanied her father on his calls as a large-animal veterinarian in Poweshiek County during the 1980s. That experience continues to drive her passion to create sustainable alternatives to the impacts of agricultural policy upon rural and urban areas in Iowa. Her master's thesis is a case study of an urban fishing program at Des Moines park ponds that would provide an opportunity for urban residents to engage with their watershed through community programs.

HOME TO FARM Continued

The FVC supports veterans in reducing risk and becoming successful farmers by utilizing the many specific resources available to assist military veterans starting businesses, buying land, or overcoming disabilities.

Due to limited spacing, preference for the retreat will be given to veterans who have

demonstrated a serious interest in pursuing food and farming careers and to post 9-11 veterans who are near the beginning of their agricultural career.

To find out more, or make an application, contact Michael Porter, at the Farmer-Veteran Coalition 530-756-1395 or email info@farmvetco.org

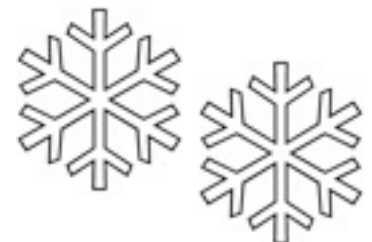


Annie Thompson,
Masters student in Sustainable
Agriculture and Community and
Regional Planning

Annie is studying empowerment in the climate change movement. This summer she is interviewing members of grassroots organizations about the work they do and how it helps makes them confident in taking action on climate change!

Annie also loves to can, so if you have any good corn relish recipes, send them her way!

**Iowa Farmers Union
Convention is
coming this winter**



In previous years the state convention has been held in August. This year it will be held on December 2-3, 2011.

Upcoming Events

From the Farmer Veteran Coalition
Coming Home to Farm
 July 14-16, 2011
 Ames, Iowa

From the National Farmers Union:
All States Camp
 July 16, 2011
 Bailey, Colorado

From IFU & Practical Farmers of Iowa:
Field Day
 August 27, 1PM
 Radiance Dairy,
 Fairfield, Iowa

From the Center for Cooperatives:
Farmer Cooperatives Conference
 November 3-4, 2011
 Minneapolis, MN

Farm to School

Lynn Heuss

There is growing interest in feeding children healthy food and giving them hands-on activities to help them learn. Farm to School includes programs that help children learn about agriculture in the classroom and taste local food in the cafeteria. In 2007, Iowa lawmakers passed Farm to School legislation to establish a program that would link schools with Iowa farmers, provide schools with fresh Iowa-grown food, and provide youth with hands-on learning opportunities. Youth in participating programs get to experience farm visits, cooking demonstrations, and school gardening and composting programs.

This year, four new Iowa Farm to School Chapters were started. There are now fifteen chapters located across Iowa dedicated to raising awareness about agriculture and increasing consumption of locally-grown food in schools.



The newest Farm to School chapters are located in Burlington, West Liberty, Clear Creek, Amana, and Marshalltown. After applying to become a chapter, each area receives a small grant to support their activities. Chapters have access to promotional items, brochures, and grower directories to find local fruit and vegetable producers.

Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey said, "The existing (Farm to School) chapters have been the leaders in developing new and creative ways to increase the amount of fresh, local fruits and vegetables available to students and we are excited to have four new chapters joining them." He went on to say, "There are great opportunities to expand the amount of local foods available in our schools."

The four new chapters join existing programs in Independence, Atlantic, Clear Lake, Amana, Cedar Falls, Oelwein, Decorah, Van Buren, Iowa City, Eldridge, and Windsor Heights.

How the Health Care Law Affects Farmers

Virginia Wolking, Center for Rural Affairs

Recognizing the lack of affordable health care for Iowa farmers, Iowa Farmers Union and the Center for Rural Affairs worked together to help pass federal health care reform in 2010. The new Affordable care act contains provisions that benefit Iowa farmers and small business owners but many who stand to benefit lack information on what the new law does for them.

The Center for Rural Affairs, Iowa Farmers Union and Iowa Citizen Action Network are hosting forums to your questions on the Affordable Care Act.

Whether you are wondering about what the health care law means for your family's insurance, for the insurance you provide to your employees, if you can stay on your parents' insurance plan, or about the timeline of when different parts of the law will go into effect, we have answers for you. The forum is open to all who have questions about the federal health care law or the impact that state-level decisions will have on Iowans.

We are still nailing down the details on forum dates, times and locations so watch your mailbox and email inbox for additional information on a forum in your neck-of-the-woods. We'll also be posting information on the meetings at www.cfra.org/iowa-meetings

Legislative Update

Kent Hartwig

The 2011 Iowa legislative session has gone into extreme overtime. The session was expected to end on April 29th when expense payments for food and lodging to legislators ran out. However, since no agreement was made on the budget, the legislature continues to meet at least once a week. Behind-the-scenes negotiations are continuing; it appears there are several more weeks left before the session will end. Some of the outstanding legislative issues remaining this session include all appropriation bills, mental health redesign, a two year budget, abortion facility requirements, and property tax reform.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

A bill to allow MidAmerican Energy to build a nuclear power plant (HF 561) has passed the House and is eligible for debate in the Senate. This legislation would provide MidAmerican Energy with every tool they need to site and build a new nuclear electricity generating facility in the state of Iowa. The bill shifts much of the risk and

burden of this facility onto the rate payers for a power plant that may never be built or go online. The bill faces a significant number of amendments if it is debated in the Senate and it is questionable whether Senator Gronstal will bring the bill up for a vote since it does not have a majority of support in the Senate Democrat Caucus.

INTERFERENCE WITH AGRICULTURE

HF 589 is legislation surrounding stopping interference with agriculture. HF 589 would establish criminal penalties for individuals who fraudulently apply for a job at an agricultural facility and are hired under false pretenses. They would be penalized if they then proceed to videotape and/or tamper with the operation's equipment without reporting a complaint to authorities. This bill as passed by the House is a large proposal and the Senate author has introduced an amendment which limits the scope of the bill to an enhanced trespassing charge for an unauthorized individual caught with recording equipment at a farm or agricultural facility. This legislation is eligible for debate in the Senate, but it is possible that



Kent Hartwig

it may not be brought up as leaders are focusing on the budget.

LOCAL FOOD

Finally, funding for a local foods coordinator, commission, and fund were included in the Senate's Agriculture and Natural Resources Budget. As expected, the House removed this funding from their bill, but we are hopeful that final negotiations will yield the \$75,000 needed for this Iowa Farmers Union priority. If the money is provided, it would help forward the Iowa Food and Farm Plan.

FARMARAZZI

from Slow Food USA

Let's celebrate images of farms, not hide them. There is a campaign to stop legislation that would make it illegal to take photos or videos of farms in Iowa & Minnesota. Check out the slideshow, sign the petition, and submit your photos at:

www.slowfoodusa.org

Iowa Farmers Union

Farm Camp



June 6-10, 2011
9:00AM-3:00PM
Onion Creek Farm
Ames

\$175 per child
\$140 with IFU
membership



PO Box 8988
Ames, IA 50014-8988

GRASSROOTS newsletter

June-July 2011

Coming soon from the Iowa Farmers Union
and Center for Rural Affairs:
Health Care Reform and you
presentations will be held around the state this June.
Stay tuned for more information.



IFU members at the 2011 National Convention in San Antonio -
President Chris Petersen, Jan Shirley, and Marvin Shirley



75th All-States Camp
Anniversary Reunion
July 16th, 2011
Bailey, CO

Printable and Online registration are at nfu.org. All are welcome!