Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council

Rooted in Community

www.foodshed.net

Summer 2003
Volume 1, Number 1



Council member Sr. Lucille Janowiak paints at the SECA market grand opening, May 8th.

SECA Farm Market Opens with Flowers, Herbs

by Valerie Deimel & AliciaMarie Belchak

Enthusiasm soared and the weather cooperated as volunteers painted and placed signs welcoming Grand Rapids' newest farm market to the Sheldon Complex parking lot, located at 121 Franklin Street in Southeast Grand Rapids.

The Southeast Community Association's (SECA) first annual farmer's market officially opened Thursday, May 8th with a profusion of flowers, tomato plants, herbs, and even a few shiny apples. West Michigan farmers will continue to provide local produce and flowers every Thursday from 2:00 pm to 7:00 pm through the end of October. For neighborhood residents, the farm market brings the promise of fresh, healthy food and the return of market traditions lost in recent decades.

"It's a long time coming," remarked Viarene Little of southeast Grand Rapids. "I'm looking forward to vegetables -- corn, okra, peppers."

The new farm market plays an integral role in SECA's Healthy Heart Initiative, which has been funded by a grant from the Michigan Department of Community Health and co-sponsored by the Kent County Health Department, the Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council and the Grand Rapids Dominicans. Because of the high rate of obesity, hypertension, and diabetes among the African American population, the grant focuses on ensuring the availability of healthier and fresher food to the many minority residents living in the SECA neighborhood.

With the help of Grand Rapids' newest farm market, southeast community members will now enjoy regular access to fresh fruits and vegetables throughout the growing season. In addition, WIC recipients and elderly customers will be able to purchase food with Project Fresh coupons.



Grower Larry Portis and his assistant, Kevin Whitfield, assist SECA customer Viarene Little.

"It's something positive for the community," stated Sarah Smith, executive director of SECA and acting market manager. "We were always having to go outside of the community to get what (fresh food) we wanted. We wanted good nutrition right here in the community."

"A lot of planning has gone into it," Smith added. "It's very exciting."

Planning began last summer and included drafting a set of market rules. "We have space for at least fifteen vendors," said Smith. Vendors pay a fee for their space, either by the day or by the growing season, and any profits will go back into the program.

"It's a wonderful thing," commented market vendor Lynn Bull from L & L Bull, L.L.C. in Casnovia, Michigan. "I really enjoy it. With the newer farm markets you can get in on the ground floor."

Continued SECA Market, pg. 2

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Rooted in Community

The quarterly newsletter of the Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council.

Summer 2003, Vol. 1, No. 1

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We welcome your article ideas!
Let us know what food issues concern you, locally as well as globally. If you have an event or know of one coming up, our editors would love to hear from you.

Writers wanted: Got ideas? Like to write? Passionate about food, society and the environment? Join our volunteer staff of contributing writers and photographers.

Subscriptions: $15 annually. Contact Tom Cary at the WMEAC office.

Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council (GGR FSC) is a project of the West Michigan Environmental Council (WMEAC).

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SECA Market (Continued)

Bull's husband, Leslie, has been farming all his life, and although Bull is herself a nurse manager by trade, she has joined the farming business in recent years. Their 206-acre farm includes two greenhouses and 100 acres of apples. Additionally, they grow a wide variety of fruits and vegetables sure to appeal to farm market customers throughout the season.

But while Bull values the rarity of a new farm market, the SECA market is not really a stranger to southeast Grand Rapids, according to Smith. In the early 80's, the community enjoyed fresh produce from a farm market held at the old South High Driving Range, once located at Cottage Grove and Division Street. For Smith and other neighborhood residents, the return of an old tradition is more than welcome.

Grower Larry Portis of Larry's Nursery and Landscaping also welcomes the comeback of a neighborhood market. Portis brings his flowers from Idlewild, Michigan, but to him, southeast Grand Rapids is still home. He grew up just across the street from the new market and graduated from South High School in 1961. Now he plans to sell his flowers at the SECA market until he gets too busy with his landscaping business.

"(The neighborhood has) changed a lot for the better," Portis commented. "I'm sure I'll see some of my old friends come through here," he grinned.

For more information about the SECA Farmer's Market, contact Market Manager Sarah Smith at (616) 245-4398.

Editor's Note: For more West Michigan farm markets, check out page 7.

Letter from the Editor



Welcome to the first issue of *Rooted in Community*, the quarterly newsletter of the Greater Grand Rapids Food System Council (GGRFSC)!

We are truly excited to bring you this newsletter as a venue to better explore the nature of our food and our food system, both locally and globally.

How we get our food is often "invisible" to us; we buy our food at the grocery store and don't think much about how it got there and what went into it. The truth is our food system is a highly dynamic organization of components in which we play a vital role as consumers. "We are the last link in that chain, the final decision-maker between field and fork," says Paul Stankewitz, Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council member and Director of Michigan Catholic Rural Life Coalition, in his four-part commentary series, *The Morality of Eating.*

Too often the excuse for action and change is innocent ignorance. The Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council, as the emerging collaborative in West Michigan, hopes to change that through this newsletter and through its other programs and initiatives. Ultimately, the goal is to develop a more sufficient, nutritious food supply that is locally grown in a sustainable manner; a supply that provides a more equitable distribution to all those who need healthy food. It is the mantra of "nutrition, sustainability, and access."

And you're invited to join us. Agricultural producers, environmentalists, planners, agency and non-profit personnel, governmental officials, chefs, retailers, gardeners and concerned citizens - all are actively working together to investigate our food system. Where does the system need to be tweaked? Where does it need to be overhauled? And how?

In the pages of this newsletter, we hope to bring you the insightful and useful information you need to learn more about our food and to act upon new ideas. Inside you will find Council reports, local events, news, resources and commentaries as well as global research and activities. All of it food for thought.

Happy harvesting! ~ AliciaMarie Belchak ~ Editor, *Rooted in Community*

South East Community Sprouts Gardens

by Katie Rose Brandt

The South East Community Association (SECA) has two new gardens to share the work of the harvest. Three city lots with good soil and access to water and trash pick-up were all generously donated by Klieman's, a men's clothing store, to create South Gate Garden Park on Sheldon, located just south of Wealthy.

Many citizens came forward to turn the soil by hand on the April 26th groundbreaking ceremony, including workers from BD's Mongolian Barbecue, Calvin College, and the neighborhood. Years of misuse as a thoroughfare had so compacted the soil that a local farmer finished cultivating the area with a tractor.

Soon, this new garden will bloom with wildflowers, herbs, and vegetables from individual family gardens. It will also be a classroom where plants and kids can grow in tandem. The young gardeners will meet face-to-face with living science amid the rows of cucumbers and collards. They can even take part in service projects to earn a Junior Master Gardener certificate. Alternatively, the youth can choose to help clean up an elderly person's yard, create a poster about pollution, or make certificates to give to neighbors with beautiful gardens.

Growing a garden is an uplifting alternative to crime, boredom, and lack of exercise, according to garden coordinator Carrie Chludzinski. Surrounded by beauty and possibility, seeds of self-confidence sprout inside kids, adults, and tomatoes alike. In doing so, strong roots grow that will connect these kids to the land for years to come.

Chludzinski began working with children and plants long before she started at SECA. She has been involved with Kent County 4-H and has even helped to write the curriculum for Michigan's Junior Master Gardener Program. As Crime Prevention Coordinator for SECA, Chludzinski sees daily how gardening keeps the gardeners and the land out of trouble. In so many neighborhoods, an abandoned lot can become a trash heap or a dark place for crime to breed. If that same empty lot is filled with vegetables and growth, there is no place for trouble to start.

Volunteers have also tilled Mack's Memorial Garden, adjacent to the SECA building at 1408 Madison, for 14 years. There, neighborhood children decide what to grow in the garden, help to sow seeds and pull weeds, and reap rewards by taking home some of the harvest. By growing fresh foods with their own hands the kids somehow learn to ignore the ice cream truck and forget about those shiny 25¢ bags of chips, Chludzinski says. This year the gardeners plan to plant strawberries, beans, tomatoes, lettuce and brassicas.

The City of Grand Rapids has also donated one lot at 629 Cass for another SECA garden. With time, Chludzinski and her team of dedicated volunteers will know the abundance, meaning, and stories that their newest garden will bring to lives in the SECA neighborhood.

How to Get Involved in SECA Community Gardens

Contact Carrie Chludzinski at SECA
(616) 245-4398
southeastcommunity@hotmail.com
or
Get your hands dirty and help out at one of the gardens listed below.

South Gate Garden Park
421-425-429 Sheldon, just off Wealthy
Saturday 10-11 am; Tuesday 4-5 pm

Mack's Memorial Garden
1408 Madison SE
Thursday 4-5 pm
4-H; Youth Oriented

Syca-Know-More Garden
629 Cass
Monday 4-5 pm
4-H; Youth Oriented





Put Your Company Name Here!



… and support the Food Systems Council…

We have reasonable advertising rates for your food-, farming-, and nutrition-related enterprises and events. Contact Valerie Deimel for more information: (616) 554-0337 or vdeimel@hotmail.com.

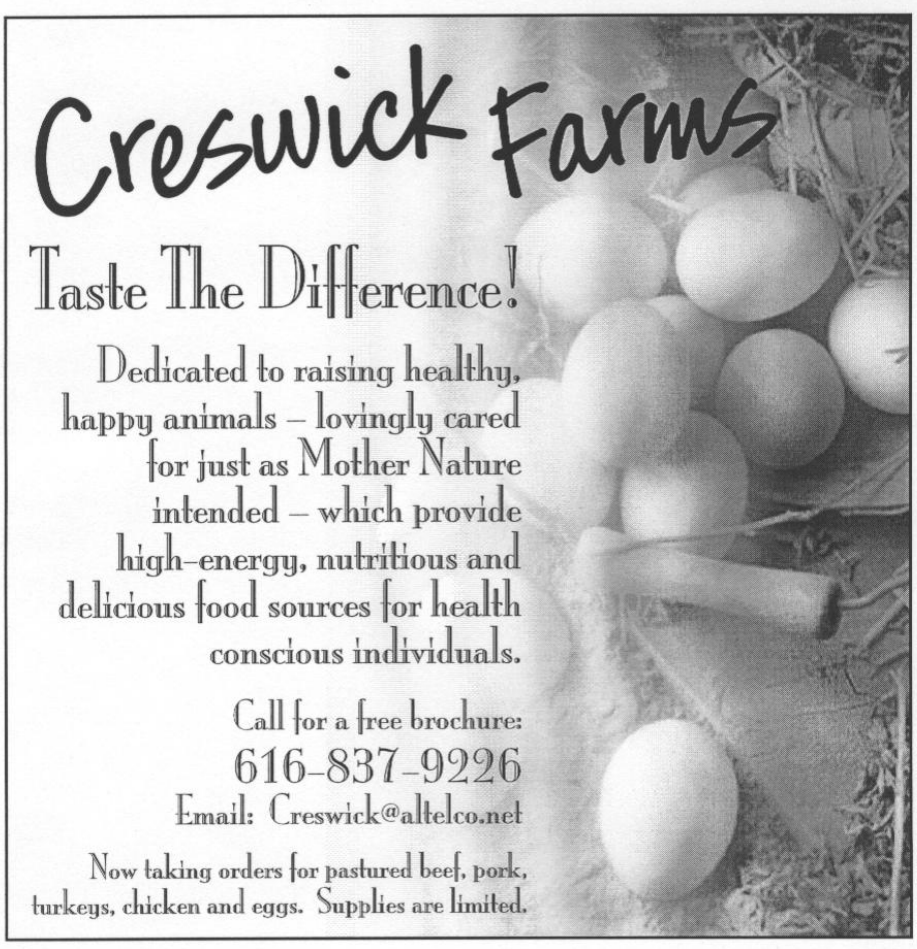
Alphabet Soup: Genetically Modified Food

By Katie Rose Brandt & AliciaMarie Belchak

Calvin College held a conference this spring bringing together two ideas that seem incompatible at first glance. Entitled *"Agricultural Biotechnology and Sustainability: Food for Thought,"* the April 26th conference offered insight into the contrasting array of assumptions separating supporters and opponents of genetically mondified organsims or GMOs. Splicing genes from one creature or plant into a crop seed has the aura of a new green revolution for some while others fear that the dangers and mistakes of the first such revolution will only be magnified. Who's right? And who decides?

As the discussion from the Calvin Collge conference suggests, the answers to these questions and others are prolific and varied. Here's just a sampling from some of the presenters at the April symposium:

- Safety and health issues remain unresolved in many instances, although unintended allergic reactions could be triggered as a result of genetic modifications. Dr. Deborah Letourneau, a researcher at University of California – Santa Cruz, revealed health issues are further complicated when corporations withhold health studies from peer review and requests via the Freedom of Information Act; CEOs claim granting information would reveal vital trade secrets.
- Dr. Maartin Chrispeels, a researcher at the University of California – San Diego, pointed to the many new directions GMOs can take agriculture, perhaps to better feed the world. Golden Rice, manufactured by Monsanto, could prevent blindness in 250,000 children annually with its enhanced production of Vitamin A. Recent research efforts include salinity resistance and drought tolerance in Third World crops like pigeon pea and cassava. Yet, some worry that these same laboratory-intensive seed production processes create economic barriers to widespread application.
- Controversy over GMOs, World Trade Organization (WTO) regulations and free-trade agreements continues. On May 13th, the U.S. sued the European Union for straying from WTO agreements. European consumers and retailers want nothing to do with GMO food and are demanding product labeling. Tom Taylor of the Organic Consumers' Association (OCA) agrees with them, envisioning GMO-free store brands that offer consumer choice. (See also *The Question of Labeling* article, next page.)
- The environmental impact of growing genetically modified crops may be more than mere myth. In Mexico, the homeland of corn diversity, homogeny may win as signs of foreign genes from American-imported seed corn are now exhibiting themselves in teosinte, the wild grass that was domesticated to create corn nearly 10,000 years ago. In the dance of corn silk and pollen, the question lingers: Are we losing genetic varieties that may prove essential for crop survival in the future?



Creswick Farms Special Offer:

Customers placing orders* for Creswick Farms All-Natural Pastured Pork on or before 7/31/03 will receive 2 delicious Pastured Broilers free!

** Minimum order must be $200 or more to receive free broilers. Also, this offer must be mentioned at time of order placement. Broilers will be available at time of pork*

The Labeling Question

By Katie Rose Brandt

Imagine walking into a grocery store and finding information about the farms and the methods used to grow your food. Food products would be labeled: "GMO," "100% Organic," "Biodynamic," "GMO-FREE," "Michigan Grown," or "Brought to You by Small Family Farmers."

Imagine the back of a corn flakes box proudly proclaiming: "GMO Corn Grows with Less Pesticides." The soy sauces might be labeled, too: "Made with Round-Up Ready Soy Beans," followed by a slick paragraph about how glyphosate herbicides are less dangerous than the alternatives.

Would some consumers choose the unknowns of the new technology over the known dangers of pesticide reliance? Would shoppers be willing to shell out more cash for "GMO-free," like they do now for organic foods?

The idea of promoting "GMO-free" to consumers has been proposed by Elbert van Dondersgoed of the Christian Farmers' Federation of Ontario. At the April biotechnology conference hosted by Calvin College, he said that the biotech industry should "resist the urge to say transgenics are good for all food production systems." Just as organic is not for all consumers, he noted, the industry needs to recognize that some people - perhaps even whole nations - need never eat a bite of GMO foods. The industry would be better off, according to van Dondersgoed, when it can rely on labels and marketing to allow consumer choice.

However, current World Trade Organization (WTO) rules don't allow labels based on method of production, according to Organic Trade Association representative Mark Ritchie. Instead, labels must be based on the inherent qualities of the products to comply with present WTO guidelines. Richie likened this stance to policies that favor domestic products over foreign ones, a key ban under free-trade rules. Unlike the U.S. organic labeling laws that passed with wide public support and little fuss from WTO, Richie points out that reaction to GMO labeling may differ entirely.

Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council

You're invited to join us as we explore our local, national, and global food systems. Our mission is to support physical and economic access to sufficient, nutritious food grown in a sustainable manner, especially here in West Michigan. Where has our food system failed? And what can we do about it? Find out! Membership includes our quarterly newsletter, *Rooted in Community*.

Yes! I want to be a member of GGRFSC.

___ $15 individual or nonprofit
___ $50 corporate or governmental
(Please make checks payable to GGRFSC / WMEAC.)

Name: _____
Affiliation, if any: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____
Areas of Interest: _____
Comments: _____

Mail to: GGR FSC at WMEAC ~ c/o Tom Cary
1514 Wealthy St. SE ~ Grand Rapids, MI 49506

HEFFRON FARMS MARKET

"The Natural Way"

Come visit one of our markets for "a natural experience!" You'll find a fine selection of naturally grown meats, raised without the use of growth hormones and packaged without preservatives or dyes. Our meats come from grain-fed stock, available in whole (pork), halves (pork/beef), quarters (beef), or meat bundles. We also feature "Individually Quick Frozen" (IQF) fruits, vegetables, seafood… not to mention Country Dairy milk and ice cream, both without rBST hormone.

So come on in and visit one of our specialty locations!

Belding (at the farm):
7724 Ashley Ave.
(616) 794-2527

Grand Rapids:
Plainfield Plaza at Plainfield Ave. & I-96
(616) 363-4175

Caledonia: *NEW!*
Caledonia Crossing Plaza
9028 North Rodgers
(616) 891-8555

Wyoming:
Clyde Park Plaza on Clyde Park & 54th Street
(616) 534-4414

Labor of Love: Trillium Haven Farm

by Gail Philbin

"This I think speaks for itself: if you are dependent on people who do not know you, who control the value of your necessities, you are not free, and you are not safe." -- Wendell Berry, from the essay Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community.

The words of the award-winning environmental essayist get to the heart of why Michael VanderBrug and Anja Mast, two Calvin College graduates with no agricultural background, decided to start an organic farm a few years out of school.

VanderBrug, a Massachusetts native, and Mast, who grew up in Asia and the Middle East, studied subjects like philosophy and rhetoric in college, but after marrying and having a child, their desire for a healthy lifestyle created an unexpected career path.

When the opportunity arose to buy VanderBrug's grandfather's farm in Jenison a few years ago, the couple explored the options and learned about Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), an approach to food distribution that directly links consumers with small, organic farmers.

"The way farming is practiced today by the agribusiness industry is wasteful, destructive and dangerous for people and for the land," Mast says. "There are better ways to farm."

"We wondered how we were going to live our life and raise kids in a healthy, natural way," said Mast, 35, now the mother of toddlers Zoe, 3, and Pieter, almost 2. "CSAs seemed like the least isolated way to do it. The kids love the community and the members get a lot out of it, too."

VanderBrug, 29, cut his organic teeth growing vegetables in small, urban gardens since college and had been itching to try farming, a desire that dovetailed nicely with Mast's interest in home-schooling and community development through sustainable agriculture. Thus, Trillium Haven Farm sprouted from their dreams of a better life and the rich, muck soils of their 50-acre farm.

Now in its third year, Trillium Haven Farm has the support of 120 West Michigan residents who each purchased a full, double or working share of the 2003 harvest before the season began. In early June, produce became available on a weekly basis (by picking it up at the farm or at a location in Eastown) and will continue through October.

"It provides us with needed capital to purchase seed and equipment, and to prepare for the year," Mast says of the CSA subscription arrangement. "We provide weekly shares of wholesome produce throughout the growing season, and our customers benefit by receiving a wide variety of fresh, organically-grown produce. At the same time, we're assured a reasonable wage for our work and a market for our produce."

Customers surveyed by Trillium Haven at the end of the 2002 season cited another, unexpected benefit of participating in a CSA. "It was exciting and challenging to figure out how to prepare the produce which was quite new to me," wrote Kim deStigter. "I probably never ate so healthy in my life."

Christy Van Arragon, who signed up with Trillium Haven because she supports healthy food and preserving farmland, agreed. "In the process, I was expanded as a cook -- and I appreciate that more than I can say."

Unlike these two customers, most people don't have time to cook anymore, says Mast, and that represents the greatest obstacle to success for small farmers. "A CSA isn't convenient," she says. "You have to pick up the stuff, deal with it, wash it and cook it. Across the board, wherever you are, the way Americans eat is a real challenge for the CSA farm."

The CSA movement hatched in Europe and Asia before coming to the United States around 1985, according to Mast. Since then, the number of CSA farms in this country has mushroomed to 1,000 and continues to grow, she says. West Michigan has a handful, and there are about 30 in the state. (For a larger listing, see the table on the next page.) In addition to a subscription service for produce, some local farms offer organic meat and/or dairy products in the same kind of arrangement.

The CSA model benefits everyone involved -- farmer, consumer, Mother Nature. In the case of Trillium Haven Farm, Mast says the community benefits because shareholders get to know each other as well as the people who produce their food. Mother Nature (and the community) benefits because Mast and her husband keep a sizable chunk of land in Jenison from being developed and protect it as part of a larger ecosystem by



Zoe, 3, helps wash lettuce at the family CSA, Trillium Haven Farm.

Continued Trillium Profile, pg. 7

Special Insert: Guide to Farm Markets

Did you know that by purchasing directly from local growers we help protect our valuable Michigan farmland? Make a difference in our rural landscape, our community culture, our environmental health, and our daily enjoyment! Buy local and help support our West Michigan growers.

WEST MICHIGAN FARMER'S MARKETS

Allegan Farmer's Market
City of Allegan parking lot, 200 block of Hubbard St.
Thursday , 9:00 am – 6:00 pm
May – October

Coopersville Farmer's Market
DDA Pavilion, north of Main St.
Wednesday, 8:00 am – 1:00 pm
May – October

Grand Rapids Fulton Street Farmer's Market
1147 Fulton St. NE
Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday 8:00 am – 4:00 pm
May 1st – Christmas

Grand Rapids SECA Farmer's Market
Sheldon Complex parking lot, 121 Franklin St. SE
Thursday, 2:00 pm – 7:00 pm
May – October



Greenville Farmer's Market
Veteran's Park
Tuesday & Friday, 7:30 am – 1:00 pm
July - October

Hastings Farmer's Market
Tyden Park on North Bradley St. (M-43)
Wednesday & Saturday, 7:00 am – 3:00 pm
May - October

Holland Farmer's Market
Holland Civic Center
Wednesday & Saturday, 7:00 am – 3:00 pm
June - October

Hudsonville Farmer's Market
Downtown Plaza
Wednesday, 8:00 am – 2:00 pm

Ionia Farmer's Market
Corner of Adams & State streets
Monday, Wednesday, Saturday, 8:00 am – 1:00 pm
May - October

Kalamazoo Banks Street Farmer's Market
1200 Banks St.
Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, 7:00 am – 6:00 pm
June – September

Muskegon Farmer's Market
700 Yuba St.
Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm
May - December

Muskegon Heights Farmer's Market
2724 Peck, behind City Hall
Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, 7:00 am – 4:30 pm
April - December

Rockford Farmer's Market
South Squire St. parking lot
Saturday, 8:00 am – 1:00 pm
Mid-June – Mid-October

For a more extensive list that includes individual farm stands, contact Tom Cary at the WMEAC office, (616) 451-3051. The Michigan State University Extension office also publishes a guide to the Fruitridge area, (616) 336-3265, and the Michigan Department of Agriculture prints an annual farm market and U-pick directory, (517) 373-1104.

WEST MICHIGAN CSA FARMS

Meat Producers:
Lubbers Farm - beef, pork, turkeys, lamb, chicken [eggs - no subscription]
Grand Rapids, MI 49544 ~ (616) 453-4257

Zen Sheep Farm - lamb
Holland, MI 49423 ~ (616) 875-7811
ogm@michiganorganic.org

Coach Stop Farm - chicken, lamb, pork
Zeeland, MI 49464 ~ (616) 772-4660
conni@coachstopfarm.com
http://www.coachstopfarm.com

Produce Growers:

Living Earth Community Farm
Marne, MI 49435 ~ (616) 677-6176
healthalive@hotmail.com

Funny Farm Organic Produce
Grant, MI 49327 ~ (213) 834-8643
funnyfarm@mail.riverview.net

Ingraberg Farm
Rockford, MI 49431 ~ (616) 863-0697
ingraberg@earthlink.net

Trillium Haven Farm
Jenison, MI 49428 ~ (616) 457-5822
trilliumhaven@netscape.net

Uphill Farm
Holland, MI 49423 ~ (616) 751-7639
uphillfarm@juno.com

Infinity Farms
(616) 284-0170
infinityfarms8@hotmail.com

For a state-wide CSA list, go online:
http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa/csastate.htm
or http://www.moffa.org/2003MichiganCSAList.pdf

Trillium Profile (Continued)

growing healthy, organic food without pesticides, herbicides or chemical fertilizers.

Consumers agree. Since its first year, Trillium Haven Farm's customers have quadrupled, and this year it has a waiting list of 50, according to Mast.

"When we started three years ago, no one even knew what a CSA was," she says. "Now, even general gardening magazines and health magazines have information about them. People are much more aware, even in West Michigan."

Commentary Series …

The Morality of Eating: Part I

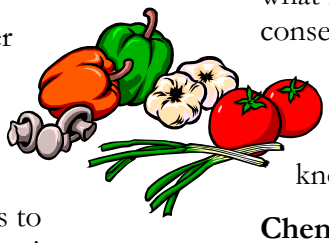
by Paul Stankewitz, Director of Michigan Catholic Rural Life Coalition

Few of us have ever considered the fact that eating is actually a moral act. We cast ballots in our political system based upon our values and concerns as citizens. Likewise, and perhaps without realizing it, we participate in a "food system" as consumers; and here, our dollars speak for us. Spending money is how we "vote" in a free enterprise economy. The question to ask yourself is what values are you supporting with your weekly food budget?

I would suggest that you are making moral choices, whether you realize it or not, each time you go to a restaurant or shop at your local grocery store. What you buy, and from whom, may be supporting and driving the food economy in a direction that you would strongly oppose, if you only knew the full story.

Genetic Influence

Most Americans are surprised to discover that 75% of the groceries purchased this week will contain some ingredient that has been genetically altered in a laboratory.



- Salmon genes are spliced into tomatoes to produce a frost resistant vegetable. That is certainly clever of us, but is it right?
- We combine soybeans with a gene to protect against the weed killer "Round-up," thereby enabling farmers to spray their fields with Round-up to kill weeds but not the altered soybeans. This in turn passes the weed-killing gene on into the food chain.
- Researchers at Michigan State University are developing genetically modified cows, attempting to have them produce human breast milk. Won't it speak volumes to the dignity of women in our society when our food system weakens the bond between woman and child?

When it comes to the issue of genetic engineering, can we respect a technique that treats plants and animals as interchangeable parts, parts that we blend according to our will?

Personally, I think that the Creator of "biblical" fish, vegetables, cows and other living things did a good job, establishing a purpose and order to the natural world.

What are we really accomplishing by what amounts to playing God?

What are we really accomplishing by what amounts to playing God? Are we improving our lives? Are we doing something for the sake of doing it because we can? Are these modified foods even necessary? Is it morally acceptable to combine different species? Should corporations hold patents on life and its forms? What are the long-term consequences to human health and the general environment? Should not these questions at least have been asked, much less answered, before charging forth into un-chartered territory?

"I used to think that food was food. Now, more than ever, I find myself in a moral quandary as I realize that formerly simple decisions, like where I go for lunch or what I serve my kids for dinner, have greater consequences beyond the mere act of eating."

I used to think that food was food. Now, more than ever, I find myself in a moral quandary as I realize that formerly simple decisions, like where I go for lunch or what I serve my kids for dinner, have greater consequences beyond the mere act of eating. My values are not reflected in much of what I see as I open the refrigerator door, which sometimes makes me think that it would be much easier not knowing what I know.

Chemical Profit

For instance, our modern food system is in such a hurry to make a profit that it is often not very kind to the environment in the process. The days of rotating crops in order to maintain the quality of the soil are long gone. Monoculture, the growing of one crop year after year, requires chemical fertilizers to artificially provide the nutrients needed by crops. Farmers now use four times as much chemical as they did 40 years ago to kill the same pests, and the amount of food lost to insects and animals is about the same! Strawberry growers, for instance, now favor all-purpose fumigants such as methyl bromide, which is injected into the ground and kills everything from mammals to microbes.

Pope John Paul II warns that when we become "tyrants, rather than custodians of the earth, that sooner or later the earth rebels." With that thought in mind, I wonder if the ability to have fresh strawberry shortcake in the dead of winter is really worth it…

To be continued in Part II, Fall 2003 issue.

Chew on This... News to Digest

City of Cedar Springs, MI Dedicates Land and $1000 to a Community Garden



Located along the White Pine Trail on West Street, the garden is open to anyone in the community and will provide residents short on space an option for growing their own food. The garden will be managed by the Cedar Springs Garden Club, which urged the City Council for the garden. The Garden Club will also offer training and education on how to garden. To find out more, call the Cedar Springs Chamber of Commerce, (616) 696-3260; ask for Garden Club contacts.

Researcher to Study Link between Farm-To-School Lunch and Improved Student Behavior

Colleen Rogers, at Michael Fields Institute, received Kellogg Foundation funding to study connections between better food in school lunch programs and improved student behavior - especially as it would relate to Farm-to-School lunch programs. She notes a positive correlation has been found in other institutions, which is the basis for her study. She is also soliciting other research. Contact her at *colrog@yahoo.com*.



GM Foods: Towards an Apocalypse

Devinder Sharma - May 17, 2003

The WTO, IMF and World Bank target more free trade for GM foods as a result of a U.S. complaint to the WTO, saying that the European Union's five-year ban on approving biotech crops is illegal, is harming the American economy and is contributing to starvation in the developing world. While developing nations' self-sufficiency has suffered enough under free trade, this will only make it worse. With the influence of the UN undermined by the "War in Iraq," the involvement of the economic community (WTO etc.) and a plan to "educate" developing nations on the virtues of GM foods, the path has been laid for the U.S. to push the EU into makimg changes in their GM policies. All this despite 100 nations signing on to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, designed to address this issue. For the full article go to *http://www.dsharma.org* and look for "*GM Foods: Towards an Apocalypse.*"

Mad Cow Madness

The Final Word: Issue #49 - Fri, May 23, 2003
http://www.foodroutes.org/finalword.jsp

With Mad Cow Disease discovered in Canada, the U.S. has put a temporary ban on ruminant imports. In 2002, 78% of Canadian beef was exported to the U.S., accounting for 4% of U.S. beef consumption. The U.S. Agriculture Secretary, Ann Veneman, says that Mad Cow has never been detected in the U.S. But according to Steve Cady of the Organization for Competitive Markets, "currently there is no way for consumers to differentiate between domestically-grown and -processed product from foreign product."

The Jungle: More Bad Meat = Bad News for Meat.

The Final Word: Issue #49 - Fri, May 23, 2003
http://www.foodroutes.org/finalword.jsp

Recent articles in the Philadelphia Inquirer expose our flawed meat processing system. Inquirer staff writers, Oliver Prichard and Aparana Surendran, say that most of the meat on America's dinner tables comes from a less-than-wholesome alliance that "relies heavily on self-policing by the industry, discourages aggressive enforcement by government inspectors, and often fails to protect consumers until it is too late." The Inquirer stories placed the blame for America's food contamination on weak federal laws, which fail to punish unclean plants. It is estimated that food poisoning or contamination causes 76 million illnesses each year, leading to 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 deaths.

City of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan Adopts Food Charter

This visionary charter aims to facilitate "a civic culture that inspires all city residents and city departments to encourage a greater degree of self-sufficiency by its citizens." Some of its goals include:

- breast-feeding families
- access to nutritious food that enables effective learning
- practical nutrition education programs
- transportation policies that sustain safe and dignified access to food that people need
- use of vacant urban lands with high potential for food production
- training-opportunities and income-generating ventures for area farmers
- year-round farmer's markets
- construction and operation of food storage facilities within city neighborhoods
- inter-municipal agreements that promote a viable and sustainable agricultural economy



For copies, please email *info@foodshed.net*.

Community Roots... Resources to Tap

Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE)

A new group, supporting the local food system as part of a "local living economy," has just formed in West Michigan. The Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) is a national alliance of local business networks that share a commitment to the vision of a sustainable global economy based on local living economies. A local living economy is one that respects the people and ecology of a region. It provides secure and fulfilling livelihoods, works in harmony with nature, supports cultural diversity, and fosters community life.

BALLE West Michigan is the local chapter of the national organization. Members are locally owned, independent businesses, farms, non-profit groups and concerned individuals joining the mission to encourage and support local business and consumer behavior that promotes a healthy community and environment. Through local ventures like co-op purchases, business mentoring, public education and joint marketing efforts, BALLE West Michigan promotes activity that is economically viable, socially responsible and ecologically sustainable.

To join BALLE West Michigan or for more information, contact Gail Philbin at *gailphilbin@ameritech.net*. Also, check out their website, *www.ballewm.org*, and the national BALLE website at *www.livingeconomies.org*.

Michigan Catholic Rural Life Coalition

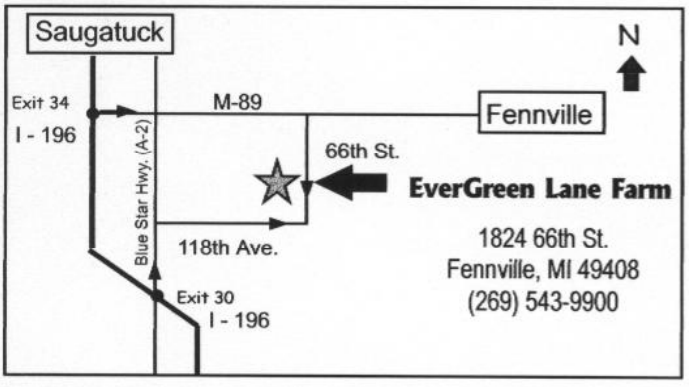
The Michigan Catholic Rural Life Coalition (MCRLC) serves the Catholic Dioceses of Michigan through agricultural/farmer support, land use/urban sprawl, and environmental issues. The coalition educates its members and lobbies for public policy change. MCRLC members are people of goodwill from varied experiences and religious backgrounds. In the Greater Grand Rapids Area, MCRLC is actively involved with United Growth for Kent County and the Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council. MCRLC believes that people are called by God to act as stewards of the Earth, to ensure that future generations live in the abundance of God's creation. MCRLC feels that individuals should participate in public efforts that restore and purify soils, water, air and other natural resources. MCRLC feels that people should involve themselves in policy initiatives that ensure food security for all and keep family farms viable. MCRLC will gladly visit your congregation or group to speak about eating as a moral act, the moral implications of sprawl, or connecting faith with the environment. The Coalition has a great website located at *http://www.michigancatholicrurallife.org* or you may contact MCRLC Director Paul Stankewitz at (989) 466-9322 or by email at *director@michigancatholicrurallife.org*.

EverGreen Lane Farm



- **100% Certified Organic** — inspected annually by Organic Growers of Michigan.
- Spring & Summer -**Salad greens, vegetables, herbs and garlic. Greenhouse transplants.**
- Fall - Four varieties of **apples**, unpasteurized **apple cider** and **pumpkins**.





Check our website www.evergreenlanefarm.com for hours and upcoming events.

HOURS: 11AM - 6PM

WEDNESDAY THROUGH SUNDAY

JUNE THROUGH NOVEMBER

USDA ORGANIC

Community Roots... Resources to Tap

American Community Gardening Association

Has community gardening caught your eye? Like the idea of "urban agriculture?" Consider visiting the American Community Gardening Association (ACGA) website, *http://www.communitygarden.org*, for some helpful tips and ideas. The Association is a national non-profit membership organization of professionals, volunteers, and supporters of community greening in urban and rural communities. They also hold an annual conference and publish info centered on community building and greening. Join the listserve online!



Ecological and Organic Farm Planning - 2003 Michigan Farm Tours

How do some Michigan farmers produce crops and livestock in ecologically-integrated systems?

A series of three farm tours, called the *"Ecological and Organic Farm Planning in Action"* series, will look at answers to that question this summer and fall. Designed for farmers and others interested in exploring ecological approaches to farm design, operation and management, the tours will be held in July, August and September 2003, providing unique opportunities to see farm plans at work.

Whole-farm planning is based on the concept of the farm as a system of integrated and interdependent parts. By taking an ecological approach to whole farm planning, farmers can make choices about crop rotations, livestock management, pest control and soil fertility that harmonize farm systems with the surrounding environment as much as possible. For those interested in organic production, the organic farm plan is a requirement for certification. Even for those not seeking certification, the organic farm plan can provide a structure to guide decisions about your individual farm philosophy and goals. Organic farm plans address questions about field histories, seed sources, watering systems, weed, insect and disease management, soil fertility, use of compost or manure, buffer zones, harvesting and marketing.

The first field day will be held in Southwestern Michigan in mid- to late July and will include visits to two farms as well as an introductory workshop on key aspects of organic farm planning. The second field day will be held in Northwest Michigan in early August, highlighting planning for certified organic fruit and vegetable farms. The third field day in mid-September will provide an intensive, in-depth tour of one diversified Michigan farm facilitated by organic and farm planning experts.

These field days are jointly organized by the Michigan Organic Food & Farm Alliance (MOFFA), the MSU Kellogg Biological Station (KBS) and the Michigan Agricultural Stewardship Association (MASA), with co-sponsorship from Organic Growers of Michigan. The August organic tour is also co-sponsored by the Organic Consumers Alliance. Funding for the tours is provided in part through a grant to MOFFA from the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) Risk Management Partnership Program and a grant to KBS, in partnership with MASA, from Project GREEEN.

To request a registration brochure for any one or all of the field days, contact Carol Osborne, *carolo@gtlakes.com*, (989) 705-7204; or Larry Dyer, *dyerlawr@msu.edu*, (269)671-2412, ext 229. Brochures will be available starting in June, and additional information will be posted at *http://www.moffa.org*.



Select a Taste of Michigan

Governor Granholm launched *"Select a Taste of Michigan,"* a statewide marketing program for local and organic Michigan foods, at a conference in Grand Rapids in March 2003. The initiative is a partnership between the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the nonprofit Michigan Integrated Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS), as well as several local groups including the Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council (GGRFSC). The program, focusing in its first year on the Greater Grand Rapids Area, aims to combine consumer education with promotional efforts to help identify and create additional demand for Michigan-grown, Michigan-processed local and organic food products. As she kicked off the campaign, Governor Granholm said: "We're supporting the vitality of Michigan families, farmers, and agribusinesses."

The effort works to link retail outlets and local farmers in providing consumers with the first-rate taste and nutritional value of locally-produced food. Educational information, taste testing, "meet-the-farmer" days, in-store demonstrations and weekly sales promotions focusing on Michigan fresh and processed foods will take place at participating grocery retailers, including: D&W Food Centers, G.B. Russo & Son, Harvest Health, Spartan Stores, and Meijer, Inc. Different local products will be featured as the growing-season progresses.

The *"Select a Taste of Michigan"* movement will also create two new labels – *"Select Michigan Fresh"* and *"Select Michigan Organic"* – which the participating Grand Rapids retailers will use to showcase Michigan products.

For more information and to find out about volunteer opportunities, contact Kristine Fedewa, manager of MIFFS Food Secure Futures Project, (517) 668-2028, or visit online *http://www.miffs.org*.



- Cherries, Sugar – July
- Blueberries, Peaches, Fruits & Vegetables – August
- Organic Harvest Month – September, with Organic Festival on September 14th
- Apples, Potatoes – October

Branching Out… Calendar of Events

Unless otherwise listed, please email info@foodshed.net or call (616) 451-3051 for more information on GGRFSC meetings and events.

July 2003

8th – 7:00 PM - Nourishing Traditions Group Meeting (holistic, natural diet, food preparation and preservation): call Lubbers Farm (616) 453-4257

10th – 10:00 – 11:30 AM - GGRFSC Producer/Marketing Meeting - Alpine Twp. Hall

11th – 12:00 – 1:30 PM - GGRFSC Board Meeting - WMEAC Office

24th – 4:00 – 7:00 PM - SECA Farmer's Market Grand Opening Celebration - Sheldon Complex: call SECA @ 245-4398

24th – 7:00 PM - Sausage Making Class (with natural ingredients): call Lubbers Farm (616) 453-4257

August 2003

11th – 5:30 – 7:00 PM - GGRFSC Board Meeting - WMEAC Offices

12th – 7:00 PM - Nourishing Traditions Group Meeting: call Lubbers Farm (616) 453-4257

14th – 10:00 – 11:30 AM - GGRFSC Producer/Marketing Meeting - Alpine Twp. Hall

23rd – 2:00 PM - Preserving Foods (drying, canning, freezing and fermenting): call Lubbers Farm (616) 453-4257

September 2003

4th, 5th – "*Use of Local and State Food Policy Councils"* national workshop: *http://www.statefoodpolicy.org*

9th – 7:00 PM - Nourishing Traditions Group Meeting: call Lubbers Farm (616) 453-4257

11th – 10:00 – 11:30AM - GGRFSC Producer/Marketing Meeting - Alpine Twp. Hall

12th – 12:00 – 1:30 PM - GGRFSC Board Meeting - WMEAC Offices

13th – *Select a Taste of Michigan* - Organic Harvest Demo (TBA): call (517) 668-2028 or visit online *http://www.miffs.org*

14th – West Michigan Organic Havest Festival - Blanford Nature Center, Grand Rapids: email *evergreenlane@i2k.com* or call (616) 543-9900

27th – 6:00 PM - Harvest Festival - potluck, dancing, hay-rides & bonfire: call Lubbers Farm (616) 453-4257

Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council

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