

Beginning Farmer News - Grant opportunities and advising for funding your farm

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February 2024

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Meet beginning farmer Ashley Wenke of Pleasant Grove Homestead

Earlier this month, **Ashley Wenke**, co-owner of Pleasant Grove Homestead, won Iowa Farm Bureau's Grow Your Future Award at the Young Farmer Conference.

Ashley took home first place and a cash prize to expand the farm's direct-to-consumer farm enterprises. Ashley and her husband **Zachary Wenke** provide meat, produce, eggs and honey to surrounding communities through farmers markets, cooperatives and other direct-to-consumer channels. As of 2023, they

have raised over 1,500 meat birds and 300 laying hens, and added three high tunnels to their large market garden.

We asked Ashley: What is a good first step for an aspiring farmer looking to grow their future farm?

Ashley: “Consider making sustainable steps rather than going into debt on a dream that you aren’t sure won’t work. We started with a home garden and kept making it bigger, using the money we made to buy things to make us more efficient as we scaled up.”

Connect with Ashley via Pleasant Grove Homestead's [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages.

PROGRAM UPDATES

New grant opportunities available for infrastructure and equipment



Food and farm businesses taking part in regional food distribution and wholesale markets are encouraged to apply for the new Iowa Resilient Food System Infrastructure program grants:

- **Infrastructure grants:** \$100,000 to \$1 million (pre-proposal and consultation call due by Feb. 23)
- **Equipment-only grants:** \$10,000 to \$100,000 for new, used or refurbished equipment (pre-proposals due March 8)

Iowa RFSI is part of the USDA's American Rescue Plan, receiving over \$5 million to support infrastructure for the middle of the food supply chain. [View application details.](#)

Free grants advising services for your farm

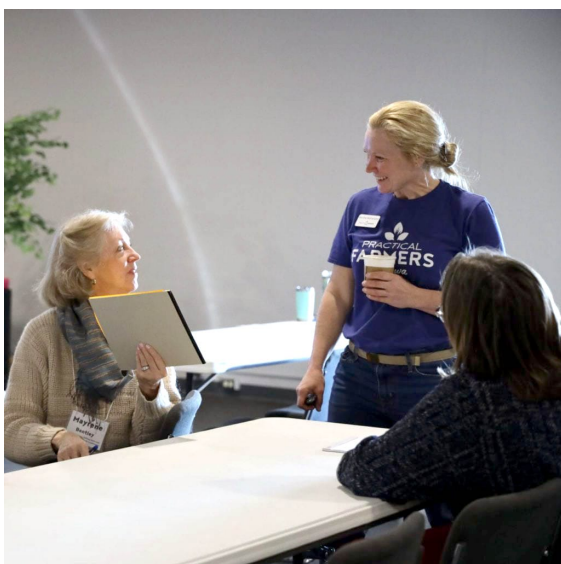


Curious about funding for your farm? Michael Fields Agricultural Institute offers a [free grants advising service](https://michaelfields.org/grants) to help you secure the capital you need.

Get help applying for grants, loans and cost-share programs that could help you with specific projects to develop your farm.

Email **Wren Almitra** at grants@michaelfields.org to get started.

Get personalized help from PFI with your land search



More often than not, finding land takes a personal touch. **Martha McFarland**, PFI's senior farmland viability coordinator, can help!

Martha specializes in fostering personal connections around land, linking aspiring farmers with landowners.

To get started, [email Martha](mailto:martha@michaelfields.org) your farm location, acres of land, types of enterprises and the land arrangement you seek.

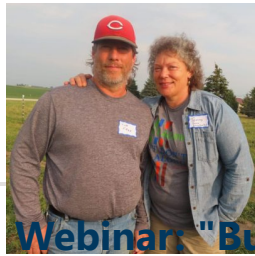
UPCOMING EVENTS

Webinar: "Allies and Adversaries: Balancing Pollinator Habitat and Wild Spaces"



Tuesday, February 20 | Noon-1 p.m.

Learn how **Jill Beebout** of Blue Gate Farm and **Rob Faux** of Genuine Faux Farm encourage pollinators and natural predators of crop pests on their farms while also navigating adversarial relationships with deer, woodchuck, gnats and other critters.



Our winter webinar series is free and open to the public.

[RSVP to attend.](#)

Webinar: "Building a Farm for Shepherding"



Tuesday, March 12 | Noon-1 p.m.

Register for our upcoming webinar, "Building a Farm for Shepherding" with **Wendy Johnson.**

Wendy rotationally grazes Isle-de-France sheep, a breed of wool sheep, at Joia Food & Fiber Farm. In this webinar, learn why she loves this breed for its adaptability and resiliency and how she's used third-party certifications to build a market for her meat and wool.

[RSVP to attend.](#)

Upcoming PFI events

All events listed are in Central time.

Feb. 15: Meet-Up – [Virtual Horticulture Farmer Meet-Up](#)
9-11 a.m. | [Online](#)

Feb. 16: Meet-Up – [Horticulture Farmer Meet-Up](#)

*Hosted by: Joanne Roepke Bode,
Mary Beyerhelm Huey and Healthy
Harvest of North Iowa*
9-11 a.m. | Algona, IA

Feb. 21: Meet-Up – [Horticulture Farmer Meet-Up](#)
Hosted by: Molly Schintler
9-11 a.m. | West Branch, IA

Feb. 23: Meet-Up – [Horticulture Farmer Meet-Up](#)

Hosted by: Emily Paulsen
9-11 a.m. | Harlan, IA

Feb. 27: Webinar – [Winter Webinar: Revitalizing Soil for a Small-Scale Hemp Farm in Iowa](#)
Noon-1 p.m. | [Online](#)

Friends of PFI events

Feb. 15: Webinar – Cooperatives

Hosted by: Legal Food Hub

11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. | [Online](#)

Feb. 21: Webinar – Retail Farm Market School: Attracting Visitors with Instagram

Hosted by: Penn State Extension

11 a.m.-Noon | [Online](#)

Feb. 29: Webinar – Easements

Hosted by: Legal Food Hub

11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. | [Online](#)

Feb. 15-March 28: Course – Holistic Cropping Planning

Hosted by: Holistic Management

1-2:30 p.m. | [Online](#)

Feb. 24-25: Workshop – Hands on Kidding Class

Hosted by: Stormdancer Farm

10 a.m.-5 p.m. | Smithville, MO

March 12: Webinar – Know Your Numbers: Applying for Financing

Hosted by: Penn State Extension

11 a.m.-Noon | [Online](#)

[View our events calendar](#)

Contact our team

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