

# the PRACTICAL FARMER

SUMMER 2022



## *In This Issue:*


Making Space for Habitat

Stacking Bales and Profits

Nourishing Community  
Through Local Meat





A close-up photograph of several vibrant green spinach leaves. The leaves are heart-shaped with prominent veins and a slightly crinkled texture. They are growing in dark, rich soil. The lighting is bright, highlighting the natural sheen and color of the foliage.

Winter-grown spinach is rising in popularity among the farmers who grow it and the customers who look forward to enjoying it each year. Read more about this cold-hardy plant on pages 16-17.



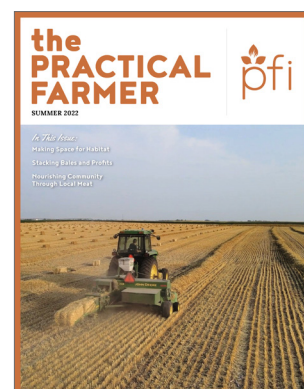


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Small squares of wheat straw are baled on the Knuth Farm outside of Mead, Nebraska. Read Angela Knuth's story and learn more about PFI's small grains cost-share on pages 11-13.



## 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 published quarterly as a benefit of membership to help keep farmers and friends of farmers in touch with one another through informative articles on relevant farming topics, current on-farm research, upcoming events and other news of interest.

**Magazine Editor:** Tamsyn Jones

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



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## From Adversity to Opportunity With the Help of Friends

### Change Is Hard

**C**hange and adversity are intertwined. Sometimes hardship begets change, such as health issues, loss of income, climate change or, ahem, a pandemic. But sometimes the change is purposeful and forward-looking.

How can we set ourselves up for a better future state? Regardless, it is often impossible to tell what came first, the adversity or the change. And the cycle of change and adversity repeats itself again and again. Even when we intend to change, change is hard. It forces us from our familiar and is accompanied with difficult conversations and decisions. While it can be human nature to shy away from these discomforts, they help us to be drivers for change, rather than passengers that are simply reactive to it.

I had the pleasure of attending a training that the Iowa Food Systems Coalition put on recently titled “Reimagining Our Food System.” This training asked some honest and solutions-based questions about how we work together to create a healthy food system that is accessible for everyone.

During this training, we were asked to reflect on how we act when we are confronted with discomfort. We learned that sometimes we shut down. Or, we can try to minimize the discomfort without working through it, which means that the discomfort is left unaddressed.

But if we lean in to the uneasiness, we can work through it. When we have uncomfortable conversations, it’s important that we acknowledge we’re human, and that discomfort is taxing. It’s also important to not take responsibility for things we can’t change, to know our circle of influence and focus on changing what we can.

### Change Is Less Hard With a Support Network

Having some stability in your life helps us with change. For me, as many of you, that stability comes from my PFI network. While this network has grown, it has remained an unwavering source of support and creativity for many of us.



**Partners Become Friends:** Clare Lindahl (right) of Soil Water Conservation Society, shows Sally Worley about town in Washington D.C. this spring when Sally visited for a National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition meeting.

Vic Madsen, long-time PFI member, board member and farmer near Audubon, Iowa, watched our annual conference via livestream. He said: “I saw happy, talented people speaking from the heart. It doesn’t get any better than that. Someone told me many years ago that PFI is a safe place. To me, that means a place where people can be themselves without worrying about how others will judge them. How the safe-place attitude comes about is far above me. It probably starts with friendly, caring people who are not judgmental and people who are not self-promoting. Whatever makes it work, we need to keep doing it.”

Early PFI members, like Vic, set the tone for this welcoming network, where we “get along, but don’t go along.” We have been able to keep this space one where we can freely share our mosaic of ideas and farm systems with each other. This is so important for us in our individual and shared efforts.

This community, where people can be themselves – and can ask candid questions about aspirations and challenges – is a change-enabler. Done with purpose, in collaboration and with a plan, change is an opportunity. Practical Farmers of Iowa is not immune to change. In fact, as we grow, change is inevitable. But as you’ll see on pages 36-37, we are approaching the need

to update our staff structure with intention and a sense of purpose so we are well-positioned for success, impact and growth.

We just finished up our winter season of events. At the Beginning Farmer Summit, participants in one networking group were asked to talk with one other and describe a community they belong to and what makes them feel part of that community. Here are a couple of reflections shared with the group:

David Arnold, Marshalltown, Iowa: “My community brings mutual curiosity and mutual hope for success for everyone in it.”

Nancy Brannaman, Lisbon, Iowa: “We have shared values, including around caring for the land. And we realize that caring for the land can heal other hurts in our lives.”

Thanks to all of you who joined us in community, and learning, to together work toward an Iowa with diverse farms, healthy food and vibrant communities. Together, we are changing the world.

*Sally Worley*



**ANNOUNCEMENT!**

**2022 PFI FIELD  
DAY SEASON**



**HOP ON BOARD!**



**GET OUT IN THE FIELD!**



**TAKE A CLOSER LOOK...**







**OR  
GAIN  
A NEW  
PERSPECTIVE...**



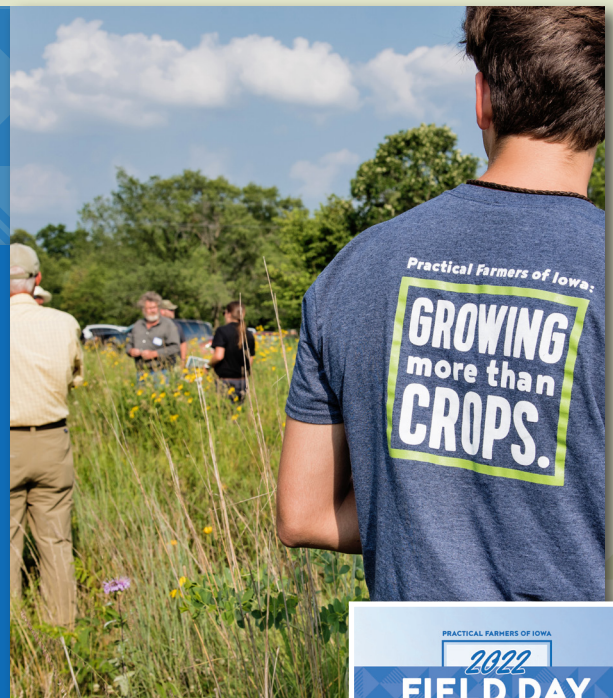
**YOU NEVER KNOW WHO WILL SHOW  
UP TO LEARN ALONGSIDE YOU.**

# JOIN US AT A FIELD DAY!

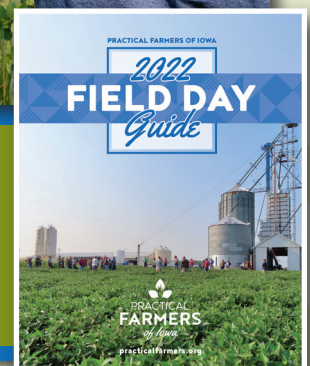
Field days remain a foundation of PFI's mission to equip farmers to build resilient farms and communities. We invite you to attend field days similar to your own production, or to explore topics and farms that span the agricultural spectrum. We offer farmer-led field days on conventional and organic field crops, cover crops and small grains, livestock farms of differing scale and species, on vegetable production, orcharding, agroforestry, cut flowers and more.

All PFI field days are free for anyone to attend. RSVPs are appreciated, but show up anytime!

See the full line-up of field days, RSVP and learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/field-days](https://practicalfarmers.org/field-days).



Want a PFI field day guide mailed to your house?  
Or a stack of guides to share with others? Call us at (515) 232-5661 or email [debra@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:debra@practicalfarmers.org).





# MAKING SPACE for Habitat

By Lia Carillo

*Heath Stolee has found ways to integrate wetlands, buffers and other on-farm habitat while staying profitable*

Heath Stolee has a passion for conserving the land, habitat and wildlife of his home state.

In 2009, he returned from military service in Iraq to Nutty Farmer Chestnuts, his family farm in Radcliff, Iowa. Soon afterwards, he and his family started experimenting with ways to integrate conservation practices into their farm management.

“Iowa holds a special place in my heart,” Heath says. “When I came back to the farm in 2009, we started doing some different things. We started with cover crops and trying some different rotations with small grains and alfalfa.”

## Adding a Wetland

Heath’s conservation efforts accelerated in 2020, when he worked closely with Ducks Unlimited and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship to install a 16-acre wetland. As an active member of Ducks Unlimited and a board member of the local chapter of Pheasants Forever, participating in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) was a natural fit. Part of the federal Conservation Reserve Program, CREP involves state, federal, local and private partners to offer financial incentives to landowners for voluntarily restoring wetlands to benefit water quality.



Through the program, wetlands are intentionally placed in areas where they capture water from tile drainage – in Heath’s case, about six tile lines from 1,893 acres of agricultural land – before it enters streams and rivers. The wetlands remove nitrate and other agricultural chemicals that would otherwise enter surface waters while also providing habitat for a variety of species. Ducks Unlimited estimates that Heath’s wetland will, over its lifespan, remove more than

1,744 tons of nitrogen from the drainage tile in the watershed.

To pay for the project, Heath took advantage of financial incentives through CREP, along with additional funds from Ducks Unlimited’s Living Lakes Initiative. In total, Heath enrolled 56 acres, including the wetland, into a conservation easement that ensures those acres will be protected as wildlife habitat.

“It’s good for private landowners that want to do something,” says Heath about the benefits of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. “[The wetland] is paid for, you still own it, you get to enjoy it and it’s the right thing to do for wildlife and water quality.”

## The Value of Wetlands

So what are wetlands and why are they so important to protect, build or restore? Adam Janke, a wildlife extension specialist with Iowa State University, defines wetlands as places where water and water-loving plants interact to create shallow pools that vary in depth and duration of flooding. The definition is broad because wetlands can vary widely, from oxbows and marshes to potholes, shallow ponds and more.

All wetlands, however, provide vital habitat for wildlife, fish and waterfowl – and they were once widespread features of Iowa’s landscape. Today, with more than 85% of Iowa’s land used for farming, wetlands also play a vital role in filtering out excess nitrogen and phosphorus, as well as agricultural chemicals, that are commonly found in agricultural runoff.

Recognizing this, the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy lists wetlands as one of several practices that can help Iowa improve its water quality. The strategy, adopted by the state in 2013, aims for a 45% reduction in levels of nitrogen and phosphorus flowing from Iowa waters to the Gulf of Mexico. These excess nutrients contribute to the Gulf’s annual dead zone, a low-oxygen area unable to support marine life.





Because 95% of Iowa's land is privately owned, farmers and landowners are key partners in Iowa's water quality efforts.

"We look for potential sites to restore wetlands, but a lot of the time, it's farmers and landowners coming to me," says Mike Shannon, a biologist from Ducks Unlimited whom Heath worked with to create his wetland. "Wetlands have a high cost to begin with, but they are the longest lasting of all the water quality practices. When someone contacts me, I try to figure out their vision and what programs might work for them."

Usually, Mike adds, it ends up being cheaper for farmers to install a wetland than to keep spending money – whether by installing more tile, replanting, fertilizing or losing yields – on an area that isn't good for production. For Heath, that constant struggle with a patch of ground signifies the area may be better as a wetland. "We have to take care of the land, and if the land wants to be wet anyway, you're not taking prime acres out of production," he says. "It just makes sense to put some of these things on the landscape."

### Inspiring More Conservation Curiosity

Mike acknowledges that taking ground out of production is a big decision. While people decide to install wetlands for different reasons, he says that, in his experience, most landowners find that the wetland solves a problem and improves their quality of life. Adding a wetland can also be a gateway to exploring other conservation practices, he notes.

"I once worked with a landowner who wanted to put a 10-acre wetland on family farm ground right behind the house," Mike



says. "He said this area was essentially always wet and wasn't good for production. At first, the landowner's wife had doubts – she didn't want mosquitos and bugs around, and didn't want any part of it. Now it's their favorite place to be."

The couple built a deck that overlooks the wetland to enjoy the view and all the visiting waterfowl, and Mike says they found it especially meaningful when their son shot his first duck there. Notably, their positive experience with the wetland encouraged the couple to experiment with cover crops. "That CREP wetland had made them look into soil health and other conservation practices, like putting radishes out there, and they are so happy."

*(Continued on page 10 →)*

Because 95% of Iowa's land is privately owned,  
farmers and landowners are key partners in Iowa's water quality efforts.







Heath is also experimenting with other conservation and agricultural practices. For instance, he has added buffer strips and planted chestnut trees to diversify his property, help the land and “break up the monotony of the corn.”

“I had about 15 pounds of production last year on 600 trees, and expect production to really ramp up in three or four years as the trees mature,” he says. “Right now, the important thing is that they’re growing. It’s fun to watch them start to produce.”

Heath is also collaborating with Mike and ISU to add some vegetation to the wetland. They have planted bull rush, arrowhead and wild rice to provide food for the waterfowl and wildlife that lives on and visits the farm. Heath says he doesn’t mind spending money on projects like this because he sees the benefits. “The wetland and other habitat on the property has provided a resting area and a home for trumpeter swans, waterfowl, pheasants and other wildlife,” he says, “all while helping water quality.”

### Financing Habitat on Farms

Farmers and landowners interested in ways to add or restore a wetland or other habitat on their land have a range of options. “There are plenty of programs to help with financial assistance,” Mike says. “Often, Ducks Unlimited has resources to help out or can serve as a technical expert.” He and other private lands biologists also regularly work with government agencies and nonprofit organizations, and can suggest other programs that might be a good fit.

“I am happy saying, okay, I can’t help you but let’s go talk to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, IDALS, DNR or some other organization,” Mike says. “Let’s talk to somebody that has something that might work for you.”

When he does have a chance to work with farmers and landowners, Mike says he appreciates the opportunity to hear farmers’ perspectives, work with them to meet their goals – and sometimes, help shift their thinking about conservation.

“I’ve really enjoyed working with Heath to add different conservation practices to build a resilient farm,” he says. “When I speak to landowners, I occasionally get the comment that Iowa is only for farming, and Heath’s perspective is refreshing.”

Responding to that sentiment, Heath says: “That’s not how it used to be or what it should be. The land provides us income, and we have to take care of it. We all have to farm – I have to farm, and everyone has to make a living.”

“But there are also acres that don’t need to be farmed. There is no reason we can’t make a prosperous living and put some of the other good stuff into conservation. It can be a give-and-take.” ■

### *Learn More*

Practical Farmers of Iowa can help connect people to their local USDA Service Centers or a private lands biologist near them. Contact Jorgen Rose at **(515) 232-5661** or [jorgen@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:jorgen@practicalfarmers.org).

Read the wetland story of another PFI family, John and Beverly Gilbert, at [practicalfarmers.org/blog](http://practicalfarmers.org/blog).





# Stacking Bales and Profits

*Selling wheat straw, Angela Knuth and her family have found a steady stream of income in a volatile commodity market*

**When Angela Knuth joined her husband Kerry's third-generation family farm, Knuth Farms, near Mead, Nebraska, she didn't have experience with a row crop operation. Today, she is in charge of precision agriculture technology on the farm.**

"I didn't grow up on a commodity farm that grew corn or soybeans," Angela says. "I grew up on a small farm with a lot of animals."

After college, Angela moved back to Mead, Nebraska, her hometown. In 1992 she married her husband, Kerry, and became interested in learning more about his family's corn and soybean operation.

Angela started out on the farm by washing equipment, driving seed and chemicals out to the field and helping run the grain cart. During these early days, she also did a lot of internet research. "I read about farmers like Dave Brandt in Ohio, who were talking about soil health already, and I started going out to our fields and observing things for myself," Angela says. "I noticed that after tillage, the soil was cloddy and loosened within those first 6 inches."

From her research, Angela knew that the top 5 to 10 inches of soil had the highest biological activity, so she began to question how Knuth Farms' tillage program was benefitting the farm and their bottom line.

## Making Changes for Soil Health

In 2004 the Knuths' took their first step towards increasing their soil health by no-tilling during the soybean year of their rotation. The following year, the Knuths switched from conventional tillage to strip-till on their corn acres. But the real turning point came in late 2012.

Corn prices were starting to trend downward from their all-time high and the Knuths wanted to explore ways to make a profit that could also help them further build the soil and reduce their inputs. "I started looking at the season itself," Angela says. "Our growing season is roughly 190 days. The idle season is almost as long. How could we utilize more of the season and turn a profit?"



Seeking to grow more during that idle season, the Knuths were approached about a program offered in 2013 by the University of Nebraska that paid farmers to grow food-grade wheat for a specialty market. The Knuths had never raised wheat before but were open to trying new things. "I realized that growing wheat created an opportunity to move in the direction of soil health," Angela says. "Planting in the fall and harvesting mid-summer opened up new windows of the year for us to add diversity to our rotation. It also allowed us to better spread out our workload."

That first year, the Knuths received a premium from the university program and grew 200 acres of wheat. But the premium was only offered for one year and wheat prices began to trend down again a few years later. Rather than stop growing wheat, the Knuths found a way to keep it in the rotation – and remain profitable – in the face of changing markets: selling small square bales.

## Finding a Steady Market in Straw

"Straw has been the anchor of our wheat program," Angela says. "It's a steady source of income." Unlike grain prices, the price of straw does not fluctuate as widely. Even in years with low grain prices, the Knuths keep wheat in their rotation to maintain their straw customer base.

The straw from small-grain crops like wheat is harvested after the grain in the middle of the summer. It can be packaged in various shapes depending on the baling equipment used, but is most commonly found in small squares or large rounds. The straw is primarily marketed to livestock operations to be used as feed or bedding, but smaller bales are often popular with individuals or other businesses.

Small square bales make up the majority of the Knuths' straw harvest. They produce between 5,000 and 6,000 small square bales a year, which they market to a variety of outlets. "We sell most of it to a feed store, but people buy a handful of bales for their animals and others will buy bales during the fall for holiday decoration," Angela says. To get the word out, the Knuths put ads in the local paper and in farm magazines.

*(Continued on page 12 →)*



All the bales that don't go to the feed store are directly marketed, which the Knuths enjoy. "We don't get to direct-market with our commodity crops. They just go to the elevator," Angela says. "Straw and other forages have given us contact with customers. And now that we've been at it long enough, we have customers returning each year."

The Knuths also learned from one of their customers about renting bales, which is especially compatible with outlets, like stores, that only need them seasonally. After a customer is done renting the bales, the Knuths are able to sell those bales to someone else, generating more income. The steadiness of the small-bale market has made it a vital component of the family's wheat crop. Says Angela: "In years of low [wheat] prices, the grain is the gravy on top."

## Building Community With Straw Harvest

But harvesting and marketing straw takes added work. When they were first starting out, the Knuths found the process to be very labor-intensive. The first year they hired a custom-baler. The baler would drop the small squares every 6 feet along the windrows and the Knuths had to come back with a hayrack to pick up the bales and stack them together – no small feat when harvesting thousands of bales. "Thankfully, we had two high-school aged boys, Gregory and Garrison, who were up for the tasks with friends," Angela says.

After the first year, the Knuths bought their own baler so they wouldn't have to hire out the custom work. But they still had to find the labor to stack the bales in the hayrack. So they got creative. "Our local school had a fundraiser with a live auction, and for a couple years we had people bid on a 'bale party,'" Angela says. "We'd call the winners when the straw bales were ready and they would spend a few hours picking up and stacking with us out in the field."

Word got out, and the Knuths hosted a few large groups for these parties. After helping to stack the bales, the Knuths invited the group to a barbecue back at their home place. "I think there's something unique about baling straw that attracts people," Angela says. "They enjoy the simplicity and the slow

**"Straw and other forages have given us contact with customers. And now that we've been at it long enough, we have customers returning each year."**

*- Angela Knuth*

steady rhythm of the baler as it chugs along. A lot of people grew up doing it. It's fun for them to be out in the field again."

Through the years, the Knuths have been able to streamline their straw harvesting process. They now hire a neighbor to use a Bale Baron, a machine that goes through the field and scoops up the small square bales in packs of 21, eliminating the need for big groups to tackle the labor. While they still get requests from people who want to help during the summer, the added equipment has been invaluable to the family's workflow.

## Stacking More Benefits

While the consistent cash flow from wheat straw is a huge asset, having wheat in the rotation has other benefits. Angela says it gives them a large window to experiment with cover crops. "This past summer with the advice of our consultant, we planted a 17-species mix after harvest to build soil health," she says.

The Knuths have also noticed other benefits across the rotation, like a 10-bushel per acre yield bump, on average, in the corn planted the year after wheat. "Soil health and economics are related," Angela says. "If we can maintain or increase yields, reduce inputs by growing our own nitrogen and suppress weeds with cover crops, that keeps more money in our pockets."

Angela continues to observe her fields and notes that even though the family is still early in their soil health journey, some results are already evident. "We have much better water infiltration now," she says, "and our soil looks and feels so much better in the spring when there's been a cover crop."

In her local area, wheat is still fairly uncommon. "Small grains, cover crops, growing your own nitrogen – they are changes worth exploring." ■



**Left:** The winners of the 'baling party' gather on the Knuth's farm. **Right:** The Bale Baron, a machine that accumulates small square bales in packs of 21, which makes for streamlined transportation.



# Learn more & get involved!



Angela shared her experiences harvesting and marketing straw at PFI's 2022 Small Grains Conference, held in Lincoln, Nebraska, on March 1. The annual event brings together farmers, researchers and small-grain buyers to network and share information about how to make diversified rotations work on farms.

Mark your calendars for the next Small Grains Conference, which will take place next March in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

## Did you know you can get cost-share for growing wheat?

PFI now offers two cost-share programs for small grains. See below for more details!

## Small Grains Cost-Share

For farmers like Angela who are diversifying their cropping rotation with a small-grain crop, Practical Farmers now offers two programs that cost-share in multiple years of the rotation:

- Grow and harvest a small grain and follow it with a frost-seed or summer-planted cover crop that contains at least one legume species.
- Reduce Nitrogen application in corn that follows your small grain in rotation by 40 units (compared to your typical N rate in a corn-soybean system) OR apply no more than 100 units.

**Both programs pay \$15 per acre on up to 200 acres and are available in both 2022 and 2023.**

### Eligibility requirements:

- Available to Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska and Wisconsin farmers only.
- Double or relay-cropping soybeans is not eligible for cost-share.
- Acres must be conventional or in transition to organic.
- Acres may not be able to overlap with certain EQIP practices or private carbon programs.

Visit [bit.ly/CoverCropCostShare](https://bit.ly/CoverCropCostShare)

or contact Lydia English at [lydia@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:lydia@practicalfarmers.org) to learn more.



# A Vision for Regenerative Iowa-Based Meat

99 Counties offers a new market for regenerative, humanely raised livestock

“I want to change agriculture. I want to change our state’s culture. I want to bring back small businesses, small towns and families that want to create communities together,” says Nick Wallace, of Wallace Farms near Keystone, Iowa. His 10-year goal is to source regenerative, nutrient-dense products from healthy soils on farms in each of Iowa’s 99 counties.

As an Iowa native, Nick has witnessed the decline of soil health and rural vibrancy over his lifetime. Nick’s vision for Iowa’s future, paired with a network of livestock farmers eager for new market opportunities, has led to the formation of 99 Counties – a new Iowa-based meat marketing company that plans to start selling meat in September 2022.

The mission of 99 Counties is “to transform agriculture and people’s relationship with food by connecting regenerative farmers directly to consumers who care about supporting humane and sustainable livestock production.”

The journey to this point started in the summer of 2019, when Nick visited me at the PFI office to share ideas he had been pondering for some time. I then connected Nick with two other PFI members and farmer-entrepreneurs interested in marketing – Wendy Johnson, who operates Joia Food Farm near Charles City, Iowa, and Caleb Baker, of R|C Farm near Clearfield, Iowa. The three farmers all brought their

passion and unique agriculture experience to the table and worked together to lay the foundation for 99 Counties.

Nick, a farmer, entrepreneur and lifetime member of PFI, has 20 years of experience in meat marketing through his current business, Wallace Farms. Wendy owns a regenerative farm producing humanely raised animal products, and has experience aggregating products from multiple sources. Caleb is transitioning his family’s conventional row crop and cattle farm to perennial pasture and raising grass-fed beef to sell in his local community.

After the core team was established, Practical Farmers got involved again. We have heard from many PFI livestock farmers over the years that marketing is a challenge and they need and want help, as well as alternative marketing options like aggregating products. Guided by our 2021-2023 strategic plan, which seeks to pave a path to prosperity for regional food and farm businesses, we applied for, and received, a grant from the United States

Department of Agriculture – Ag Marketing Services division to help turn the farmers’ shared vision for 99 Counties into reality.

## Steps to Starting a Business

This grant funding was used to hire Matt LeRoux, an agriculture economics consultant who specializes in meat marketing. Matt worked with the farmer team to complete a feasibility study that informed 99 Counties’ business plan. The feasibility study assessed facets critical to the operation, such as consumer market research, target customers, branding, production and sourcing, sales plans and product pricing. While time-consuming, Matt says a feasibility study is vital for future success. Many farm businesses miss this step, which can lead to a less viable business model and more challenges establishing an economically sustainable operation.

“In developing the feasibility study, the team searched for the balance point between what would appeal to a large enough market and what the founders felt passionate about,” Matt says. “I think that balance led us to a plan that allows the business to be viable and the farmers to be committed to the mission.”

Much deliberation and time went into developing the study. “It was really helpful to



(Above): Nick Wallace divides a paddock for rotational grazing on his farm near Keystone, Iowa. (Opposite) Left: The logo of 99 Counties. Right: 99 Counties co-founders from left to right: Mike Adkins, Nick Wallace and Christian Ebersole at Nick’s farm near Keystone, Iowa.





see all of the nuances that go into starting a business of this magnitude,” Caleb says. “It was also helpful to realize that you need to look at the end and work backwards, so you can figure out where to begin.”

The study’s findings show there is consumer demand, specifically in the greater Chicago area, for meat produced in a way that respects the land and the animals, as well as a desire to directly support local Iowa farmers. The traits 99 Counties will use for marketing include Iowa-raised, grass-fed and non-confinement. The study also showed that 99 Counties has an opportunity to win and retain customers with an attractive, easy ordering system paired with clear communication about traits of the meat it will sell and excellent customer service.

### From Plan to Reality

As the plan coalesced, Nick took a leading role and started the search for money to fund start-up costs. “Serendipitously, two technology entrepreneurs – Christian Ebersol and Mike Adkins, who had traveled across the U.S. learning about regenerative agriculture – contacted PFI to inquire about strategies to invest in regenerative agriculture in Iowa,” Nick says. PFI connected him with Christian and Mike, and this led to the evolution of the team behind 99 Counties.

Nick, the vision-keeper and experienced direct-marketer, paired his ideas and skills with those of Christian and Mike. Christian’s background is in venture capital, fundraising and launching products. Mike’s background is in technology and developing data platforms. Using their combined skillsets, and the feasibility study as a guide, the three are building a platform to empower farmers to adopt regenerative agriculture.

Wendy and Caleb will both continue supporting 99 Counties through various roles. Wendy will serve as a farm ambassador helping to recruit farmers, certifying their practices and providing support to regenerate more land. Caleb will serve in a more background role as an informal advocate of 99 Counties in the community and as a sounding board for Nick about how the business is progressing. Caleb might also supply livestock in the future.

In early 2022, 99 Counties fundraised \$3.8 million dollars from a combination of investors who, as stated on 99 Counties’ website, “share a passion to improve the health of humans and the environment through good food.” The fast-growing company now employs nine people and expects to add another 10 employees in Iowa and the greater Chicago area by year’s end.

### A Business is Born

Once it launches, 99 Counties will sell frozen beef, pork and poultry via subscription boxes and a la carte options. Findings from the feasibility study show subscription bundles, which are ordered online and consist of an assortment of meat cuts from mixed species, are a reasonable proposal for the target market.

The bundles will serve customers in Iowa and the Chicago metro area. “Each cut of meat will come with a barcode providing traceability back to the farm of origin,” Christian says, “along with photography and videography chronicling the stories of the farmers who raised the livestock with regenerative practices, so consumers can feel proud knowing that their purchases supported a small, nearby farm with a positive impact on the environment.”

The company is seeking to purchase whole animals from grass-fed beef and non-confinement pork and poultry producers. In a blog post, Christian writes: “When livestock are ready to be harvested, 99 Counties will buy the whole animal from the farmer at a premium price point, paying on average a 15% premium to farmers.” All animal transportation, processing, packaging, sales and marketing will be handled by 99 Counties to, as Nick explains, “empower farmers to focus on animal husbandry and regenerative practices while we take care of the logistics involved in processing, cold-storage, marketing and distribution.”

The core principles of 99 Counties, and its plan to put those principles into action, all serve to support producers who are already using regenerative agriculture practices and to help more farmers adopt these practices by creating a marketplace for their regeneratively raised livestock. When more farmers are viable, says Nick, “we’ll populate our state with culture, community and bring Iowa back to life.” ■

### Learn More

To learn more about 99 Counties, the farmers and landowners it’s recruiting and the story behind it:

- Visit [99counties.com](https://99counties.com)
- Read [techcrunch.com/2022/02/22/99-counties-regenerative-agriculture-meat-marketplace](https://techcrunch.com/2022/02/22/99-counties-regenerative-agriculture-meat-marketplace)
- Watch for **meet-and-greet events** around Iowa this summer. These producer-focused events are a chance to meet the 99 Counties team, learn more and ask questions.

To learn more about 99 Counties’ production standards, email Nick Wallace at [nick@99counties.com](mailto:nick@99counties.com).



# Finding the Sweet Spot

Winter spinach offers a bounty of rewards: outstanding flavor, market potential and opportunities for farmers

## Making a Market

At River Root Farm near Decorah, Iowa, Mike Bollinger and Katie Prochaska have made some changes in recent years.

When they established River Root Farm, Mike and Katie grew “one of everything in the seed catalog” on their small, diversified market farm. Their goals changed when they started a family, however. They shifted their focus to raising only those crops they could grow in higher volume, with a higher price point and better profit margins, thus improving overall profits.

“We have transitioned into wholesale production, so we need to use our high tunnel space to focus on volume production of the five things we grow: baby kale, baby arugula, baby Asian greens, lettuce mix, and spinach,” Mike says. “But if we grow one crop as deep as we can into the winter, it would be spinach. It can withstand really cold temperatures and not degrade.”

Dan Fillius, commercial vegetable specialist with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, adds that winter spinach is uniquely sweet and says this, and the reason why it’s so winter-hardy, has to do with its biology. “The plants use sugar concentration in cells as a natural antifreeze,” he says. “So when spinach freezes, the cold weather brings out more sugars and a sweeter flavor.”



River Root salad greens are packed into five-ounce clam shells and sold in bulk to area cooperatives and restaurants. Mike says, “We saw the market opportunity for greens to be in growing unique things in our region and replacing crops shipped in from California and Arizona.”

And they’re getting pretty close. In 2021, Mike and Katie grew and marketed spinach 50 of 52 weeks, and a loyal customer base seeks out their product. “When we didn’t have spinach those two weeks,” Mike says, “we had produce managers calling us because customers were calling them to plan their shopping around when our spinach would be in stock.”

Mike projects he and Katie could as much as triple their current high tunnel capacity and still only nick the Midwest market demand for winter-grown spinach. With 26,000 square feet of current space in their high tunnels, that is an eye-opening statement.

At Lee’s Greens near Nevada, Iowa, Lee Matteson has had a similar experience with his winter spinach production. Spinach is frequently the most popular option in his winter salad greens CSA, which he offers from November to March, along with wholesale and a la carte sales. This creates an off-season market that keeps cash flow consistent through the winter months.

For the 2022 winter season, Lee is planning an overall increase in the amount of spinach he produces. Of his six heated houses he uses through the course of the year, he plans to shut three down following harvest of the last fall crops. Two heated

houses will house hydroponic production of lettuce, kale and other salad greens, and one house will be used entirely for in-ground spinach production.

That one will be unheated, both to save on energy costs and to produce a “crunchier, flavorful crop.”

“If I cover the spinach with cloth, like Reemay, it provides just enough





degrees – to get the crop through the winter,” Lee says. “I can plant in September and get five or six harvests from one planting of spinach. You have to time the harvests right, but it regrows time after time.”

“Spinach can go through several freezes,” he adds. “It’s just so tolerant. We could definitely sell more spinach. We haven’t hit a ceiling in that market yet.”

## Time It Well, and Handle With Care

Timing is a key factor throughout the production cycle of any fall crop, starting with the timing of seeding. This is true of any fall crop, but for spinach – which, with luck and good management, will be in production through multiple cuttings over four to five months – it is especially important to plant seeds at the right time. At River Root Farm, spinach gets direct-seeded on Sept. 10.

“The margin of time is incredibly thin during this period,” Mike says. “Missing planting dates by more than a couple of days can result in a significantly delayed crop, which can mean missing the market opportunity presented by Thanksgiving sales in the fall.”

Careful handling while harvesting is another critical factor. Though spinach is quite durable to temperature variations, the leaves require a gentle touch and deft cuts. Mike and Katie do much of the harvesting by hand with knives. They find more quality control employed at harvest results in a better-packaged product. They have also found that making cleaner cuts results in better regrowth and contributes to the long-term production viability of the crops.

While harvest at Lee’s Greens works a bit differently, Lee and his team take just as much care in their process. Lee prefers cutting the whole spinach rosette, rather than individual leaves. He finds that timing the harvest at the right stage encourages faster regrowth.

“If you harvest too late, it will regrow more slowly,” Lee says. “Actually, [spinach] grows back faster than lettuce and other crops that can’t handle the frost. It yields better poundage overall, and I find customers like the mix of sizes in their orders.”

## Rethinking Seasonal Production

When asked why growing spinach in winter is so special, Dan gets excited. “It’s distinct to have a crop that feels out of sync with the outside world,” he says. “Plus, the flavor is incredible! The stems are like candy. It captures the imagination.”

Dan spent years as a commercial vegetable farmer in Michigan, Minnesota and Iowa before leveraging his extensive knowledge about farm management, production, season extension and all things veggie to support Iowa’s commercial vegetable industry through his role at ISU. His vision for what is possible with a crop like winter spinach is intriguing.

“The dream is to have a customer base that is as enthusiastic about winter spinach as they are about the first sweet corn,” he says. But Dan’s vision extends beyond spinach. He sees potential for targeting other unique markets, and believes season extension offers farmers and consumers alike the opportunity to completely rethink seasonal production – along with the potential to change lifestyles. Winter spinach is just the beginning.

“There’s a case to be made that greens – perhaps particularly spinach – can generate more dollars per square foot than even tomatoes,” Dan says. “So don’t make them an afterthought. Make them a real focus.”

In advocating for winter spinach, Dan sees opportunity for not only a strong market but also for work-life balance. “You can work less hard,” he says. “I’ve even seen farms in other parts of the country flipping their production

seasons by going all-in on winter greens production and taking summers off.”

Mike and Katie knew that growing their business in a way that sustained their operation along with their lifestyle and mental health meant they had to take a different approach.

Says Mike: “We found that with the shift to fewer crops and focus on wholesale, growing all through the winter can ultimately reduce the pressure placed on summer production by distributing production, sales and marketing throughout the year.”

## The Sweet Spot

And while other crops may also become sweeter with cold exposure, spinach reigns as a customer favorite. Hardier than lettuces yet more tender than kale, winter spinach is durable, versatile and compelling, with a sugar-rich flavor that can’t be beat.

Yet growing winter spinach is a practice in cognitive dissonance; it feels somehow upside down to plant during harvest season, harvest when snow flies and deliver fresh, bright leaves during the coldest days of the year.

But those attributes are also what make winter spinach production special. It means tapping into a unique market, developing a dedicated following of customers and expanding what is possible in the vegetable farming lifestyle.

For the farmers who grow it, winter spinach lands in the sweet spot. ■





# Consuming Locally Through PFI's Directories

By Emma Liddle



The beginning of summer heralds the opening of farmers markets and CSAs. The exciting lineup of fresh fruits and vegetables draws consumers to buy straight from farmers. But as summer wanes into autumn, outdoor farmers markets – and the visibility and convenience they offer farmers and shoppers alike – close too, leaving fewer options for direct marketers who may still have product left over.

Even if seasonality is part of the job, producers need consistent demand for consistent income. The same can be said for businesses, non-profits and organizations that handle local products. Practical Farmers of Iowa's directories exist to connect consumers with products and services from members. Last April, we launched the PFI Directories page on our website to house all of our directories in one location.

This page makes it easier for supporters to find the goods and services they're looking for, directly from PFI members. When you purchase goods or services from members listed here, you're directly funding and helping our membership. Doing so builds farm viability, encourages creativity and helps new farms succeed.

## Member-Benefit Directories From PFI

Practical Farmers of Iowa has three member-benefit directories:

- The **"Local Foods Directory"** contains PFI members who are growing and marketing products, from vegetables and meat to popcorn. If you're looking to join a CSA, source whole cuts of meat or compare local ingredients, this is the directory to visit.
- The **"Businesses Offering Local Foods"** directory consists of several businesses that act as distributors of local products, such as food hubs or co-ops.

- Our newest addition to the Directories page is the **"Business and Organization Directory."** Here, companies with an Organization-level PFI membership list their services and contact information so people can reference them when looking for new products or services. This is an ideal directory for farmers looking for agricultural services, products and resources.

The Directories page also links to two separate webpages with specialized directories for cover crops and small grains: the "Small Grains Directory" and the "Cover Crop Business Directory." The latter was recently transformed into an app and website that offers cover crop goods and services by location.

These two directories are excellent resources for those interested in planting cover crops or small grains – and for businesses seeking to connect with farmers. Businesses don't need a PFI membership to be listed – so if you offer a relevant service and aren't listed, contact us about getting added.

We created our first two product-sourcing directories in 2016 as a way to increase exposure and support for PFI members.

The "Local Foods Directory" started off with 81 listings, which we featured in our Autumn 2016 magazine.

In that issue, we wrote: "Both farmer and non-farmer members have identified local foods as a priority issue for Practical Farmers of Iowa. We hope that, by listing members who market local foods in a centralized place, we will help foster more connections between farmers and the friends of farmers looking to support them." Today, the directory has grown to include 118 farm businesses – and the goal remains just as true now as then.

117

PFI member farms listed in our "Local Foods Directory"

52

Iowa counties represented

179

Cities and surrounding areas served across the state, from Adel to Woodbine

26

Enterprises represented in the "Local Foods Directory"

64

The number of farmers raising vegetables, the most common product in the "Local Foods Directory"

33

Organizations listed in the "Business and Organizational Directory"



We officially launched our “Business and Organizational Directory” on our Directories page in May 2021 as an added benefit for the companies and non-profits serving farmers, landowners and rural communities. This directory has helped people find services directly from organizations who are part of the PFI network, and has helped these organizations promote and market their resources.

## Directories as a Marketing Aid

Our member-benefit directories are easy to join and browse. Interested farms or organizations can sign up through our website, and only need to fill out a couple of questions to join. For example, the “Local Foods Directory” consists of just four columns: farm name and website, member names, locations served and products available. As long as the farm or household has a current PFI membership, its listing can be included in our directory.

Natasha Wilson is the primary contact for West Fork Farmstead, which produces meat, eggs and honey in eastern Iowa. She uses the directory to increase her exposure to PFI people and to network with similar people.

“I have used the directory to look for producers in other parts of the state who I may not know personally or think of right away,” Natasha says. “It was easy to sign up and has been easy to make changes when needed. I appreciate being included to help potential customers and other farmers find me, and to help improve our overall presence and exposure online.”

A minimum of vital information on the directory allows the farm or business to speak for itself. This cuts out a lot of unnecessary time and effort in marketing and purchasing. The simplicity also allows producers to conduct initial market research.

For example, the “Local Foods Directory” offers enough information for these farms to see what other producers in their area might be growing. From here, they can identify a niche and decide what to grow and market. Conversely, it’s simple to find PFI members with complementary products for purposes of collaboration. Each directory provides a snapshot of what PFI members sell, and enough contact information to reach out.

## Directories as a Consumption Aid

PFI’s directories are also an ideal starting spot for consumers looking to find local goods or services. Jeanne Hansen of Hansen’s Dairy, in Hudson, Iowa, uses the “Local Foods Directory” for marketing and personal purchasing.

“I recently used that directory to locate nearby duck eggs,” she says. “If you’re looking for unique things, get on [the directory] and find them.” Jeanne also recommends the directory to customers who ask about other products. When used like this, the directories are an excellent tool to connect friends of farmers with the farmers they wish to support. “People need to realize that connection is there,” Jeanne says.

For a PFI member, these directories are a free, effective means of increasing their customer base. Our friend of farmer members want to support our farmers. More broadly, supply

chain shortages linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with farmer creativity in adapting their operations to meet consumer needs, has added new momentum to the public’s interest in sourcing more ingredients locally. Being listed in PFI’s directory is another way to advertise and connect with potential customers.

## A Growing Commitment to Local Sourcing

Building connections between farmers and buyers matters to PFI members and staff. This is why PFI staff strive to source ingredients locally from members for all our major events. Working with caterers or cooks to source local foods isn’t always easy. But the effort is worthwhile, both for the quality of the food and the networks formed.

Bre Taege, catering manager at Farmhouse Catering, looks forward to using local products where possible, and uses PFI’s “Local Foods Directory” as a resource. “The farmers are always so responsive and helpful,” she says.

At our 2022 annual conference in January, Farmhouse Catering used local ingredients from 25 PFI member farms – including eggs from Bridgewater Farm, cream from Hansen’s Dairy, whole chicken from Wild Rose Pastures, onions from Blue Gate Farm, lettuce from Lee’s Greens and others. Nine of these farms are listed in the “Local Foods Directory,” a copy of which was sent to Farmhouse Catering.

“I didn’t have to ask each individual producer what I could get from them,” Bre says. “It saved so much time! I use these contacts all the time for events throughout the year. I truly feel like I am supporting local businesses, and as a local small business ourselves, we love to support our community. We know we are getting a fresh and quality product every time.” ■

## Want to explore PFI’s directories?

- Find the Directories page at [practicalfarmers.org/directories](https://practicalfarmers.org/directories) or under the Connect With PFI section of our website.

## Want to add yourself to one of our directories?

- Under each directory, there is a form to sign up. If needed, please join or renew as a PFI member and complete the form under the directory you would like to be added to – and please allow one business day for your entry to be listed.
- If you would like to join the “Businesses Offering Local Foods” directory, please email Emma Liddle at [emma@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:emma@practicalfarmers.org) to inquire.

## Questions?

- Contact Emma at (515) 232-5661 or [emma@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:emma@practicalfarmers.org).



## Improving Food and Farming

Thanks to the support of many, PFI has expanded program offerings to serve more farmers

**P**ractical Farmers of Iowa is increasing our program offerings and the number of people we serve. For example, we have expanded our cost-share programs beyond cover crops and small grains to include cost-share funds for livestock farmers who need mobile fencing and water systems to start or expand grass-based production, and for farmers who want to add habitat to their land.

This expansion is possible due to continued financial contributions from a growing group of supporters. **If you are one of these supporters, THANK YOU.** If you would like to join this list of generous people and organizations, please contact me: [sally@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:sally@practicalfarmers.org)

In fiscal year 2021 (Oct. 1, 2020-Sept. 30, 2021) Practical Farmers received \$3.74 million in revenue. This represents an increase of \$500,000 from fiscal year 2020. Of this revenue, **\$111,529 came from donations above membership from 409 individual donors.**

In addition, 27 PFI members purchased gift memberships for others, both supporting PFI and bringing more people into this transformative network. We also received funding from 51 grants and from 29 private companies.

### INDIVIDUAL GIVING IS TRANSFORMING PFI

Your donations let us invest in necessary infrastructure, like technology to help us work more efficiently, allowing us to serve a larger network of farmers.

Your generosity allows us to respond to unanticipated needs, such as transitioning events to a new format or serving farmers in ways that aren't directly supported by a specific funding stream. For example, your donations funded financial match money to help beginning farmers create viable farm businesses.

Your donations also send a strong message that you value PFI's work and trust PFI to invest your money wisely. **This is a huge compliment and we thank you!** ■

### GIVING THE GIFT OF LEARNING

Marilyn Barnes of Grinnell, Iowa, first joined PFI in 2001 after inheriting family farmland. "We were attracted to PFI," she says,



"because of the practical way in which the organization was looking at agriculture as a whole - preserving and improving land, providing wholesome food and grains and the sharing of information farmer-to-farmer."

For years, Marilyn and her son, Brent Schlenker, also of Grinnell, have provided their tenant a gift membership. "I wanted my renter to have the opportunity to know of field days, learn what others were doing and pick up knowledge about some of my wishes for the land," Marilyn says.

She and Brent have also regularly donated above membership. "We have found PFI to be on the leading edge of learning," Marilyn says. "Our desires for good conservation, soil health and healthy crops just synced with what PFI was doing. These donations are for the good of not only my own land, but that of Iowa and our nation and world. It has not been hard to support an organization like this." ■

### Tribute Gifts

#### IN MEMORY OF

Paul Ackley  
*In memory of Nancy Ackley*  
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# Donors in Fiscal Year 2021

*The following list represents donors above membership.*

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Tom and Irene Frantzen  
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*(Continued on page 22 →)*



» PFI Leaders : (CONTINUED)

(← Continued from page 21)

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Read our complete 2021 annual report – including stories of more PFI leaders – at [practicalfarmers.org](http://practicalfarmers.org).



# Nourishing Community Through

## *Local Meat*

Some farmers are finding success connecting with customers and selling meat directly

By Celize Christy

Directly marketing meat, for some farmers and producers, can be a way to capture more of the consumer dollar. By bypassing the middlemen – wholesalers, distributors and retailers – direct marketing allows meat producers to receive retail value for their product. For the farmers behind Crooked Gap Farm and Over the Moon Farm & Flowers, direct marketing and developing personal connections with customers has been key to getting established in the marketplace.

### **Finding a Niche, Connecting With Customers**

Crooked Gap Farm is owned and operated by Ethan Book, his wife Rebecca and their six children – Caleb, Hannah, Isaac, Jonathan, Josiah and Abigail. Together, they raise pastured and grass-fed heritage breeds of pork, beef, lamb and poultry on 40 acres near Knoxville, Iowa. The family operates a meat CSA, markets whole and half hogs and sells individual meat cuts. These diverse marketing options provide a unique opportunity for customers to try cuts of meat not commonly seen in a grocer's meat case or frozen foods aisle.

Ethan and Rebecca bought their land and started farming in 2007, but early on, they realized that their farmland was not suitable to sustain a growing herd of grass-fed cattle. "Realistically, we only have about 20 acres of pasture, which is not enough to sustain a viable business based on grass-fed beef," Ethan says. The Books pivoted to pork, realizing pigs were a more suitable species of livestock to expand on the farm.

In 2009, Ethan purchased his first drove of feeder pigs and processed them into custom cuts, marketing the meat to friends and family. Their first foray into marketing off the farm was at the Living History Farms farmers market in 2010. Starting at a smaller market allowed Ethan and Rebecca to get a feel for how best to market, learn what products sell and solidify the niche they sought to fill. This experience prepared them to become a vendor at the larger Des Moines' Downtown Farmers' Market the following year.

"The thing I love most about setting up at the market is the chance to interact with people," Ethan says. "Not everybody I talk to

purchases something, but it gives me the opportunity to share about our farm and the reasons why we farm the way we do."

### **Relationship Marketing**

Building relationships has been key to establishing Crooked Gap's direct-marketing business. Beyond solidifying a customer base, Ethan and Rebecca have also forged partnerships with other farmers and chefs. One of those fruitful connections has been with Brett McClavy, executive chef of Cheese Bar, the sister restaurant to the brick-and-mortar Cheese Shop in Des Moines.

The Cheese Shop hosts a pop-up market where farmers and food artisans are able to sell locally sourced goods. It was at the pop-up market that Ethan met Jordan Clasen of Grade A Gardens and initiated a partnership to offer and promote each other's products. "As folks come to pick up their veggie shares, they will purchase brats or meat cuts from us and vice versa," Ethan says. "That's been the secret sauce for us, the connections we have built with others."

Partnering with other farmers provides an opportunity for both experienced and beginning direct-market meat farmers to continue to grow their customer base while adding value to others' market offerings.

This has been true for beginning farmers Anna Hankins and Shae Pesek of Over the Moon Farm & Flowers. The couple launched their farm on Shae's family farm near Coggon, Iowa, in July 2019, starting with an acre of sweet corn, experimenting with their first batch of flowers and raising beef, chickens, pigs and goats. The desire to pursue a rural life and start a farm business drew both women to



eastern Iowa – in Shae’s case, back to her family farm in Delaware County. “Shae grew up on a cattle farm and my heart has always been in livestock farming as well,” Anna says. “We knew we wanted to have a direct-to-consumer meat business.”

During their second season, Anna and Shae collaborated with Local Harvest CSA, run by Maja and Carmen Black near Solon, Iowa, and Buffalo Ridge Orchard, operated by Emma and Marcus Johnson near Central City, Iowa, to offer Over the Moon’s flowers in conjunction with the other two farms’ vegetable shares.

“Collaborating with our farmer friends gave us a great leg up in direct-to-consumer marketing,” Anna says. “Flowers are an awesome cash crop and they have allowed us to start a business without really any capital investment.”

### It’s Not a Race to the Bottom

After the success of their flower CSA, Anna and Shae began to envision a similar model for marketing meat. “Raising animals is the fun part and we are so grateful to do it,” Anna says. “The hard part is navigating a way to make sure we move all that meat.” For Shae, raising livestock connects to her experiences growing up on a cattle farm and actively showing livestock and judging meat through 4H and National FFA Organization. “For me, it feels deeply satisfying to be able to provide a product folks really enjoy, and that can nourish their families,” Shae says. “It just brings me a lot of joy to raise livestock.”

At Over the Moon, customers can sign up for a three-month “farmers’ choice” meat share, where customers can get a variety of cuts and meats depending on what Anna and Shae select. This allows for the farm to have a better market flow of meat depending on what is available. Starting the farm with a horticultural crop like flowers and now incorporating meat into their offerings has allowed Anna and Shae to move from seasonal year-round operation.

“Starting with flowers was important for our cash flow. We are going to continue to do flowers, but we also hope to grow our meat enterprise and offer flowers seasonally,” Anna says. “Marketing meat has allowed us to have a year-round business for the first time. It felt

so good to have something to sell in January besides CSA shares – but to be able to sell a product is different.”

### Making the Grade

For beginning farmers, direct-marketing products can be a challenge. Navigating what products to offer while also learning how to break into a market can be frustrating. Add to that the complexities of being a small- to mid-scale livestock producer and facing the bottlenecks of limited processing options.

As beginners newly launching meat sales, Anna and Shae had difficulty booking locker dates. This led to using different lockers and inconsistent cuts of meat. “We have some real, logistical barriers,” Anna says. “But we also know that we need to produce more to have more cash flow plus efficiency in order to scale up.”

Together, Anna and Shae are continuing to make decisions on how to sustain their growth in a way that makes sense to them and the vision they both have for the farm. Launching their farm as the COVID-19 pandemic hit was an unanticipated challenge, but has taught them to have multiple strategies in their back pocket when it comes to the farm and marketing.

As for future plans for Over the Moon, Anna and Shae want to expand their meat production, continue to evolve their brand and work towards a holistic balance of labor. “Anyone can raise a chicken, but not everyone can provide the full spectrum of things that people feel or get from being a part of our farm community,” Anna says.

Ethan encourages others who are starting out to put in as much effort into marketing as they want to get in return. “An important piece of marketing is communication and relationship-building,” he says. “It is crucial to figure out who your customers are, who they need you to be and what they want.”

“We have surveyed customers and consistently communicate with them,” he continues. “The reason we are able to make the decisions we make today is because of the communication with customers we have maintained for the last 13 years.” ■



(Above): Crooked Gap Farm’s market stall at the Des Moines Downtown Farmers’ Market in 2021. Owners Ethan and Rebecca Book (above-right) have honed their direct-marketing skills over the years. (Opposite) Anna Hankins (left) and Shae Pesek, of Over the Moon Farm & Flowers, pose with packages of their meat.



# BROADENING Our Big Tent

*Practical Farmers has actively sought out a greater diversity of members these past few years, in response to member feedback and board leadership. The following statement describes our commitment to broadening our big tent.*

Practical Farmers of Iowa's mission is to equip farmers to build resilient farms and communities. Welcoming everyone and creating a culture of mutual respect have always been core PFI values.

We believe that a rich tapestry of farm types, sizes, practices and philosophies creates a more resilient and inclusive agricultural landscape. We also believe that a "big tent" filled with people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives enriches our understanding and broadens our impact.

## Inviting Everyone to the Table

In all our gathering spaces, we strive for an environment where everyone – farmers of all types and philosophies, members, employees, volunteers, partners and guests – feels valued, heard, represented and respected. As we continue to work towards a resilient and inclusive agricultural landscape, it is imperative that we redouble our efforts to embody our core value of welcoming everyone.

We are committed to ensuring that everyone – regardless of race, ethnicity, cultural background, social or political identity, education, economic status or ability – feels not just welcome but invited to engage with PFI, and has equal access to our network, programs and resources.

## Empowering All Farmers to Overcome Barriers

We envision a future where healthy soil, healthy food, clean air, clean water, resilient farms and vibrant communities are a reality for all –and where all who wish to farm are empowered to do so.

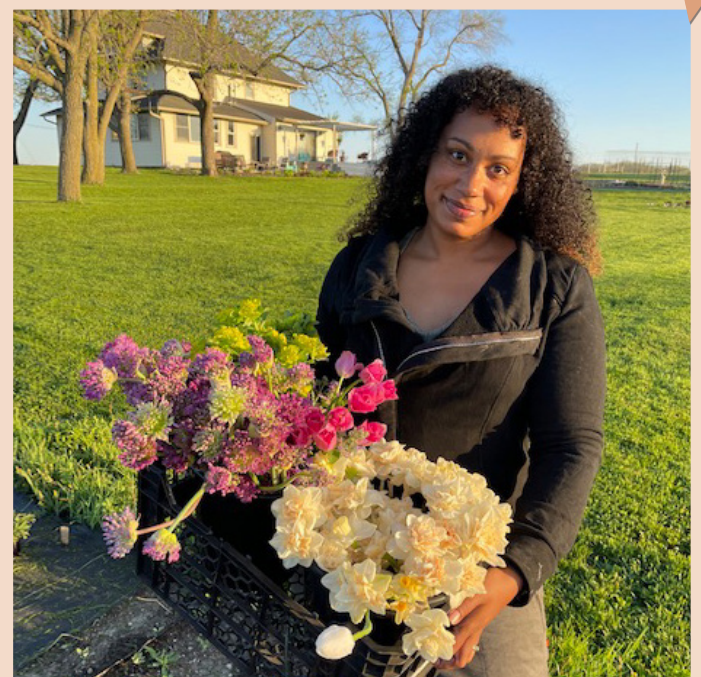
We also know that broadening our "big tent" means building authentic relationships, understanding the varied needs and barriers of all those we work with – and providing support and resources to match. Part of inhabiting the big tent is honestly examining, identifying and addressing all forms of discrimination.

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## Our Commitments

We commit to inviting and welcoming everyone by:

- Building relationships with farmers and aspiring farmers facing barriers of any kind, and providing support to address those barriers
- Intentionally uplifting farmers and aspiring farmers of color, both within PFI and the agricultural communities in which we live and work
- Collaborating with people and organizations in Iowa and across the Midwest, in all sectors, who can help us invite, welcome and support everyone
- Establishing and maintaining a welcoming workplace
- Evaluating our progress frequently, as this important work must be impactful and ongoing



## 2021-2022 Progress Snapshot and Forecast

In 2021, **22 farmers of color served in leadership roles** at PFI by presenting at **10 events** and being featured in PFI's outreach.

PFI has provided programming in **Spanish**, as well as interpretation of English speakers into **Nepali, Spanish and Burundi**.

PFI's website is now translatable to **11 languages**.

PFI has a **dedicated webpage in Spanish** and launched a **bi-monthly Spanish e-newsletter** in 2021.

We printed our **field day guide and conference brochure and program in Spanish**.

### Work in Action

Hannah Scates Kettler started Minerva's Meadow in 2020 near State Center, Iowa. Minerva's Meadow is a no-till organic flower farm with an emphasis on prairie flowers. She has participated in PFI by attending meetings organized for farmers of color to come together and share their experiences.

Hannah says: "The work PFI is doing is essential, especially in places like Iowa, with farmers of color being a huge minority. I have seen, through the work of Celize Christy, that PFI is driven to address and commit to concerns that align well with farmers of color: centering community, building networks of

resilience, regenerative agriculture and recognizing the foundation that farmers of color have made for agriculture.

"It's an organization that's finally, on some level, aware of the need for space for these conversations, these practices and these areas of activity and concern in the farming community. These spaces have been crucial to my sense of belonging and provided opportunities for networking within PFI that have made my transition to farming so much more supported than would otherwise be.

"Without this kind of network and programming, I'd feel very much without a community to lean on or a bank of such knowledge from which to draw."

### Inspiring Others

At PFI's 2022 annual conference, Shaffer Ridgeway and DaQuay Campbell shared what led them to begin their farm journeys. They also discussed the farming and urban agricultural work they are currently engaged in and how their agricultural efforts have impacted them and their families. This session – "Why Are There so Few Black Farmers in Iowa? Narratives and Perspectives From Two Black Iowa Farmers" – attracted a full house: 87 people gathered to learn from Shaffer and DaQuay.

One attendee, Paul Hoffman, from Earlville, Illinois, came to the conference to speak about his organic cropping experiences and expected to glean more agronomic information from other sessions. He said of this session:

"Little did I know that the most deeply meaningful session would be one where I gained NO knowledge on how to grow

my crops. The open and heartfelt sharing in the session with Shaffer Ridgeway and DaQuay Campbell touched my heart in a very profound way.

"As a white man from a multi-generational farming background, I have become acutely aware of my position of privilege, but have been unsure of what I can do and how to leverage that to serve the needs of Black farmers and other farmers from underrepresented cultures and communities. This session gives me hope, knowing that I am part of an organization that is willing to welcome minority voices to the table to strengthen our farming communities and progress toward a community that is welcoming and serving the needs of all farmers."

Paul has since provided financial support and expressed interest in providing land access to help farmers of color access meaningful careers in farming.

### Please contact Sally Worley, [sally@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:sally@practicalfarmers.org) if:

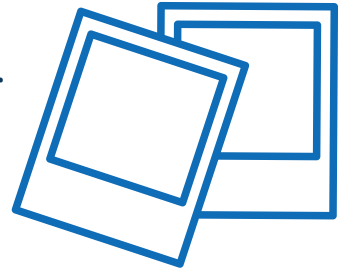
- You'd like more information about our farmer of color network development plan and progress
- You want to learn how to be involved in these efforts
- You have ideas of communities of farmers or aspiring farmers of color that PFI should reach out to



# PFI MEMBER

## Photo Album

We are pleased to launch this new section of the Practical Farmer, featuring photos submitted by PFI members from their farms. Whether you capture images of the everyday, the awe-inspiring or the curiously beautiful on your farm, send them our way and we might feature them in the next edition of the magazine.



A spring rainbow. (Photo: Rachel Petersen, Knoxville, Iowa)



Spring has arrived! Second calf of the year at Bobolink Prairie Farm (first to pose for a picture). (Photo: Nathan Anderson, Aurelia, Iowa)



Eager to make his impact on the family farm, Leo catches up on the latest features from PFI. (Photo: Marissa Waldo, Cascade, Iowa)





Chantal Maombi, Farm Manager at Tapestry Farms, tallies a “win” over the sunflower. (Photo: Ann McGlynn, Davenport, Iowa)



Turkeys finding their pasture legs at Over the Moon Farm and Flowers. (Photo: Anna Hankins, Coggon, Iowa)



Early spring shearing at Cory Family Farm. (Photo: MaryAnn Mathis, Elkhart, Iowa)



January sunset over 9.6 Farms. (Photo: Adriana Schnoebelen, Madrid, Iowa)



Andrew Ebert is ready to check hives in December. (Photo: Ebert's Honey, Mount Vernon, Iowa)



Have a photo you'd like featured in the album? Email it to [liz@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:liz@practicalfarmers.org).



## Review of: “The Forager Chef’s Book of Flora” by Minnesota Chef Alan Bergo

As another Iowa winter gives way to sunny days, budding trees and migrating birds, we are again reminded that the land provides us with all we need. We are excited to smell spring wildflowers, watch pastures and cover crops turn to green and plan our gardens.

Alan Bergo’s “The Forager Chef’s Book of Flora: Recipes and Techniques for Edible Plants from Garden, Field, and Forest” has been, for me, a welcome addition to these cool, windy days – and a reminder that in the not-too-distant past, food came not from a grocery store but from an unimaginably productive landscape that fed people for thousands of years. Alan’s moniker, the forager chef, is one he has earned. He put his time in on the cook line, worked his way up to be head chef of several restaurants and has tacked on the miles in wild places, rediscovering flavors and broadening the mainstream definition of local food. What started off as a website resume has turned into a full-time job bridging the gap between foraging and culinary art.

Alan’s writing is clear, personal and engaging. His recipes are uncomplicated, and his words instilled in me a confidence to try new methods of cooking and preparing food, both wild and cultivated (try Spring Green Dumplings). I appreciate the simplicity of his recipes, how they highlight fresh ingredients and offer substitutions for inexperienced foragers. I found myself re-envisioning uses for wild plants I have been eating for nearly a decade, and look forward to trying preservation methods that are both novel and simply executed with the resources I currently have.

For example, the book includes eight recipes for common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), a plant we’ve all gotten to know thanks to recent efforts undertaken to encourage the monarch butterfly. A favorite section of mine highlights hickory nuts and acorns; both are versatile and locally abundant in Iowa’s river valleys. If I could recommend one recipe from this book to make a forager out of anyone, it would be the Hickory Nut Milk Ice Cream. You won’t regret the effort you put into producing this extraordinary dessert.

Just as this book introduces the reader to new wild foods, it also highlights overlooked and misunderstood parts of our cultivated vegetables and landscaped yards that are edible and unique. Who knew you could use tomato leaves as a spice? Why wait to harvest a butternut squash in the fall when you can cook them green, harvest and prepare the growing vines or pickle the flower buds? Like



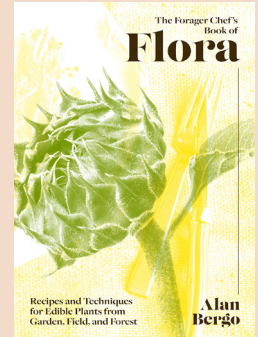
sunflowers? Let’s explore cooking a whole head like an artichoke. Think the deer are eating your hosta shoots because they’re hungry? Well, it’s also because they are delicious seared in a cast iron skillet.

In addition to exposing the reader to new uses for wild and cultivated foods, Alan gives a light commentary on our relationship with garden “weeds.” Across the world, these plants (purslane, lambsquarters, amaranth, mallow, dandelion, burdock, etc.) are seen as welcome volunteers and ingredients in traditional dishes. These commonly encountered species are the perfect bridge between cultivated and wild food, and a gateway to experimenting with foraged ingredients.

“The Forager’s Book of Flora” is clearly defined as a resource for “recipes and techniques,” not as a guide for identifying plants. I am grateful for this, as it keeps the book accessible and easy to digest by the inexperienced botanist. It provides just enough information to encourage readers to pursue their own studies. I also appreciate that Alan’s writing uses both common and scientific names, the only responsible way to effectively communicate to the reader which plants are being used.

This book would be well received by the backyard gardener and professional chef alike. I will be using it as a resource for years to come. ■

**Ben Hokscht lives in Ames, Iowa, at Onion Creek Farm with local food purveyors Lonna Nachtigal and Joe Lynch. He is an ecologist, Iowa enthusiast, local food provider and foraging instructor. Ben can be contacted through his website: [ephemeralmidwest.com](http://ephemeralmidwest.com).**



Author: Alan Bergo

288 pages

Published: June 2021

Synopsis: In “The Forager Chef’s Book of Flora” you’ll find the exotic to the familiar—from Ramp Leaf Dumplings to Spruce Tip Panna Cotta to Crisp Fiddlehead Pickles – with Chef Bergo’s unique blend of easy-to-follow instruction and out-of-this-world inspiration.

Over the past 15 years, Minnesota chef Alan Bergo has become one of America’s most exciting and resourceful culinary voices, with millions seeking his guidance through his wildly popular website and video tutorials.

Bergo’s inventive culinary style is defined by his encyclopedic curiosity, and his abiding, root-to-flower passion for both wild and cultivated plants.

Instead of waiting for fall squash to ripen, Bergo eagerly harvests their early shoots, flowers, and young greens—taking a holistic approach to cooking with all parts of the plant, and discovering extraordinary new flavors and textures along the way.

## Welcome Our Newest Staff Members

Additions to our farmer-led education and farm viability teams

### Amos Johnson – Livestock Education Coordinator



Amos Johnson joined Practical Farmers of Iowa as the livestock education coordinator in May 2022. He engages with farmers to create livestock-focused farmer-led events, writes for PFI's various publications and works to connect livestock producers with the educational resources they need.

Attending Gustavus Adolphus College, Amos majored in the humanities-focused Environmental Studies program. While in school, Amos managed the campus farm and collaborated with professors on interviewing regional farmers to develop classes and programming for the college focused on agricultural issues. He also spent time in Sweden learning about the traditional summer farms of Dalarna, a region in central Sweden, and the Sami reindeer herders of the North.

After graduation, Amos volunteered with AmeriCorps doing historic restoration on buildings and cemeteries across Minnesota. For the two years prior to moving to Ames, he worked in the Twin Cities restoring antique windows and leading workshops for homeowners. Despite all of his travels, Amos' favorite place is amidst the hills, streams and woods of his family's century farm in Belle Plaine, Minnesota. He works extensively with Prairie Oaks Institute, an educational non-profit, leading its oak savanna restoration.

Amos started off his life in Iowa and has now returned, bringing his fiancé and three cats. If he's not baking from his grandmother's recipes or fermenting something in his basement, he is likely carving kitchen items, reading books or dreaming of bringing Highland cattle to the family farm. ■

### Martha McFarland – Farm Viability Coordinator



Martha McFarland joined the PFI staff in April 2022 as the farmland viability coordinator. In this role, she supports land seekers and landowners with land access and farm transition assistance and resources. Martha has been a farmer member of PFI since 2014.

Martha also runs Hawkeye Buffalo & Cattle Ranch near Fredericksburg, Iowa, where she manages grazing on woods and pasture, raises oats and hay and works with a tenant who raises corn and soybeans. Her experience with her farm's transition and her love of the Iowa

landscape inspired her to help the next generation of farmers and landowners.

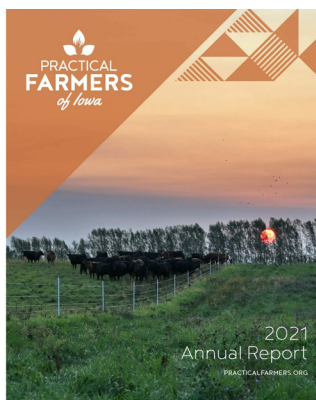
Prior to running the ranch, Martha spent 10 years working in education and mentoring beginning teachers. Martha serves on the Minnesota Bison Association's board of directors, is a member of the Iowa Cattlemen's Association and is a mentor and facilitator for the Women, Food and Agriculture Network. She holds a Master of Education from Colorado State University.

Martha also loves yoga, writing, early morning coffee on the back porch and traveling to the cities to explore new restaurants. ■

## Have You Read Our FY2021 Annual Report?

Members should have received a copy of our 2021 annual report in the mail (if you haven't, please contact Debra at (515) 232-5661 or [debra@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:debra@practicalfarmers.org) to make sure your membership details are current!).

For those who wish to share the link with others, the report is online as well. Inside, you'll read about the reach of our cover crop and small grains cost-share programs; how our recent organizational restructure is setting us up for long-term success; how our farmer-led education work is touching hundreds of farmers; and more.



Our annual report is filled with stories about our members, and offers an excellent overview of our programs, financials and what we accomplished together last year.

If you know someone who's not yet a member of PFI but could benefit from our community, our annual report is a perfect place to start – please consider sharing it with them.

Find it online at [practicalfarmers.org/publication](https://practicalfarmers.org/publication), or contact the office to request additional hard copies in the mail. ■



## Forging New Boundaries for Livestock Farmers

Meghan Filbert says farewell to PFI as she takes new path in grazing world

Eight years ago, on a remote island in Scotland, I was taking a break from tending sheep in damp moorland. I opened my laptop to read PFI's Practical News and saw that PFI was hiring a livestock coordinator. It was in that moment I knew that I was going to move back to my home state of Iowa and work for Practical Farmers of Iowa, an organization I had been admiring for many years. I wanted Iowa to grow more grass, bring livestock back on the land and bring families back to the farm.

While I knew the job would be centered around working with livestock farmers, what I didn't know was how much I'd learn about community. PFI's members and staff, who radiate honorable visions and values on a daily basis, taught me what being part of a community truly means. I am grateful to carry this deep understanding and support network with me to the next stage of my life and in my career.

The pinnacle of my time at Practical Farmers was getting to create a film, alongside my friends and colleagues, that explores livestock's role in thriving rural communities. "Livestock on the Land" pays tribute to PFI's roots while showcasing some of the finest folks in our state – and then went on to win awards. What a joy!



I am also proud that my final project was the initiation of our new grazing infrastructure cost-share program, which we hope to sustain for years to come. Through the initial round, 18 farmers were each awarded \$5,000 to invest in mobile fence and water to increase the number of acres regeneratively grazed in Iowa.

My next career move will be focused on spearheading the adoption of virtual livestock fencing in North America – a technology I've grown passionate about over the last five years (as many of you can attest to!). Starting this summer, my husband and I will be using collars on our small ruminants to graze and reconstruct oak savannas as silvopastures. Not having to pull electronet through the woods on a humid August morning is becoming a reality! We'll be hosting field days on our farm in the coming years demonstrating the virtual fence technology and agroforestry practices.

I'm honored to have supported the PFI mission to build resilient farms and communities by helping farmers bring livestock back on the land.

All my best,  
*Meghan Filbert*

## Organizing for a Just and Equitable Food System

Celize Christy bids PFI farewell as she moves on to HEAL Food Alliance

When I returned to Iowa in 2018, it felt like a homecoming to return to the place where my agriculture journey began. It has been an honor to serve PFI members, partners and the greater food and farming community. During my tenure at PFI, I have had the chance to work with innovative livestock producers and support the next generation of farmers.

Most recently, I have worked on efforts to meet the board's vision of expanding our big tent by welcoming farmers of color through our Spanish-language programming and by hosting exclusive spaces for farmers of color to be in healing community with one another.

After our 2022 annual conference, each staff member takes the time to read through each evaluation submitted. As I read through this year's evaluations, about a third of respondents requested to see more topics focusing on farmer of color in the future – affirming



that PFI's efforts at inclusion is both profound and crucial.

As an avid connector and advocate for farmers of color, I am looking forward to continuing my passion of building a more equitable and just food system as an organizer for HEAL Food Alliance. I will always carry forward the heart of PFI's farmer-led ethos and its values of curiosity, creativity, collaboration and community.

With the deepest appreciation and gratitude, thank you for all the work you do each day to practice an agriculture that inspires positive change towards a diverse and vibrant landscape.

In solidarity and community,  
*Celize Christy*

# Welcome, New Members!

## DISTRICT 1 – NORTHWEST

- Kyle Bass – Westside
- Andrew Getting – Sanborn
- Trishia Gill – Sioux City
- Doug Gronau – Vail

## DISTRICT 2 – NORTH-CENTRAL

- Shelley Buffalo – Tama
- Vivian Cook – Ames
- Molly Holz – Grand Junction
- Molly Lee – Ames
- Tamara Mauskemmo – Tama
- Gary and Pearl Rohmiller – Collins

## DISTRICT 3 – NORTHEAST

- Carrie Ball – Cedar Rapids
- Daryl Bosma – Decorah
- Brydon Hill – Cedar Rapids
- Mari Hunt Wassink – Cedar Rapids
- Chuck Kelly – Postville
- Mackenzie Miller – Decorah
- Stephen Probert – Cedar Rapids
- Fallon Shakespeare – Cedar Rapids
- Dustin Quade – Dubuque

## DISTRICT 4 – SOUTHWEST

- In Harmony Farm, Sam Applegate – Earlham
- Jody and Mike Barrett – Knoxville
- Tyler Bartley – Malvern
- Brad Blackman – Urbandale

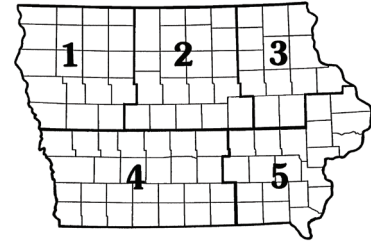
- Kelly Borgmann – Des Moines
- Morgan and Tyler Bruck – Audubon
- Trent Butler – Indianola
- Kyle Hintz – Saint Charles
- John and Brandy Luth – Walnut
- Pete Marshall – Stanton
- Jeffrey Nielsen – Des Moines
- Emily and Kyle Nordyke – Carlisle
- Mark Preston – Urbandale
- Joseph Swizdor and Carmen Golay – Indianola
- Christine Zrostlik – Des Moines

## DISTRICT 5 – SOUTHEAST

- Amberlin Barber – University Park
- Bryce Loffer – Marengo
- Tristan Gahn – Iowa City
- Kate Halter – West Branch
- Donna Hemingway and Monica Rodriguez – Iowa City

## DISTRICT 6 – OUT OF STATE

- Jesse Kuttler – Peoria, AZ
- Valent BioSciences, Hunter Hoelzel – Libertyville, IL
- Michael Poettker – Aviston, IL
- William Mitchell – Earlville, IL
- Peter Wettstein – Eureka, IL
- Seth Waibel – Mahomet, IL
- Stephen Brass – Stillman Valley, IL
- William Mitchell – Earlville, IL



- Madison Smith – Columbia, MD
- Dan Coffman – Nicollet, MN
- Eric Heins – Altura, MN
- Jamie and Mark Schulz – Elkton, MN
- Keith Olsen – Canby, MN
- Kyle Larson – Kasson, MN
- Todd Western – Minneapolis, MN
- Clay Govier – Broken Bow, NE
- Gary Gronewold – Pickrell, NE
- Jeff Steffen – Crofton, NE
- Roberts Seed Inc., Leisha and Joe Roberts – Axtell, NE
- Nathan Brabec – Wood River, NE
- John McClelland – Millerton, PA
- George Strawn – Vienna, VA
- Ed Krois – Madison, WI

*Thank you*

to our newest lifetime members!

<b>Peter Kerns &amp; Natasha Hegmann</b>	<b>Charles Benbrook</b>
Elkport, IA	Port Orchard, WA

*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](http://practicalfarmers.org/lifetime-membership).



The PFI social on June 6, which also marked our kick-off event for the summer field day season, was filled with music by Rick Exner (pictured here on guitar) and local food from members and staff. Guests toured the newly renovated office in Ames, Iowa, and enjoyed the company of PFI staff and other community members.



## Practical Farmers Events

Note: Times are in CST. Full details about all events are available at [practicalfarmers.org/events](http://practicalfarmers.org/events)

### JUNE

**JUNE 24: *Field Day:* On-Farm Poultry Processing & Licensing**

*Hosts:* Jason & Hannah Grimm | 1-4 p.m. | North English, IA

**JUNE 24: *Field Day:* Farmland Owner Legacy Award Celebration**

*Hosts:* Practical Farmers & Chris Henning | 5-8 p.m. | Jefferson, IA

**JUNE 25: *Field Day:* Connecting Agriculture and Conservation**

*Host:* Heath Stolee | 10 a.m.-1 p.m. | Radcliffe, IA

**JUNE 26: *Field Day:* A Little of Everything: Hydroponic Tomatoes, Farmers Markets and Agritourism**

*Hosts:* Mike & Donna Brahm & Family | 2-4 p.m. | Griswold, IA

### JULY

**JULY 6: Equipping RDNs and Public Health Professionals as Food Systems Leaders in Iowa**

8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. | Ankeny, IA | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/calendar](http://practicalfarmers.org/calendar)

**JULY 6: *Field Day:* Getting Started With Lavender, Flowers & Berries**

*Hosts:* Abby Barten, Nancy & John Brannaman | 10 a.m.-Noon | Lisbon, IA

**JULY 7: *Field Day:* Oat Production: From Variety Selection and Seeding to Baling and Cleaning**

*Hosts:* Dan & Susan Voss, Brian Voss & Nicole Hepker | 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. | Palo, IA

**JULY 9: *Field Day:* Prairie Strips and Conservation on Big Spirit Lake**

*Hosts:* Eric & Kelly Hoen | 10 a.m.-1 p.m. | Orleans, IA

**JULY 15: *Field Day:* Conservation Rotations and Cover Crops Following Small Grains**

*Hosts:* Andy Linder & Don Linder | 10 a.m.-Noon | Easton, IA

**JULY 16: *Field Day:* Precision Farming With Cover Crops for Soil Health and Conservation**

*Hosts:* The Wisecup Family | 10 a.m.-Noon | Missouri Valley, IA

**JULY 16: *Field Day:* Biodiversity, Beneficial Insects and Building Resilience**

*Hosts:* Angela Smith & Erik Tryggstad | 10 a.m.-1 p.m. | Oronoco, MN

**JULY 17: *Field Day:* Flower Farming With a Long-Term View: Diversifying Plantings & Revenue Streams**

*Host:* Meredith Nunnikhoven | 2-4 p.m. | Oskaloosa, IA

**JULY 23: *Field Day:* Conservation Practices in an Organic Farming System**

*Hosts:* Sara & Bob Pearson | 4-7 p.m. | Wesley, IA

**JULY 30: *Field Day:* Cover Crops, Cattle and Conservation Projects Supporting Biodiversity**

*Hosts:* John & Cindi Van Horn, Jane & Doug Cunningham and Robert & Mary Van Horn | 10 a.m.-1 p.m. | Glidden, IA

### AUGUST

**AUG. 2: *Field Day:* Weed Control Strategies in Organic Corn and Soybeans With Buffalo Cultivators and Planters**

*Hosts:* The Rosmann Family | 1-4 p.m. | Harlan, IA

**AUG. 3: *Field Day:* Whole-Farm Conservation Demonstration**

*Host:* Ann Smeltzer Charitable Trust | 5-8 p.m. | Otho, IA

**AUG. 4: *Field Day:* Linking Cover Crops, Cattle and Neighbors**

*Hosts:* Justin & Ellen Rahn | 10 a.m.-Noon | Mount Carroll, IL

**AUG. 4: *Field Day:* Conquering Cucurbits: Success With Melons and Cucumbers**

*Hosts:* Nicole & Steve Jonas | 2-4 p.m. | Boone, IA

**AUG. 9: *Field Day:* Flipping the Table on Soil Health With Silvopasture at Yellow Table Farm**

*Hosts:* Eric & Courtney Jensen | 2-4 p.m. | Tripoli, IA

**AUG. 9: *Field Day:* Growing a Flower Farm**

*Hosts:* Adam & Jenna Cook | 2-4 p.m. | Newell, IA

**AUG. 17: *Field Day:* Tree Transition at a Mid-Size High-Density Apple Orchard**

*Hosts:* David & Susan Differding | 2-4 p.m. | Winthrop, IA

**AUG. 17: *Field Day:* Urban Farming How-Tos With We Arose Co-op**

*Host:* DaQuan Campbell | 4-6 p.m. | Waterloo, IA

**AUG. 20: *Field Day:* Establishing and Grazing Legume Covers and Small Grains in an Organic System**

*Hosts:* Scott & Shannon Koether | Noon-3 p.m. | McGregor, IA

**AUG. 23: *Field Day:* Making Cover Crops Work: From Popcorn to Water Quality**

*Hosts:* Mark Schleisman & Family | 10 a.m.-Noon | Lake City, IA

**AUG. 27: *Field Day:* Bus Trip to Northfield, Minnesota: Raising Regenerative Tree-Range Poultry**

*Hosts:* Reginaldo "Regi" Haslett-Marroquín & Wil Crombie | 7:30 a.m.-8 p.m. | Bus leaves PFI office at 7:30 a.m.; second pick-up location in Clear Lake, IA

**AUG. 27: *Field Day:* Bringing Back the Edges With Precision Agriculture**

*Hosts:* Nathan & Sarah Anderson | 10 a.m.-1 p.m. | Cherokee, IA

**AUG. 30- SEPT. 1: Visit PFI at the Farm Progress Show**

*Host:* Practical Farmers of Iowa | 10 a.m.-1 p.m. | Boone, IA | Learn more at [farmprogressshow.com](http://farmprogressshow.com)

### SEPTEMBER

**SEPT. 6: *Field Day:* Growing and Marketing Salad and Microgreens at Cherry Lane Farm & Prairie Home Delivery**

*Hosts:* Krissy & Calvin Thiessen | 11 a.m.-1 p.m. | Spirit Lake, IA

**SEPT. 9: *Field Day:* Drones, Extended Rotations and Cover Crop Grazing in Bloomfield**

*Host:* Tim Dotterer | 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. | Bloomfield, IA

**SEPT. 10: *Field Day:* Farm the Best, Leave the Rest**

*Host:* Bill Gordon | 10 a.m.-1 p.m. | Worthington, MN

**SEPT. 11: *Field Day:* Book Publication Celebration and Member Social Featuring Angela Tedesco**

*Host:* Nan Bonfils | 1:30-3 p.m. | Madrid, IA

**SEPT. 14: *Field Day:* On-Farm Cover Crop Research Trials**

*Hosts:* Will & Cassie Cannon | Noon-2:30 p.m. | Prairie City, IA

**SEPT. 14: *Field Day:* Risk Management and Disaster Recovery: A Come-Back Story at Pheasant Run Farm**

*Hosts:* Ann & Eric Franzenburg & Calvin Franzenburg | 2-4 p.m. | Van Horne, IA

**SEPT. 25: *Field Day:* Growing Cultural Vegetables on Small Urban Plots With Cover Crops**

*Hosts:* Marie Andre & Tika Bhandari | 4-6 p.m. | West Des Moines, IA

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

Want to join or renew online? Visit [practicalfarmers.org/join-or-renew](http://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:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access - \$25            | <input type="checkbox"/> Organization - \$110                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual - \$50        | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Member* - \$1,000                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farm or Household - \$60 | * See details at <a href="http://bit.ly/PFI-lifetime">bit.ly/PFI-lifetime</a> |

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

- |                              |                                     |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0   | <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 or more |

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

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farmer or farm operator            | <input type="checkbox"/> Farmland owner who does not actively farm myself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not farming yet, but would like to | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                                     |

#### 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)!

- |  |                                       |                                      |                                       |                                    |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Announcements | <input type="checkbox"/> Perspectives | <input type="checkbox"/> Field Crops | <input type="checkbox"/> Horticulture | <input type="checkbox"/> Livestock |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|

#### Please add my farm to PFI's:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Foods Directory | <input type="checkbox"/> 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:

- |                                  |                                |                                |                                |                               |                                   |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

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.

- |   |                                    |    |                                      |
|---|------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I would like to give \$ _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> per month | OR | <input type="checkbox"/> per quarter |
|---|------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------|

### PAYMENT

Membership Level .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per year for \_\_\_\_\_ year(s) = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Donation ..... = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT ..... = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- |   |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check or money order is enclosed (Please make payable to "Practical Farmers of Iowa.") |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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

Office Use Only: Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Check date \_\_\_\_\_ Total amount \_\_\_\_\_ Notes \_\_\_\_\_



# PRACTICAL FARMERS *of Iowa*

1615 Golden Aspen Drive, Suite 101  
Ames, IA 50010

Non-Profit  
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Waterloo, IA  
Permit No. 901



## A Future-Forward Vision

Nick Wallace tends to cattle on his farm near Keystone, Iowa. He has a 10-year goal to source regenerative, nutrient-dense products from healthy soils on farms in each of Iowa's 99 counties. Read more about his business and future plans on pages 14-15.