

the PRACTICAL FARMER

WINTER 2024



In This Issue:

Treating the Land Right

Bridging the Gap

A Practice in Faith





Earl Hafner walks amidst a sea of strawberry plants in the greenhouse at Early Morning Harvest, a farm and mill near Panora, Iowa, that he cofounded with his son, Jeff Hafner. Learn how two multigenerational families are working together on page 26.

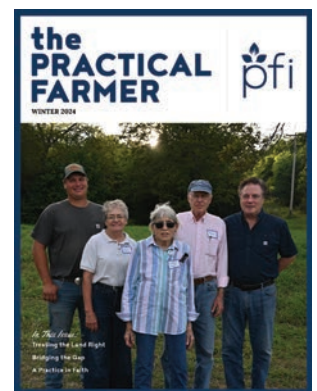
FEATURES

- 6 FARMLAND OWNER LEGACY AWARD**
Treating the Land Right
A desire to leave his land better for the future has guided Tim Kelley's 30-year journey to steward his soil.
- 8 HORTICULTURE**
Shifting Gears
As their needs have changed over the years, three Iowa vegetable farms have adapted their operations to meet the present and plan for the future.
- 10 LIVESTOCK**
A Practice in Faith
Arlyn and Sue Kauffman are living out their faith through farm, family and community.
- 14 HABITAT**
Neighbors in Conservation
For two eastern Iowa farmers, conservation has fostered connection – along with personal and financial rewards.
- 16 FIELD DAY PHOTOS**
2024 Field Day Season
See images of learning, connection, food and fun from the second half of our 2024 field day season.
- 24 BEGINNING FARMERS**
Learning Sin Pelos en la Lengua
By leading field days fully in Spanish, Jenny Horner and Emilio Moreno helped Spanish-speaking farmers access authentic farmer-to-farmer learning.
- 26 FIELD CROPS**
Bridging the Gap
For two PFI farm families, thriving as multigenerational operations hinges on trust, respect and an openness to change.

DEPARTMENTS

- 5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NOTE**
- 29 MEMBER BOOK REVIEW**
"From Maverick to Mainstream: A History of No-Till Farming"
by Frank Lessiter

Reviewed by
Laura Foell
- 30 MEMBER PHOTOS**
- 32 PFI NEWS**
- 34 CALENDAR**
- 36 NEW MEMBERS**
- 39 JOIN PFI**



ON THE COVER:

Farmland Legacy Award winner Tim Kelley (second from right) poses during his field day with some of the people most important to his farm. From left: Brent Nold, tenant farmer; Margaret Kelley, sister; Linda Lonn, partner; and Sam Kelley, brother. Read about Tim's desire to leave land better for the future on page 6.



WHAT WE DO

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

OUR MISSION

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

OUR VISION

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

OUR VALUES

Welcoming everyone

Farmers leading the exchange of experience and knowledge

Curiosity, creativity, collaboration and community

Resilient farms now and for future generations

Stewardship of land and resources

THE PRACTICAL FARMER

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

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



MAGAZINE STAFF

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

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

Senior Editor

Tamsyn Jones

Senior Graphic Designer

Sarah Krumm

Senior Photography Editor

Sarah Krumm

Executive Director

Sally Worley

Editorial Review

Sally Worley

Christine Zrostlik

Digital Magazine

Emily Yaddof

Staff Writers

Rachel Burke

Valeria Cano Camacho Tidemann

Amos Johnson

Emma Liddle

Martha McFarland

Vanya North

Solveig Orngard

Jacqueline Venner Senske

Contributors

Sophie Arnold

Debra Boekholder

Liz Kolbe

CONTACT US

Practical Farmers of Iowa

1615 Golden Aspen Drive, Suite 101

Ames, IA 50010

(515) 232-5661 | practicalfarmers.org

facebook.com/practicalfarmers

instagram.com/practicalfarmer

x.com/practicalfarmer

youtube.com/pfivideos

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

BOARD MEMBERS

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

DISTRICT 1 (NORTHWEST)

Nathan Anderson

Bobolink Prairie Farm

(515) 708-5199

n8andy@gmail.com

DISTRICT 2 (NORTH CENTRAL)

Jack Boyer

J Boyer Farms, Inc.

(319) 240-2619

jboyerfarms@gmail.com

DISTRICT 3 (NORTHEAST)

Shaffer Ridgeway

Southern Goods

(319) 830-7470

southerngoodsia@gmail.com

DISTRICT 4 (SOUTHWEST)

Jon Bakehouse - Treasurer

Maple Edge Farm, Inc.

(712) 370-3629

mapleedgefarm@gmail.com

DISTRICT 5 (SOUTHEAST)

Gayle Olson - Secretary

J & G Olson Farms, Inc.

(319) 931-1351

olsongayle@gmail.com

AT-LARGE FARMERS

Carmen Black - Vice President

Sundog Farm

(319) 331-3957

localharvestcsa@gmail.com

David Rosmann - President

Rosmann Family Farms

(612) 219-7396

davidrosmann@hotmail.com

Margaret Smith

Ash Grove Farm

(507) 402-0289

mrgsmith@wmtel.net

Tim Youngquist

Youngquist Heritage Farm

(712) 269-0592

tyoungquist@gmail.com

AT-LARGE FRIENDS OF FARMERS

Kristine Lang

(515) 825-7525

kmlang2017@gmail.com

Matt Liebman

(515) 233-8768

mliebman@iastate.edu

CO-FOUNDERS

Larry Kallem

(515) 337-1272

The late Dick & Sharon Thompson

Boone, IA

Shaping a Better Future

My fellow coworkers and I are blessed with many opportunities to hear directly from farmers and landowners on their farms. To warm up this chilly December, here are three farms I visited this past sunny July. They, like all farms, delivered good lessons for PFI to reflect on and learn from.

Whiterock Conservancy, Coon Rapids, Iowa | July 18: Interconnectivity

I joined the board of Whiterock Conservancy at the end of 2023. As part of my onboarding, cofounder Liz Garst took me and Lisa Hein, of Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, on a tour. If you haven't had the chance to visit Whiterock, you should. It's a state treasure, a 5,500-acre showcase of the interconnectivity between farming, conservation and recreation. When farmers and landowners embrace this mutuality, they can create farms that are good for the bottom line, the ecosystem and the surrounding community vitality.

Danamere Farm, Carlisle, Iowa | July 24: Dedication

Rob and Susan Fleming, who received PFI's Farmland Owner Legacy Award in 2016, live primarily in Pennsylvania but come back regularly to tend to conservation and farming efforts on their family farm. It's an endless job, from keeping the perimeter of the fences mowed for vegetables grown by long-time farm renter Alex Congera, to battling the invasive *Lespedeza cuneata*, also known as sericea lespedeza, that's pervasive in their restored prairie. But the Flemings are dedicated stewards, and have been working for decades to integrate conservation into a working farm. They're working with INHF to help preserve this legacy into the future.

Paul Ackley, Bedford, Iowa | July 26: Curiosity

On my return from a site visit to plan the 2024 Farmland Owner Legacy Award (see page 6 to learn about this year's recipient, Tim Kelley), I stopped at Paul Ackley's farm. Paul has been on a soil health quest for more than 50 years. He places books on soil health throughout his home for ready reading, and collects quotes and notes to help guide him when he's uncertain.

Paul and his late wife Nancy are recipients of PFI's 2021 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award. It's not a mystery why when you visit his farm. Each acre is tended to thoughtfully. His farm is a living example of this advice, from Dwayne Beck of Dakota Lakes Research Farm in Pierre, South Dakota, that Paul has hewed to in his learning journey: "Don't change your land to fit your management. Change your management to fit your land."

Continuous Learning

Farm visits like these offer invaluable insights, and are one of many ways staff learn from our members. Your input directly shapes our work, our programs – and our budget – letting us be relevant to you.

In September, the board approved our budget for fiscal year 2025 (Oct. 1, 2024–Sept. 20, 2025). We worked hard to ensure that every dollar of this budget was shaped by your priorities. Here are some highlights:



Sally riding in the back of an electric Gator on a very sunny and hot day at Whiterock Conservancy. Liz Garst is driving, Lisa Hein is in the passenger seat.

- With your partnership and guidance, we've grown substantially. Our budget for fiscal year 2025 is around \$20 million dollars – a significant increase from the previous year. We are excited to infuse this level of funding into our mission, and we take stewardship of these resources seriously.
- \$543,000 of this budget will go directly toward members for your leadership. This includes your time and expertise hosting and educating peers, doing on-farm research, mentoring others, doing outreach and more.
- In response to your feedback, we have budgeted more than \$11 million to invest in cost-share programs and business development efforts to help you in your quest to build resilient farms.
- To expand our impact, we plan to distribute \$1.87 million to partners that are mission-aligned, to help increase the footprint of our work.

I am extremely proud of the work we are doing together, and I'm grateful for the time you all spend sharing your priorities with PFI's staff, board and fellow members. If you'd like to share feedback on anything, from PFI's finances to our programs, please reach out! I welcome your emails or text messages – and am always happy to visit you on your farm. If you're curious to learn more about our budget, attend the business meeting during our annual conference, or get in touch!

Together, we are shaping a better future.

Sally Worley

Learn More:

Whiterock Conservancy: Visit whiterockconservancy.org.

Danamere Farm: Visit practicalfarmers.org/award-recipients and scroll down to find a news release about Rob and Sue Fleming.

Paul and Nancy Ackley: Read a profile at practicalfarmers.org/farming-for-the-long-haul.

Treating the Land Right

A desire to leave his land better for the future has guided Tim Kelley's 30-year journey to steward his soil.

By Emma Liddle



On a sunny mid-September evening, 34 attendees took their seats on Tim Kelley's farm in Elmo, Missouri. Sorghum sudangrass, still summery in its lush green, sprouted from a nearby field of cover and forage crops. Along the adjacent edge line, a thick canopy of trees cast a cooling shade over the diverse array of plant life – and the assembled crowd – as longtime PFI member Ron Rosmann awarded Tim with PFI's 2024 Farmland Owner Achievement Award.

Tim and his sister, Margaret Kelley, co-own about 800 acres along the Nodaway River in northwestern Missouri. Tim's tenant, Brent Nold, raises corn, soybeans, small grains and multispecies cover crops on 400 of those acres. Another 140 acres is dedicated to warm- and cool-season grasses that, until 2022, held cattle. The rest of the acreage contains cool-season grassed headlands, filter strips, woodlands, smaller prairie and pollinator areas and a recently restored oxbow.

Practical Farmers of Iowa created the Farmland Owner Legacy Award in 2013 to recognize landowners who help the next generation get started, advance land stewardship and promote long-term sustainability of farm businesses, environmental quality and rural communities.

Tim, while grateful to spread awareness of what he's working on, posits that he's not alone in these efforts. "There are plenty of people that are doing the same and more," he says.

Livestock and the Land

Tim's grandfather purchased the first parcel of the Kelley farm in 1907, making it a Missouri century farm. Tim grew up on the farm with his siblings, Sam and Margaret. He was fully immersed in farming life, from daily chores to raising livestock through 4-H. At 18, he left for college and spent eight years exploring the world outside of farming. Twelve years after he left the farm, he returned.

Although he grew up on the farm, Tim had never made decisions for the operation. He began farming 400 acres with a typical conventional row crop and livestock setup, but it did not yield what he had hoped, especially with the equipment cost. Tim grew curious about changes he could make, and in the late 1980s, after a drought, he added warm-season native grasses and began amending his livestock management. "There had always been cattle, but I started intensifying the

management," Tim says. Until then, cattle had been allowed to openly graze large areas, spending eight to nine months on grass and then crop residue during the winter.

Tim also built fences between sections of pasture to let them rest, added multiple paddocks and installed underground waterlines. While the soil and forage improved, it wasn't until he initiated high-stock-density grazing that he saw more rapid improvements. With this approach, cattle are rotated often to different pastures, which encourages more efficient grazing and gives plants more time to rest and recover. His journey to improve his soil health began in earnest in 2000. "The more I learned," he says, "it seemed obvious that [conservation] was the right thing to do."

Over the years, Tim has become an expert on livestock management, especially as a means of preserving and improving soil organic matter. In 2003, he took part in a SARE research project that aimed to control forbs typically considered undesirable with multispecies grazing (Tim notes that with high-density grazing, all forbs have value as food for livestock or the "microbiological ecosystem"). At that point, he was grazing cow-calf, stocker and sheep herds on 150 acres of diversified grass and legume pasture. Even in a drought year, Tim says multispecies grazing effectively reduced weed pressure in the fields, affirming his approach – and his belief that he was on the right path.

In 2016, PFI staff interviewed Tim for a member spotlight. He'd been using soil-health practices for nearly 20 years and had begun using Haney soil tests to assess his progress. In that interview, Tim shared that high-density grazing had helped boost organic matter on one of his properties to 7%. "It's pre-settlement levels for northwest Missouri or southwest Iowa – 6-8% is what they think the prairie had," Tim says.

Through careful observation and yearly testing, Tim found that while organic matter either held steady or dropped in his row crops, the cool- and warm-season grasses and legumes improved his soil health. As he transitioned from farm operator to non-operating landowner, he worked with each tenant to incorporate soil health practices. In 2023, he found Brent Nold through mutual acquaintances, and the two work closely to nurture the land through their shared vision.

Partners in Preservation

Since Brent took over as tenant, he and Tim have pushed the envelope on row cropping, with a focus on maximum diversity. They have been working to bring small grains back to the farm and introduced a 14-species mix of cover crops following small grains as well as preceding and following the corn and soy rotations. Brent is adding poultry litter and other organic material to increase soil health. When nominations opened for PFI's Farmland Owner Legacy Award, Brent nominated Tim, citing Tim's financial and moral support for stewardship practices.

"[Tim] is discounting the rent for soil health practices and is always pushing me forward down my soil health journey," Brent says. "Living roots year-round is a goal we are accomplishing as well."



Ron Rosmann presents PFI's 2024 Farmland Owner Legacy Award to Tim Kelley during a field day on Sept. 13, 2024.

"The more I learned, the more it seemed obvious that [conservation] was the right thing to do."

- Tim Kelley

"Nature hates a vacuum, but also abhors a monoculture," Tim says. "That's why we like multispecies in our pasture – both above and below ground."

The only piece missing from their system is livestock. Tim was the grazer until 2022 but sold the last of his livestock to focus on other soil health and conservation projects. Aware of how vital livestock are for soil health, Tim and Brent are actively seeking a grazer to serve as their third partner. They hope to find someone willing to graze livestock on 200 acres of perennial grassland as well as on 100 acres of annuals that follow the small grains. "That's one good thing about working with Brent. I think we share the vision," Tim says. "You have to make a profit, but the land comes first."

"[Tim's] knowledge on cattle and adaptive grazing is second to none," Brent says. "He has been a great partner, mentor and friend the entire time I've known him."

As Tim approaches 30 years of using conservation-based land management, his goal is to increase soil organic matter, fungi, protozoa and diversity. He and Brent both want to reduce chemicals and fertilizer while maintaining yield. They realize finding the right balance will likely involve trial and error – but Brent says he knows Tim is on his side. "I can fail at about anything," Brent says, "but I can definitely learn as I'm going down."

Back at the award ceremony, Sally Worley, PFI's executive director, told those gathered that it can be tempting for farm owners to take the path of least resistance when it comes to managing their land – but that doing so often leads to less conservation, more farm consolidation and less farmland access for beginning farmers.

"Or farmers can follow a more complex path in instilling conservation and diversity on their farmland, and paving the way for beginning farmers to get farmland access," Sally said. "This path is neither simple, nor is it easy, but it is of the utmost importance for our farming future. Tim is one such farmland owner. He has not picked the easy path, but the important and complex path."

Tim insists that he's just fulfilling his landowner's responsibility to leave the land better than he found it. Reciting a quote he learned from Neil Dennis, a friend in Saskatchewan, Canada (and past PFI Annual Conference speaker), he says all his actions on the farm are guided by its sentiment: "Look out for the land," he says, "and it will look out for you." ■

Shifting Gears

As their needs have changed over the years, three Iowa vegetable farms have adapted their operations to meet the present and plan for the future.

By Jacqueline Venner Senske

Raising vegetables is hard work. It's physically demanding, runs on a rigid schedule and requires endless decisions. These strains lead many farmers to adapt their operations to accommodate changing needs. Here, three farmers share reflections on what they changed, and why.

✿ Rob and Tammy Faux

At Genuine Faux Farm, near Tripoli, Iowa, Rob and Tammy Faux work on a system of five-year plans. Like many produce farms, flexibility and adaptability have been hallmarks of their farm's evolution. They started their farm in 2004 with sales at area farmers markets, launching their CSA with 20 members in 2005. "Our first five-year plan said that our CSA was going to be no bigger than 40 shares. But also, sometimes opportunities knock and you have to work within your plan to seize them," Rob says.

By 2008, they were up to 120 CSA members plus four weekly farmers markets. A core group of customers sustained them against turnover, with new customers providing the profit. Over time, Rob and Tammy noticed changes to that core group as customers' lives and needs changed. New subscriptions flagged. "Around that time, the CSA model in Iowa was starting to struggle," Rob says. "The CSA wasn't going to keep us in the black anymore."

Recognizing the need to adapt, he and Tammy branched out, selling to restaurants in nearby Waterloo and providing bulk sales to a retirement community. By 2019, they planned to drop the CSA entirely and switch to a system of prepay credits. "Customers could use their credits to purchase the produce as we had it available, and when they ran out of credits, they could purchase more," Rob says.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, Rob and Tammy found they needed to adapt again. They couldn't secure workers and decided Rob needed to find supplemental work. Since 2007, Rob had worked full-time on the farm while Tammy, a professor of social work, taught at nearby Wartburg College. In April 2020, Rob started a remote, part-time job with the Pesticide Action & Agroecology Network. Around the same time, he was diagnosed with kidney cancer. "It was a messy year," Rob says. Currently, they've scaled down to a level Rob describes as "mildly frantic to keep it doable." They still raise some produce in high tunnels,



Rob and Tammy Faux

along with turkeys, broiler chickens and eggs. With two off-farm jobs, their main goal is for expenses and income to add up to zero. He adds, "We're still seeking that magic balance of farming plus off-farm jobs plus time to enjoy life." Identifying core values – like avoiding pesticides and seeking to right-size the farm – along with mapping out five-year plans has helped them set intentions, gauge their progress and revise plans as needed.

As they work on their next five-year plan in late 2024, Rob and Tammy know it'll look different. "As we progress through our lives, the major medical things are going to happen more often, so that must be reflected in our plan," Rob says. "We know there will be pivots, not just in our farms but in our lives. The idea of possibility has always been a big fuel of our farm – how can we be healthier, more sustainable, more efficient, make things work better. Right now, I'm even more optimistic about next year." ■

⚙️ Donna Warhover

In early October, just ahead of a season-ending hard freeze, Donna Warhover of Morning Glory Farm in Mt. Vernon, Iowa, had a backache. Donna and her team had spent the morning harvesting peppers and digging sweet potatoes – 2,000 pounds before lunch with another 700 pounds to go in the afternoon – and there was still much to do.

Yet her back was aching. Through physical therapy, she had learned why: a slipped disc. “Now, I’m trying to delegate,” Donna says. On her farm, Donna manages and directs work all around her. But she also balances her roles as a mom and grandma, and as a daughter to aging parents.

In response to her injury, and preparing to scale back, Donna has made some changes. Previously, her CSA spanned spring, summer and fall. She also did area farmers markets, restaurant sales and on-farm sales. Now, she’s narrowed her focus to a six-week spring CSA, restaurant sales and something new to her: growing crops for use at other farms. The 2024 season was Donna’s second year being part of a collaborative CSA with nearby Buffalo Ridge Orchard, run by Marcus and Emma Johnson in Central City, Iowa. Donna also grows plant starts for another nearby farm.

Growing for others has involved a learning curve, from adjusting quantities, to accommodating delivery schedules, to tough decisions around crop failures. The new issues and challenges in these business relationships have required communication and



Donna Warhover

adjustment on both sides. But these pivots have let Donna continue to generate income from the farm while making use of her existing facilities, well-honed skills and practical expertise.

“Our hope was always to be able to pass this to the next person who wants to do this,” Donna says.

“The physical demands are great, and we want to position ourselves for retirement.” As she and her husband continue planning their next steps, Donna says she’s motivated by figuring out how to meet their needs more effectively.

“We’ve experienced great success in being a CSA farm, a vegetable farm, a mentoring farm, a place for adults with disabilities. And now it’s a new season,” Donna says. “It’s time to rethink how we’re living here on this farm.” ■

⚙️ Laura Krouse

In late September 2024, Laura Krouse of Abbe Hills farm near Mt. Vernon, Iowa, celebrated her last CSA pickup of the season. It was also her last CSA pickup ever.

“I’ve been doing a CSA 20 weeks per year for over 30 years,” Laura says. “In 2020, it was 160 shares, but over the years, we probably averaged around 80 per year.”

Over the life of her CSA, she prepared around 57,600 CSA shares, all filled with produce Laura planted, grew, harvested, washed and packed. Hidden from view are the countless hours planning, watering, weeding and doing other endless tasks that go into vegetable production. After all those years of work, Laura says she’s ready for a change. “It’s physically harder than it once was. I can’t tolerate the heat, and the drought is hard too. I’m 68, and I’ve been farming here since 1988,” Laura says. “I’ve made a bazillion mistakes, and a couple things have worked out. But I’d like to calm down a little bit.”

For support in mapping out the future of her farm and her next steps, Laura connected with Martha McFarland, PFI’s senior farmland viability coordinator. “Transition can be hard for any retiring farmer,” Martha says. “There are so many variables and decisions, with few models for food farmers. We start with identifying goals for their land’s legacy and considering their future needs in terms of finances and lifestyle. Figuring these things out helps farmers determine next steps.”



Laura Krouse

Laura says working with Martha helped her find solutions she feels good about. “Making a list of what I wanted was so helpful.” In 2025, Laura plans to seed a third of her farm to native grasses and have a nearby farmer graze sheep on her land. “I will still have some vegetable production of my own – about one-third of what it has been,” Laura says. “I will grow for restaurants who are existing customers, and now, they will get first pick of my crops rather than what’s left after I fill the CSAs.”

Laura has other plans in the works but isn’t ready to share all her news, beyond saying she has found a successor to take over in the future. “It can be kind of exciting to make the pivot. It can be scary too, but I’m ready,” Laura says. “I’m looking forward to what comes next.” ■

A Practice

IN FAITH

Arlyn and Sue Kauffman are living out their faith through farm, family and community.

By Amos Johnson



Arlyn and Sue Kauffman had skunk troubles. It was a crisp autumn day, but all the windows and doors of their century-old farmhouse were open in an effort to cleanse the air.

The night before, a skunk had found her way into the crawl space under the house. Though Arlyn and Sue hadn't seen the olfactory offender, they could smell her telltale perfume. As the wind wafted in, drying corn whispered in the field across the road. Bright shadows of maple leaves danced in the front yard as the wind whisked away the lingering scent.

Arlyn grew up on these 240 acres of Green Ridge Family Farm, near Weldon, Iowa – but a skunk under the house was a first for him. Still, while others might be vexed by such a malodorous guest, Arlyn understood and accepted the reality with grace. Though he was nonplussed, he saw skunks as simply part of the wider community of life on the farm. Twice, Arlyn has released skunks from live traps caught elsewhere on the farm and used the acts as teaching moments for his children.

“I want the farm . . . to be a place where they learn to nurture, not dominate and exploit,” Arlyn says of the ethos he wants to pass to his children.

For Arlyn and Sue, farming is an act of stewardship. Skunks, for instance, help control rodent populations – important when eggs and grain are the backbone of the farm. Arlyn believes his family’s job is to simply care for the land for the time they have. And that care extends to the communities the land supports, be it the customers who buy their eggs – or the skunks who eat the mice (and fumigate the house).

This belief is firmly rooted in Arlyn and Sue’s Mennonite faith, which underpins how they live their lives. “We believe that the Earth was created by God, and Jesus gave us the example of nurture and care, not exploitation,” Arlyn says. “We want to follow that as best we can.”

Farmers in Fellowship

If Arlyn’s Mennonite faith is the river that carries him through life, community is the current flowing under the surface. Arlyn explained why in closing remarks he gave at the 2018 Cooperators’ Meeting, PFI’s annual gathering of on-farm research participants. Amish Mennonites, he said, believe that “the smallest unit of sustainable spiritual life is not the individual, but rather the group.”

“So,” he continued, “it’s in my psyche. I can’t not think like that.”

As fields get bigger and farms spread farther apart, farming is becoming lonelier for many farmers. There’s less opportunity to chat with a neighbor at the fence line. And as livestock leave the landscape, there are fewer fence lines to meet at. But for Arlyn, such a reality would be unbearable. Cooperating with neighbors and family, exchanging time and

equipment – generally helping each other – sustains him. “If I had to do this all by myself and everyone else in the area was a competitor – and I know that’s how some farmers feel – I don’t think I could do it,” Arlyn says. “It would destroy me.”

Luckily, Arlyn doesn’t have to worry about a quiet and lonely struggle. Beyond

the shared ethic of mutual support within his community, he also has neighbors using similar production practices. Eggs are a mainstay at Green Ridge Family Farm, which Arlyn and his family source from about 20,000 cage-free hens housed in a 500-foot-long barn. To feed that many birds, the Kauffmans raise their own non-GMO corn, oats, barley, soybeans and wheat. The hens also have daily access to 50 acres of permanent pasture. This system lets them market their eggs with specialty certifications, including pasture-raised, GMO-free and American Humane Certified.

The Kauffmans market their eggs with specialty certifications, including pasture-raised, GMO-free and American Humane Certified.

In their church, four other farmers raise eggs this way, and market and distribute those eggs through the same company as Arlyn and Sue – Fairfield Specialty Egg, based in Illinois. The company’s business model, Arlyn says, prioritizes helping young farmers gain access to agriculture. Each family is allowed one barn, which spreads opportunity more widely within the Mennonite community. When a new family is starting off, those who already have chickens lend support, from physically building the barn to sharing knowledge and experience. The Kauffmans have been raising chickens since 2015 – so they now often mentor beginners in their community.

“It’s a lot of collaboration,” Arlyn says. “There’s a lot of phone calls.” They also get asked about their chickens during church meetings, though Arlyn emphasizes they try not to do that too much.

Within their close-knit community, however, Arlyn’s family has also received its share of support. Once, he recounts, he found himself in a predicament. It was haying time, but he was called away unexpectedly. He knew he’d have time to cut the hay, but not to bale it. The weather forecast didn’t look good, so Arlyn asked his cousin for advice. Should he take the chance and cut, potentially leaving cut hay in the field to rot in the rain, or hope the weather held out until after he returned? “It’s time to mow the hay,” his cousin replied. “Go mow the hay. We’ll make sure it gets baled.”

These acts of mutual aid are recorded in a book, Sue explains. When you help move cattle, or someone loans a planter, it all gets written down. At least once a year, she tallies it all up. Debts are settled. But more often, the

(Continued on page 12 →)

*“I want the farm . . . to be a place where they learn to nurture, not dominate and exploit.”
- Arlyn Kauffman*

exchanges have been so equitable that hosting someone for dinner is enough to balance the accounts. This ethic of community care is a core value. But, careful not to misrepresent, Arlyn says it doesn't mean he and Sue are immune to economic realities.

"We feel the pressures to try to chase the bottom line," he says. "But I feel like by working together, we can help each other resist those pressures."

Good Works and Grace

At 20,000 hens, the Kauffmans' flock isn't small. By national standards, however, it's not huge. According to The Poultry Site, egg operations with 75,000 or more hens account for 95% of all layers in the U.S. Commercial in-line facilities, where eggs are laid and processed at the same site, account for 85% of all table eggs in the country. These farms can have up to 6 million layers, with each poultry building housing anywhere from 50,000 to 350,000 hens.

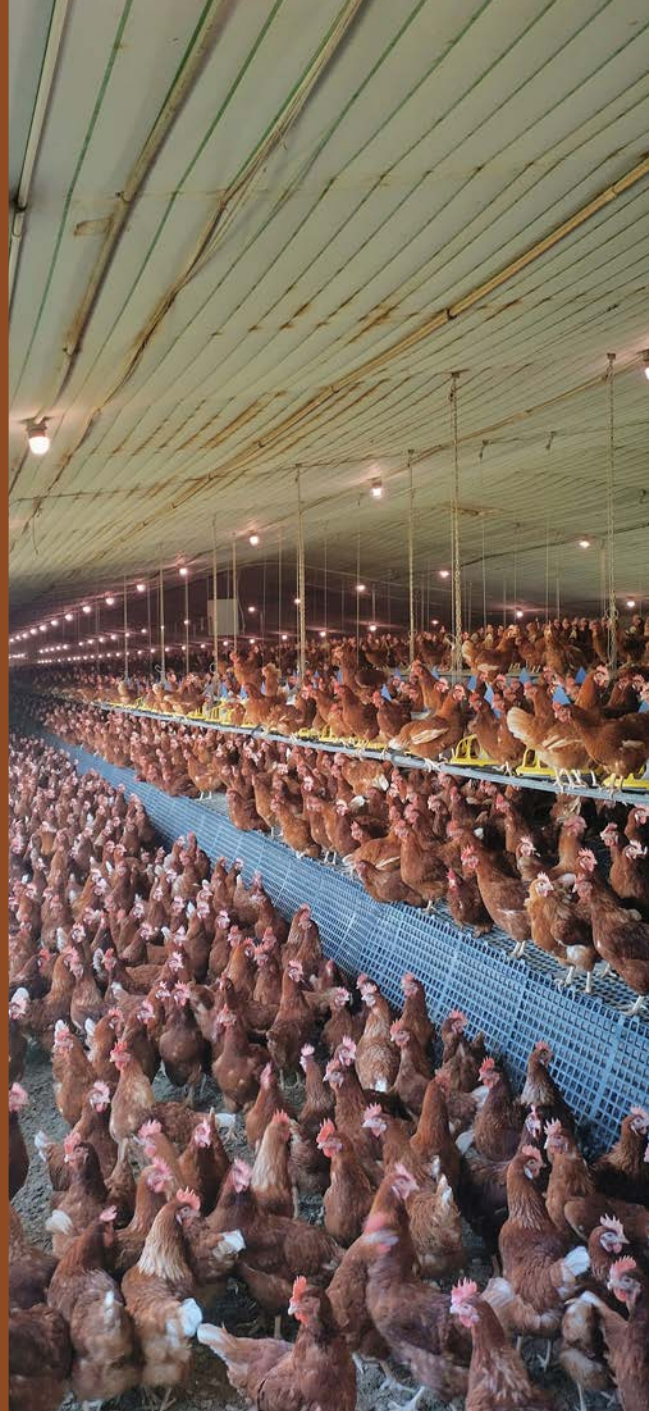
Still, Arlyn describes his operation as "commodity eggs with specialty certifications." The eggs leave the farm, go through intermediaries and end up in California. "I'm not sure I feel good about that from a social standpoint," he says. That his eggs don't serve his local community bothers him, and he grapples with the ways his management doesn't fully reflect his goals of stewardship and community. When asked what his biggest challenges are, Arlyn sits for a time in contemplative silence, scratching the ears of the dog by his side. "I think for me, it is a philosophical dilemma."

Sue agrees. "We believe that we – you, us – were created to take care of the Earth and to be productive." Part of that mandate of their faith, Sue explains, is making sure everyone has a chance to connect with the food they eat. "Sometimes it feels like what we're doing, even though it's maybe not as bad as, you know, the mega conglomerates, it's not helping that challenge."

The dilemma for them is palpable. But Arlyn says it's a tradeoff. Sacrificing community with their customers has let them live out other core values. "It has given us the opportunity to be on the farm with our children. And it provides enough income to pay for itself, for our farmland loan and to buy machinery," he says. "It allows us to be here and be a part of the ag community."

"I like the working together – doing things together as a family and an extended family."

- Sue Kauffman



Arlyn's Hyline Brown chickens produce around 19,000 eggs a day.

The work itself is also a family endeavor, which is just as important to them. "It brings me joy to work with my children," Sue says. Farming together has engendered many meaningful moments. She describes how her boys used to roller-skate around the egg room, and recalls watching them "walking a little straighter because they are contributing to something that needs to be done."

"I also enjoy helping with the birds sometimes, and with the eggs," Sue adds. "But I like the working together – doing things together as a family and an extended family."

The Narrow Gate and the Difficult Way

As Arlyn and Sue look to the future, their vision is one of more connection to land and community, and contentment. Arlyn dreams of a mobile pasture system for his chickens so he can use them and other animals to harvest forage, and to continue improving soil health.

Arlyn and Sue also hope their children can take the next steps on the path of community connection and care. Both agree they'd want their children, should they pursue agriculture, to farm smaller, not bigger, and in a way that directly serves their local community. "Moving in that direction means scaling down a lot, which then makes cash flow challenging," Arlyn says. "But I do want them to have a sense of responsibility in taking care of the Earth."

"It's part of this personal journey that I have been on to not make efficiency the God," he continues, "to not make the bottom line of cash be what drives our lives."

Systemic forces are powerful, however, and Arlyn acknowledges the impact of growing up in a system that prioritizes financial return in exchange for work. "I hope my children can do better with that [dilemma] than I have," Arlyn says, "that they will be able to make choices based on the greater good." ■



The nest boxes are angled so that the eggs roll onto the conveyor belt where Arlyn watches for any defects.

Learn More

Listen to Arlyn's closing remarks at PFI's 2018 Cooperators' Meeting, where he shares more about how his faith underpins his life and his farming practices:

practicalfarmers.org/pfi-cooperators-meeting-2018-closing-remarks

"A Mennonite's View of Grace" by Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld:

press.palni.org/ojs/index.php/vision/article/view/396/341

Neighbors in Conservation



Chuck Hesse

For two eastern Iowa farmers, conservation has fostered connection – along with personal and financial rewards.

By Vanya North



Steve Robisky

Steve Robisky and Chuck Hesse have been neighbors in eastern Iowa for nearly 20 years. But it wasn't until 2016, when Chuck rented 59 acres from Steve, that the two got to know each other better. Since then, they've found their paths crossing more as each has embarked on similar – but different – conservation journeys.

Their farms, near the Cedar River in Black Hawk County, Iowa, both offer serene views of rolling, tree-covered hills. Steve's farm, 700 acres first purchased in 2005 and added to over the years, is scattered across several counties on the west side of the river. It's almost exclusively dedicated to conservation, apart from about 100 acres currently in corn, beans and hay.

"I like conservation. I like everything about it," Steve says. "I like clean air. I like clean water. I like snow that stays white because it doesn't get dirt blown all over it."

On the east side of the river, Chuck's farm is a sprawling 1,200 acres, half in corn and the other half in beans. Chuck owns some of those acres and rents others. "I probably travel a 12-mile radius on my rented and owned land, and I know every turn," he says. "I know where the soil types change and where the land rises or falls. When you're harvesting the crop or doing any work, there's pride there."

Renting land from Steve let Chuck see firsthand how Steve was integrating conservation practices. Observing Steve's commitment to conservation – both for the environmental benefits and the potential economic incentives – planted the seed for Chuck to explore similar strategies on his own land.

As they each continue to work the land in their own ways, their parallel paths in conservation are converging, showing how neighboring farmers can inspire and influence one another, even when their approaches differ.

Connecting Through Conservation

Steve grew up on a family farm specializing in hogs, corn and soybeans. But seeing the struggles of the 1980s farm crisis, he didn't feel confident about the future of farming. He forged a career off the farm, starting in the seed and pet food business in 1986 and switching to Deere and Co. in 1990, where he worked until retiring in 2020.

He still wanted to make a living off the land, however, and in 2005, Steve started buying land. Later, he started exploring ways to profitably use conservation practices on those acres, as well as on inherited land. That search led him to discover various federal and private programs that pay farmers for conservation efforts.

Part of his thinking is based on simple crop economics. In late November 2023, for instance, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated the average cost to plant, grow and harvest corn would be around \$856 per acre in the 2024 crop year. To break even, farmers would need to yield between 180 and 200 bushels per acre. "But in conservation," Steve says, "there are programs that can make \$255 per acre without all the inputs, putting that land ahead in profit margins."

Beyond the numbers, however, land stewardship is a key part of Steve's farming goals. Between 2015 and 2021, he worked to transition row crop land into native prairie.

"In conservation, there are programs that can make \$255 per acre without all the inputs, putting that land ahead in profit margins."

- Steve Robisky

Chuck, meanwhile, first noticed changes to Steve's farm in 2016, while renting from him. He recalls driving past his neighbor's land and seeing flowers beginning to bloom across vast swaths of Steve's farm. Intrigued, Chuck asked Steve about it. Steve explained his plan to make money off the land by enrolling it in the federal Conservation Reserve Program, which provides annual rental payments to landowners who convert environmentally sensitive cropland to vegetative cover.

Chuck admired the beauty of Steve's newly established prairie and approached Steve for advice on creating a conservation plan for his own farm. He'd been thinking of ways to increase conservation, but knew he didn't want to remove most of his land from production as Steve had. Instead, Chuck was inspired to stop planting his cash crop in marginal acres – areas of his farm that didn't make enough profit to justify the costs associated with keeping them in production.

"I have variable soil types on my farm and that really affects harvest numbers," Chuck says. "I used data from my combine and overlaid that with a map of the farm. I noticed that, at harvest, certain areas would do poorly five or six times over a 10-year period."

Balancing Conservation With Economics

Armed with that insight, Chuck realized those areas of his farm, about 22 acres, would be better used for habitat. He reached out to Steve for advice. Steve recommended a seed mix used for Conservation Reserve Program plantings called CRP 42 Prairie Mix – and he offered to plant those acres for Chuck. In 2017, Steve seeded the first 8 acres of Chuck's land using CRP cost-share, followed by another 14 acres later in the year.



Chuck's pollinator prairie

Today, Chuck's farm also boasts colorful blooms and diverse pollinator habitat, which borders his main crops. The land Chuck removed from production was also eligible to enroll into CRP, which he did in 2017. The program offers cost-share to prepare, seed and mow the land, and farmers often receive a sign-on bonus for joining. Chuck says the conservation rental payments he now receives on those acres make them more profitable than they had been as cropland.

"I realized I was throwing \$200 to \$300 of [cash crop] seed into this sandy area, and on zero-harvest years, I was out \$300 [per acre]," Chuck says. "Now, the rental payments through various CRP programs guarantee some income on those acres."

For Steve, this financial aspect is an important facet of conservation work. His approach to habitat conservation is guided by the commonly used analogy of a three-legged stool. For conservation plans to be robust, he says, they must be environmentally sustainable, have a positive impact on people and provide a financial return. On his land, Steve has

"I used data from my combine and overlaid that with a map of the farm. I noticed that, at harvest, certain areas would do poorly five or six times over a 10-year period."

- Chuck Hesse

seen a return on investment of 5.5% per acre, or \$200-\$300 per acre, after converting around 90% of his land to habitat.

Environmental sustainability, another leg of the stool, involves keeping the land healthy long into the future. "It takes around 100 years to make an inch of topsoil – and that's if there is native tallgrass prairie on it," Steve says. "Rebuilding these areas is one way we can assure the future of agriculture in the state."

Both Steve and Chuck have seen the benefits of their conservation efforts – the third leg of the stool. "The soil on my production acres has additional nutrients being added to it," Chuck says. "Plus, there are so many animals now. I have a lot of pheasant, deer and other wildlife using the CRP acres. Wildlife on the land also improves that land."

Steve says, "I can tell you, when people see an intermix of conservation practices, clean snow in the winter or a deer or turkey, it leaves a positive impression on people, and not just those farming." ■

Get Help Taking Marginal Acres Out of Production

Interested in restoring your own marginal acres? PFI has teamed up with Stephanie Nelson, the Iowa precision agriculture and conservation specialist for Pheasants Forever. She helps farmers analyze yield data to identify acres better suited for habitat than crop production.

"Chuck Hesse practiced precision conservation by evaluating his farm's profitability at a subfield level, improving his bottom line while creating habitat," Stephanie says. "This practice can benefit anyone, and we offer resources like CRP to help farmers get started."

To learn more about technical support and unique incentives, visit pheasantsforever.org or contact **Stephanie Nelson at snelson@pheasantsforever.org**.

2024 FIELD DAY Season

While you might see a few more PFI field days continue to trickle in through the winter and early spring, we've wrapped up the 60 events that were featured in the field day guide. Thank you to everyone who hosted and attended. We enjoyed reading in the evaluations the wide variety of reasons why you attended. There's no "wrong" reason to attend a field day, and hundreds of good ones! Here's a selection:

*My dad wanted to come. | To encourage my wife. | A good friend invited me and my daughter.
My husband's dream is a flower farm. | Attended with friends for the experience. | Close to home.
Family friend. | To support my brother. | Our children are dreaming about how to farm on our 20 acres.
Brought four of my girls with me. | Grandpa invited me. | My mom dragged me. | Invited to come with
son and daughter-in-law. | My professor suggested it. | Bringing a friend who hadn't been to a PFI event
before. | To learn about what I see when I drive from Marshalltown to Des Moines. | For my birthday!*





2

(1) Ross McCaw sports a fresh “Don’t Farm Naked” T-shirt while talking to field day attendees at a stop near a field entrance (Aug. 30, Marengo, IA) (2) Matt and Jocelyn Vermeersch and their two boys, along with Maggie McQuown and Steve Turman, pose together after hosting a successful field day on generational farm transition and converting row crop ground to permanent pasture (Sept. 3, Red Oak, IA). (3) Farmer Morgan Hoenig of Mogo Farm discusses the impact of adding a deer fence, purchased with PFI’s Produce Safety Cost-Share, around her production fields (Sept. 4, Mount Pleasant, IA).



3



1

(1) Adam Ledvina greets his goats during one of his “Year in the Life” field days. During this event, Adam showed attendees the equipment he uses on his farm (Oct. 1, *Chelsea IA*). (2) Ron Rosmann takes attendees on a wagon tour through a recently grazed field of cover crops (Aug. 10, *Harlan, IA*). (3) Kisonia Mufuta and two of her children pose on Kisonia’s farm plot at the Feed Iowa First Wanatee Farm (Sept. 13, *Marion, IA*). (4) Ryan and Jamie Madison discuss their poultry processing preparations before encouraging guests to try processing a chicken themselves (Aug 25, *Gladbrook, IA*).

(5) Ron Rosmann speaks before presenting Tim Kelley with PFI’s 2024 Farmland Owner Legacy Award during Tim’s field day, hosted with his tenant farmer, Brent Nold (Sept. 13, *Elmo, MO*). (6) Dan Fillius of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach came prepared with pocket cutlery at Tate Carlson’s field day so attendees like Dan Murphy could sample watermelon grown in ground Tate is converting from row crops to fruits and vegetables (Aug. 29, *Storm Lake, IA*). (7) At the last of four field days Jenny Horner and Emilio Moreno hosted as part of PFI’s “Year in the Life” series, the chickens engaged with staff and equipment (Oct. 12, *Red Oak, IA*).

(8) Cait Caughey demonstrates how to clean seeds from a remnant prairie during her field day hosted at Willow Lake Nature Center (Oct. 26, *Woodbine, IA*). (9) Jeremy Wallace, of Raw Farms, explains how he manages the farm’s chicken enterprises to a group of his peers (Oct. 2, *Luzerne, IA*). (10) Natasha Hegmann, PFI’s senior horticulture and local foods coordinator, confers with Clover, Bridgewater Farm’s chief ambassador and head of security, about microphone and speaker operations as farmer Dale Raasch describes the process of adding eight new high tunnels during this year’s wild weather (July 28, *Bridgewater, IA*).



2







(1) Alex Udermann sets the stage at his field day by explaining the five principles of regenerative agriculture he follows on his farm (Aug. 9, Sartell, MN). (2) Julie and Jon Martinez proudly display the prairie restoration they and their tenant farmer worked hard to establish, showcasing the benefits of on-farm conservation (Sept. 11, Camanche, IA). (3) Elana Gingerich demonstrates planting a chestnut tree at her field day that explored how to get started growing chestnuts. (Aug. 27, Parnell, IA). (4) Attendees converse over a meal while donning their biosecurity booties at the field day Dan and Ila Taylor and family hosted showcasing how they're integrating row crops and livestock (Sept. 12, Bouton, IA).

(5) While standing in their new high tunnel, Nathan and Emily Paulsen of Brun Ko Farm explain how they accessed funding to build a high tunnel, install water lines and make food safety improvements – upgrades they say have revolutionized their operation (Sept. 20, Exira, IA). (6) Mark Westbrook describes his grazing system for turkeys and geese, shown here, as well as chickens that graze among the fruit trees and shrubs at Solstice Farm (Sept. 15, Waverly, IA). (7) Kevin, Kendra, Will and Myra pose in front of their new farm store after their field day about exploring how to balance farming with family needs (Nov. 9, Mount Ayr, IA). (8) PFI member Jerry Ackermann, alongside Micah Ranum and Scott Rahl of Pheasants Forever, shows how precision conservation can enhance soil health and biodiversity (Aug. 21, Lakefield, MN).



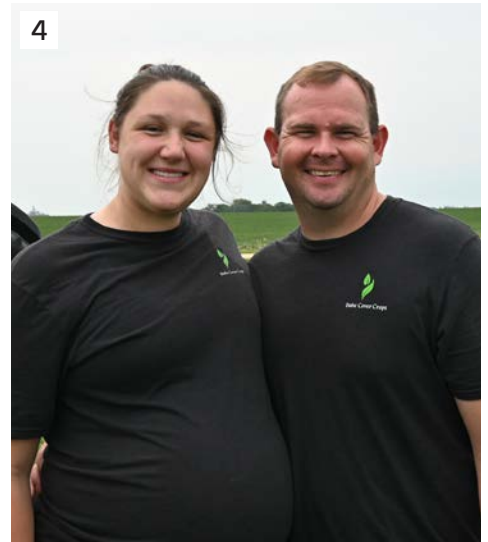


1

- (1) Two groups exchange greetings as they meet and learn about each other during Fiona Harrar's field day (Sept. 26, Washington, IA). (2) Carly and Ethan Zierke of Sweet Season Farm explain their new seed enterprise to attendees during their field day about mindful growth (Sept. 1, Calmar, IA). (3) Jenny Horner explains the electrical fence system she and Emilio Moreno use on their farm, while Emilio drives the grounding stake during the third field day of their "Year in the Life" series (Oct. 12, Red Oak, IA). (4) Jessica and Dan Bahe, owners of Bahe Cover Crops, pose for a photo after sharing tips for growing a cover crop business (July 30, Stanley, IA).
- (5) Cover crop business partners Mike Dickinson (facing the camera) and Mark Unruh (to Mike's left) of CoverPro 365 take field day attendees on a hayride to view a field of teff grass adjacent to Mike's robust poultry operation (Aug. 23, Logan, IA). (6) A group of Jake Bigelow's cattle accepts hay in exchange for helping Jake demonstrate his animal handling practices (Sept. 7, Winterset, IA). (7) Sandy McAntire (left) works with other attendees to gather prairie seed on the shores of Willow Lake. (Oct. 26, Woodbine, IA). (8) Ross McCaw's parents and PFI staff help serve a hot meal after the field day (Aug. 30, Marengo, IA).
- (9) Marcus and Emma Johnson dazzle in Buffalo Ridge Orchard shirts, featuring a botanically accurate illustration of their primary crop: the apple (the leaf placement matters!). Emma welcomed attendees before leading a discussion about their collaborative CSA and tours of their pack shed and orchard (Aug. 4, Central City, IA). (10) Yearlings and kids enjoy some fresh pumpkins after a rainy afternoon during the last Spanish field day on Adam Ledvina's farm as part of the "Year in the Life" series (Nov. 5, Chelsea, IA).

2





LEARNING SIN PELOS EN LA LENGUA

By leading field days fully in Spanish, Jenny Horner and Emilio Moreno helped Spanish-speaking farmers access authentic farmer-to-farmer learning.

By Valeria Cano Camacho Tidemann

It all started with an email I sent in early 2024 to Practical Farmers' email discussion list, a forum for PFI members to communicate, share and connect online. "Any Spanish speaking goat farmers out there?"

Less than two hours later, I got a reply from Jenny Horner. She and her partner, Emilio Moreno, are beginning livestock farmers in Red Oak, Iowa, who at the time were entering their second year raising goats on Jenny's family farm, Spring Lake Organic Farm.

After the first call, I knew we were on the cusp of something great for PFI's *Agricultores Latinos* program.



Emilio Moreno and Jenny Horner

As PFI's Latino engagement coordinator, I was in the early stages of planning a new field day series for Spanish-speaking farmers called "Year in the Life." The aim was to highlight a specific farm enterprise – in this case, goats – and follow a farmer or farm family over the course of a year. Each field day

in the series would share a different aspect of the farmer's experience with other Spanish-speaking farmers.

The series would also represent a new milestone for PFI's *Agricultores Latinos* program: It would be the first to feature field days held entirely in Spanish. As we've worked to build this program and create more intentional spaces for Spanish-speaking farmers in our network, we've started by offering interpretation and translations of our publications and events. While these increase accessibility and are a step in the right direction, nothing beats being curious and asking questions, *sin pelos en la lengua* (which translates directly as "without hairs on the tongue," meaning without hesitancy).

With the "Year in the Life" series – which we successfully planned and held with Jenny and Emilio, and a parallel track at goat farmer Adam Ledvina's farm near Chelsea, Iowa – we were able to offer that authentic learning experience for the first time.

The First Farm Visit

For me, connecting with farmers like Jenny and Emilio is also an opportunity to build connections with the community of Spanish-speaking farmers in Iowa and the Midwest. After our first call, they invited me to visit their farm. Part of our goal was to start planning the field days for the year. But it was also a chance to get to know each other better.

It was mid-February and the air still had a bite to it as we walked around the farm. "Hijas, hijos, move over please!" Jenny called out to her goats, using the Spanish words for female and male goat kids. Our first stop on the tour was Jenny and Emilio's future Airbnb studio, which they built themselves on the ground level of the old grain barn. It has a direct line of sight to their herd of 40 goats and is filled with family history, like the 70-year-old piano that belonged to Jenny's dad.

"We're in the fifth year of remodeling our home, taking it bit by bit – all Emilio!" Jenny said. Emilio tried to share the credit, but Jenny laughed and shook her head no. Sustainability is important to them. As the morning light streamed through an upcycled stained glass window they found at their neighbor's curb, Emilio shared how they've sought to use recycled and



Jenny watches a goat give birth to twins during a “Year in the Life” event.



Emilio holds a young goat for a child to see up close.

reclaimed materials. “All the materials were bound for the dumpsters.” They also preserved a massive cottonwood when building their balcony. The tree projects through the middle of the structure, enclosed by a staircase made from large stepping stones. Walking down the stairs, we could see their new livestock fence – also built by Emilio – which they financed through the federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

The Path to Goats

Emilio was born in Mexico City, Mexico, and moved to the United States in early 2000s. He never imagined he’d be living on a farm. Meeting Jenny, who told him of her dream of raising goats, changed his path. “Helping to achieve her goals . . . was the initial motivation,” Emilio says. “But now I have fallen in love with the animals too.” On their farm – which they named Chivos Vivos (which means Lively Goats) – Emilio brings his work ethic, creativity and construction experience.

For Jenny, Spanish is a second language. She became fluent after falling in love with Spanish culture during a college study-abroad trip. Once back in the U.S., she moved in with her grandparents on the farm to support them as they grew older. She put her newly acquired language skills to work in Red Oak when the local high school asked if she could help provide interpretation services.

That experience, and working with her Hispanic friends in a local greenhouse, strengthened Jenny’s desire to make Red Oak an accessibly hub for new Spanish-speaking immigrants, whose numbers surged in Iowa starting in the late 1990s. She dabbled in a horticultural operation for a couple of years. But her heart was set on goats, which she sees as ideal for serving a diverse market.

With Chivos Vivos, Jenny and Emilio are striving to be a key spoke in that hub of connection. Hosting field days for the “Year in the Life” series fit right into that ethos. As part of the series, they shared their experience at four events from March to October, covering topics ranging from goat health and fencing to using goats for brush control as a Goats on the Go affiliate.

As with all beginning farmers, she and Emilio are still unsure what their farming future will hold. They have yet to make a

profit from their goats, so they both work full-time jobs off the farm. “It [farming] is more work than I could have ever possibly imagined,” Jenny says. Despite the uncertainty, she and Emilio feel supported by family and friends. Looking ahead, they’d like to expand their operation to include meat goat products, commercial grazing and agrotourism.

They also want their farm to be a welcoming and accessible space for the community.

Welcoming Neighbors

This is evident when I’m back at the farm in May and see how she and Emilio are helping others connect with the land. “Pato! Pato! Pato!” chants 3-year-old Aolani, a visitor’s child, as she chases her old pet duck around the yard. Children of Jenny and Emilio’s friends have wanted small chicks or ducklings from the local tractor supply store.

The baby birds start off fitting into a small container within an apartment environment, but soon outgrow their living conditions. Jenny has accepted the adult aviary friends with a smile. It doesn’t hurt that these children squeal with excitement the moment they step out of their cars. Other attendees are young families in the area. When asked why he brings his three boys to PFI field days, one visitor, Amadoro, says, “I love to bring them over so they can experience this too. It’s the dream, right? It would be amazing to live in the country and have a farm, but it’s hard and requires a lot of money. Maybe one day we could have our own goats, chickens, dogs and cows too.”


Jenny and Emilio emphasize that it’s possible to start a farm. Jenny acknowledges it might be scary at first – and it’s important to know there will be loss when raising livestock. “But it’s all learning,” she says. “Inform yourself. Talk to friends who have more experience than you.” Emilio says the benefits make all the hardships worthwhile. “When I hold the baby goats in the spring, it all just fades away.”

“We’re really excited for the future,” Jenny says. “I have a dream of goat yoga. I’m not giving up just yet! That’s what excites me, all the possibilities, but you have to give yourself lots of patience. You’ve gotta prepare the heart.” ■

Bridging the Gap

For two PFI farm families, thriving as multigenerational operations hinges on trust, respect and an openness to change.

By Solveig Orngard



A rosy pre-dawn glow faintly illuminates the large sign welcoming visitors to Early Morning Harvest, a bustling grain, honey, produce, aquaponics, livestock, egg and grain milling operation that typically begins its day hours before the sun is up. In the staff gathering room, cofounder and current owner, Jeff Hafner, saunters in to sit. It's now 7:15 a.m., but for Jeff, it's a mid-morning break.

"I made coffee at 3 a.m. today," he says with a tinge of weariness. He mentions how one of the farm's employees arrived at 3:30 a.m. and was on the road with deliveries an hour later. "All the Amazon and eBay orders are filled and taken to the post office already."

Early Morning Harvest lives up to its name.

Also seated at the table is Jeff's father, Earl Hafner, who cofounded the business and maintains an active role in the farm's operations. Earl passed leadership duties to Jeff years ago, but father and son always worked well together. Across farm country, stories abound of power struggles or conflict when a younger generation returns to the farm. But Earl and Jeff have managed to avoid that fate.

"It's been a 30-year process (of handing over responsibility)," Jeff says. "We've had to get rid of our 'I'm right' thought process because times change and people change." His father adds, "It comes down to listening and respect for the other person."

Embracing Change

The Hafners' connection to this patch of land in the rolling hills near Panora, Iowa, began in 1948 when Earl's family first moved to the farm and started running a small dairy operation. Earl grew up helping with farm labor but left to join the military followed by several years working various agricultural jobs. By 1979, he was eager to farm again. His parents sold the farm and

retired to a nearby town, but Earl was able to rent it back and start his own farm operation that same year with his wife, Ronda Hafner, who helped with bookkeeping in addition to her off-farm work.

Jeff's story parallels his dad's in many ways. He, too, grew up helping on the farm, joined the military, explored other interests and later returned. Central Iowa Power Cooperative had bought the land in two separate purchases in 1979 and 1980 intending to build a coal-fired electrical plant, but the plans never advanced. Jeff joined his father in the operation in 1993 and bought back the farm five years later.

As Jeff and Earl share their story, they complete each other's thoughts, and Earl chuckles. "We badger back and forth all the time," he says. The closeness of their bond is evident, as is their penchant for playfulness. It's also clear how they've managed to thrive as a multigenerational team: through mutual respect, openness to new ideas and a willingness to innovate.

As a result, their respective imprints are clearly visible in the diverse enterprises on the farm.

The farm's original enterprises, started by Earl, include row crops, cattle and pigs. In 1999, the Hafners started exploring organic practices, which quickly became a pillar of their farming philosophy. After starting with 5 acres of organic barley, they gradually transitioned their land and diversified,

“We’ve had to get rid of our ‘I’m right’ thought process because times change and people change.” - Jeff Hafner

adding buckwheat, wheat and rye to their rotation of corn, soybeans, oats and barley.

One day in 2009, while Jeff was away on a 13-month military deployment, Earl received a Kashi cereal label in the mail from his son. The brand, a subsidiary of Kellogg, is known for using a variety of whole grains in its cereals. “Jeff wrote, ‘We grow these grains, let’s make our own cereal,’” Earl recalls. “So we bought our little 4-inch mill. We were just playing around. I gave away a lot of cereal. And that got a lot of people interested.”

Earl enjoyed experimenting with milling grains. Following Jeff’s return in 2010, the Hafners received a grant to install a stone mill. Early Morning Harvest, LLC was born – and with it, a new direction for the farm. The Hafners, including Jeff’s wife, Shannon Hafner, were now poised to mill their own grains in earnest. That same year, they added an aquaponic greenhouse, a big interest of Jeff’s. The new enterprises meant new sales opportunities.

In the years since Early Morning Harvest’s naissance, they have found markets at Iowa stores and restaurants and through online sales, which spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, to boost efficiency and take advantage of new opportunities, Jeff and Shannon bought the distribution company That Iowa Girl. In just one year, Early Morning Harvest grew from a staff of five to a team of 19 – and the Hafners had to quickly figure out new personnel, marketing and distribution processes.

Today, Jeff and Earl’s roles look much different than they did just five years ago. Jeff now spends more of his time educating and leading their mix of seasonal, part-time and full-time staff. “When we talk about managing, remember that you manage things and lead people,” Jeff says. “You never manage people.” He makes a point of learning each person’s strengths to fit everyone comfortably into the workplace puzzle.

This inclusive approach to building a cohesive team in many ways mirrors the attributes of respect, openness and trust that have enabled Jeff and Earl to mesh as a multigenerational farming family.

Saying No to Power Struggles

About 100 miles away, near Iowa Falls, Iowa, these attributes are also evident in how the Gilbert family has navigated farming together. John and Bev Gilbert operate Gibraltar Farms with their son and daughter-in-law, John C. and Sarah Gilbert. One of John’s brothers, Greg, and his wife, Barb (John C’s uncle and aunt), are also part of the farm team. Together, they raise a diversified mix of crops and forage, along with cows and pigs they market through Niman Ranch and directly to consumers.

In 1899, the elder John’s great-grandparents bought the dairy farm where John grew up. But the name Gibraltar Farms began in the early 1930s when John’s father started his own Brown Swiss dairy herd. He later expanded the farm, buying more acres from the 1950s to the 1980s. John grew up helping on the

(Continued on page 28 →)



Jeff and Earl Hafner at Early Morning Harvest.



The Gilbert family in 2021. From left to right: Greg, John, Bev, Kate (John C.’s sister), Sarah and John C. (photo courtesy of Niman Ranch)



Earl shows off some harvested grain from the family farm.



John C. Gilbert and his uncle Greg briefly check in about the day's tasks.

farm. When he returned in 1979 with Bev, he worked alongside his parents to keep everything running. But the transition back was not without friction – and his father continued to be active on the farm even after John C. and Sarah joined the operation in 2010.

“People complain about either farming with their parents or farming with their kids. I would always say, ‘I guarantee you that the hardest is farming with both,’” John says, prompting hearty laughs around the room.

The dairy operation continues today with John C. and Sarah, though they have greatly downsized the milking herd to about six cows. They also now feed the milk to young dairy steers transitioning to a forage-based diet in their 70-head cattle operation. Their transition to the farm has been smoother – a deliberate choice by John and Bev, who wanted to avoid the challenges they experienced farming with John’s parents. “They’ve bent over backwards to make it not (challenging) like that for us,” Sarah says.

For John and Bev, a smooth transition also ensures the land will be cared for. On Gibraltar Farms, conservation practices are integral to how they farm, and the Gilberts have done work to add and restore habitat. “It’s important to not only make things better,” John says, “but also to ensure that there is somebody in some way who can carry on what you’re doing.”

Working Together

For both the Gilberts and the Hafners, good communication is central to successfully bridging any generational gaps. In the Gilbert household, Bev says important conversations were

often had during Sunday dinners, a weekly family ritual for years. She adds that communication doesn’t always have to be direct to be effective.

“My husband’s mother would call me every day and invariably would tell me all the things that John’s dad had told her,” Bev explains. “Then John would come home for lunch and I would transfer everything that came over indirectly to him. Now, when Sarah and I talk about things and then have to transfer the info to our husbands, it kind of reminds me of the old way.”

“Put it this way,” John interjects, “we have a system!”

Respect and trust are also key ingredients to success – as well as a willingness by the older generation to step back and cede some control. From her vantage at Gibraltar Farms, Sarah notices and appreciates John and Bev’s openness to change. “Coming back to a place where people are already willing to do things differently allows for a lot more opportunity than if you’re trying to slot yourself into somewhere really rigid. That really struck me when we came back here to the farm.”

At Early Morning Harvest, Earl is content to take a backseat view of farm operations. “I can give suggestions, but I don’t want to make decisions that affect the profitability of the farm,” he says. “Anymore, I don’t know all the details of the operation. Now I’m just educated labor.”

Jeff acknowledges this shift. “For both of us, our goal now is to prepare the next generation. With every person that passes through here, the businesses take on a different color. Our decision now is – will the businesses continue, and if they do, what will they look like?” ■

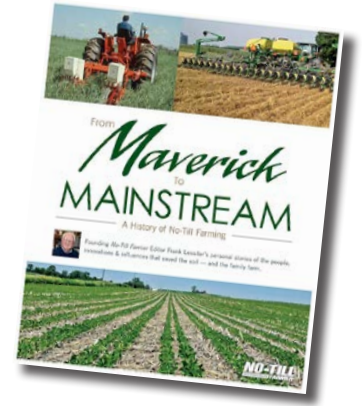
“Coming back to a place where people are already willing to do things differently allows for a lot more opportunity.” - Sarah Gilbert

Review of Frank Lessiter's "From Maverick to Mainstream: A History of No-Till Farming"

By Laura Foell

"What would be the feeling of this nation should a foreign nation suddenly enter the U.S. and destroy 90,000 acres of land, as erosion is allowed to do in a single country?"

- Hugh Hammond Bennett, viewed as the father of soil conservation, 1881-1960

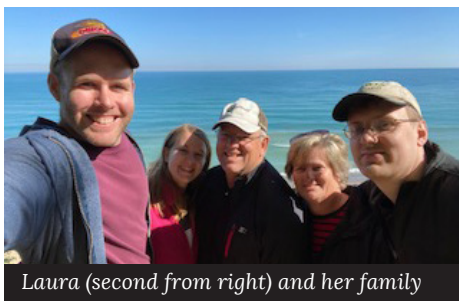


Getting rid of the plow and quitting cultivating is the theme of the book

"From Maverick to Mainstream: A History of No-Till Farming" by Frank Lessiter. In 400-plus pages, this tabletop book explores the history of no-till farming through a collection of articles from No-Till Farmer magazine, which has been in print since 1972, and many personal stories from and about the people and inventions that have influenced no-till farming.

The book begins with stories of farmers starting to question the effectiveness of the moldboard plow for preparing the seedbed. The plow was linked with the devastating effects of the Dust Bowl on soil, farms and livelihoods during the 1930s. It was around this time that people started questioning the myth that wind and soil erosion are the major causes of soil degradation. In fact, tillage is the main culprit – and that's how no-tillage was defined: as getting rid of the plow and quitting cultivating.

Readers learn about Hugh Hammond Bennett's pioneering work on soil erosion, and that much of the early no-till work was based on Edward Faulkner's revolutionary book "Plowman's Folly," published in 1943. In it, Edward stated,



Laura (second from right) and her family

"No one has ever advanced a scientific reason for plowing." His book questioned the widely accepted orthodoxy of moldboard plowing, and in 1956, the federal Soil Bank Program – the predecessor of today's Conservation Reserve Program – started paying farmers to quit farming marginal lands. In 1966, equipment manufacturers, such as Allis Chalmers, successfully commercialized a no-till planter. But acceptance of no-tillage was slow to take off. Even as chemical companies began developing herbicides to make no-tillage practical, no-till was considered "farming dirty."

One article from 1972 that Frank includes highlights this gap while painting a sharp contrast between the benefits of switching to no-till versus relying on other conservation practices alone. It tells how an Indiana Soil Conservation worker stated that, given current no-till adoption rates in his area at that time, it would take 118 years to control erosion with strip cropping, terraces and other conservation practices compared with using no-till for just one year. Elsewhere in the book, we learn that engineers of planter equipment were questioning the need to turn over anywhere from 500 to 1,000 tons of soil per acre with the plow when we only need 8% of the ground for a seedbed.

Over time, however, no-till started catching on. Rapid expansion of precision technology has helped no-tillers cut fertilizer and seed costs, improve crop stands and reduce their environmental footprint. Frank's readers learn how acceptance of no-till spread in

the U.S. and other countries. Machinery dealers abroad, for instance, have been quick to encourage farmers to use no-till equipment.

And we can't forget the "underground critters" – the worms, fungi, bacteria and organic matter. The book references university studies showing how earthworm populations increase in no-tilled fields compared with other tillage methods.

By the end of "From Maverick to Mainstream," readers will have a better sense of the history no-tillage and the people who were key to advancing this innovation. Even experienced or long-time no-tillers will get a behind-the-scenes look at the hurdles no-tillage faced, and its wins. Everyone will come away reminded of this fundamental truth: Everything starts with the soil. ■

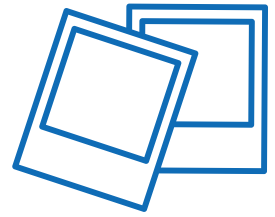
Laura Foell was raised on a small farm in southern Illinois on which her family raised livestock and crops. She graduated from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Illinois, with a degree in general agriculture in an era when only one of five of students was female. After marriage, she moved to Iowa in 1984 to join her husband on his family farm in Sac County.

She and her husband own, farm and co-manage the family farm and have been no-tilling for more than 30 years. They have developed farm plans including buffer strips, CRP, strip tillage and horticulture crops in addition to corn and soybeans. Recently, their son Tom has joined the operation as they continue the century farm for another generation. In the spirit of transition planning, they hold yearly family planning meetings in which their son, daughter and son-in-law participate and to make sure the next generation is prepared to assume responsibility.

PFI MEMBER

Photo Album

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



Winry Tucksen enjoying a cucumber at the Hampton Farmers Market. (Karen Koenig (Grandma), Koenigs' Acres Farm, Hampton, IA)



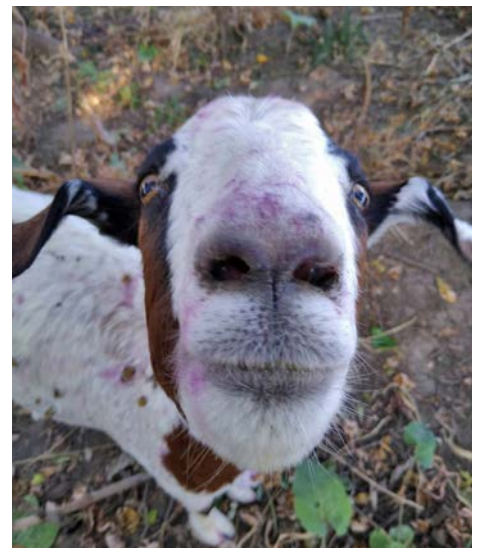
Bean field headed into fall. (Dave Bangert, Donnellson, IA)



Pumpkin (the pony) helps the boys and Dad (Mike) with chores. (Janine Robertson, Knob Hill Farm, Webster City, IA)



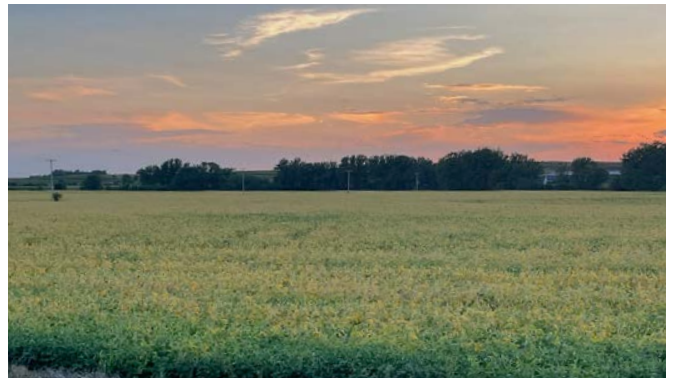
A mandala garden takes shape, awaiting its cover crop. (Sandro Lopes, David City, NE)



"It's that time of year... 'suitsors' are on the way! Does my pokeweed berry juice look alright?" (Margaret Wolter, Sandhill Acres, Chelsea, IA)



Selfie-approved – it's a good day to seed cover crops! (Jacob Bolson, Hubbard, IA)



Sunset over a soybean field. This field is part of a PFI Cooperators' Program trial testing the impact of cover crops on the number days suitable for field work. (Bob Sullivan, Woodbine, IA)



American British White Park bull calf, "Pancho," poses for a sunset photo. (Linda Wattonville, Wattonville Family Farm, Allenman, IA)



The annual apple cider-making: washing apples and crushing in a hydraulic press. (Denise O'Brien, Rolling Acres Farm, Atlantic, IA)



Morning dew on a collard leaf. (Joe Hunt Wassink, Black Earth Gardens, Cedar Rapids, IA)



It's almost like harvesting rainbows. (Ken Wise at Meryl & Dave Hiler Farm, Rockwell City, IA)



An afternoon honeydew treasure hunt in the garden completed. (Eric Cleveland, Cleveland Family Farms, Alden, IA)



Have a photo you'd like featured in the magazine?
Email it to liz.kolbe@practicalfarmers.org or tag PFI on social media and let us know!

Meet the Newest Members of PFI's Team

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



Tracy Engel
Senior Geospatial Data
Coordinator

Tracy lives in Jefferson, Iowa, on a small hobby farm where she gardens and raises Nigerian dwarf goats. She and her Vizsla, Tasha, enjoy hiking in Iowa's state parks and sharing the occasional snack. Her cat, Twilight, is a famed mouser who is also a people-lover.



Cory Gamble
Field Crops Viability
Coordinator

Cory grew up in Iowa, and has lived in Hawaii and Oregon. He loves to play golf and spend time doing outdoor activities with his family and children.



Shawn Hanson
Finance Manager

Shawn lives in Nevada, Iowa. In his leisure time he likes to go to thrift stores, play board games, spend time with his children or work on whatever his current craft or DIY project is.



Kyleigh Meyeres
Grants Coordinator

Kyleigh lives in Altoona, Iowa, with her partner Ashton, their two dogs, Beans and Fitz, and horse Frac. In her free time, you will find her doing public outreach for the fire department, riding her horse or reading a good book.



Roberta Bianchin Rebesquini
Cropping Systems Research
Coordinator

Roberta enjoys reading, traveling – especially to visit family and friends in Brazil – exploring new places, being outdoors in contact with nature and getting to know new landscapes. She loves trying different eateries and breweries and spending quality time with loved ones.



Becca Snider
Finance Assistant

Becca's family has farmed in central Iowa for generations. She enjoys learning new things on a variety of topics, from ancient civilizations to modern neuroscience and a lot in between. In her free time, Becca enjoys reading or crafting.



Beth Waage
Field Crops Education
Coordinator

Beth lives on a small acreage north of Ames, Iowa, with her husband and two children. Outside of work, she enjoys all things outdoors, including gardening, hiking, running, photography, walking her dogs and biking.



Bryan White
Office Manager

Bryan lives in Boone, Iowa. He is involved in many hobbies, including participating in classic car shows, woodworking, traveling, going to concerts, and attending sporting events with his wife, Jess.

Investigating Seedling Starting Practices Through On-Farm Research

Turning on the grow lights or the heater in the greenhouse is an exciting harbinger of spring for many vegetable farmers, as it usually signals the annual ritual of getting seedlings started. This task, however, is a repetitive chore that takes time, energy and materials – which also makes it ideal for experimentation, as small changes could lead to big improvements in efficiency.

Over the years, vegetable farmers in PFI's Cooperators' Program have conducted three on-farm trials exploring seed-starting practices. Jill Beebout, a longtime cooperator, took part in two of these (she also recently received PFI's Master Researcher Award honoring the 20 trials and nine PFI field days she's done over the years). She notes that "seed-starting is a foundationally important part of our operation. We grow 99% of the transplants we use, so improving that process makes a lot of sense."



Jill Beebout and her partner, Sean Skeehan

In a seed-starting trial last spring, five farms tested whether covering their brassica seeds with soil when starting them in trays affects germination rates and transplant viability. Participants included Jill Beebout, Hannah Breckbill and Emily Fagan, Natasha Hegmann and Pete Kerns, Roxanne Mitten and Carly and Ethan Zierke. Three out of the five farms found that covering brassica seeds resulted in higher germination rates (15% on average). One farm found that covering resulted in 15% more plants that were healthy enough to be transplanted. Farmers concluded they would continue covering their brassica seeds, though some said they might skip it if they were pressed for time.

This was beginning farmer Ethan Zierke's first trial with the Cooperators' Program, and he is excited to continue using trials to fine-tune his practices. "There are countless things we do daily because we think we need to," Ethan says. "It's always a good feeling to implement a practice that is supported by experience and data."

Jill Beebout says that over her farming career, her 20 research trials have been invaluable for challenging misconceptions, solidifying processes and drilling down on profitability of practices, including starting seedlings. Even when a trial has shown that her original practice is sound and changes aren't needed, the affirmation helps erase doubt. Jill's advice to new on-farm researchers: Don't underestimate the amount of work a trial takes and take on too many, or you'll be grumpy come summer. "When you are starting, pick one easy and important trial to do," Jill says. "At the end of a trial, I have never regretted doing it."



Want to dig deeper?

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

Interested in conducting a research trial to hone your seed-starting system or any other practice on your farm?

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



PFI Events

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



JANUARY

JAN. 9-10 • Pre-Conference Short Courses
Iowa Events Center | Des Moines, IA | *For more information, visit practicalfarmers.org/annual-conference*

JAN. 10-11 • PFI Annual Conference
Iowa Events Center | Des Moines, IA | *For more information, visit practicalfarmers.org/annual-conference*

JAN. 17 • Small Grains Shared Learning Call
Free | Online | *Register at practicalfarmers.org/shared-learning-calls*

JAN. 21-APRIL 8 • Winter Webinar Series
Weekly on Tuesdays | Noon-1 p.m. | Online | *Full descriptions at practicalfarmers.org/winter-webinars*

JAN. 28 • Commercial Apple Growers Workshop
Wilson's Orchard & Farm | Cumming, IA | *For more information, visit practicalfarmers.org/events*

EVENTS IN SPANISH

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

FEBRUARY

FEB. 7 • Small Grains Shared Learning Call
Free | Online | *Register at practicalfarmers.org/shared-learning-calls*

FEBRUARY-MARCH • Horticulture Farmer Meet-Ups
Free | Various locations | *For locations and dates, visit practicalfarmers.org/calendar*

FEBRUARY-MARCH • Grazing Farmer Meet-Ups
Free | Various locations | *For locations and dates, visit practicalfarmers.org/calendar*

MARCH

MARCH 5 • Midwest Covers and Grains Conference
Great Wolf Lodge | Wisconsin Dells, WI | Free for PFI Members
Register at practicalfarmers.org/midwest-covers-and-grains-conference

MARCH 7 • Small Grains Shared Learning Call
Free | Online | *Register at practicalfarmers.org/shared-learning-calls*



Find PFI At

JANUARY

JAN. 23-25 • GrassWorks Grazing Conference
Wisconsin Dells, WI | *Learn more at grassworks.org/grazing-conference*

JAN. 24-25 • OGRAIN Winter Conference
Madison, WI | *Learn more at ograin.cals.wisc.edu/ograin-events/2534-2*

FEBRUARY

FEB. 4-6 • Iowa Ag Expo
Des Moines, IA | *Learn more at iowaagexpo.com*

FEB. 11-12 • Iowa Specialty Producers Conference 2025
Ankeny, IA | *Learn more at iowaspecialtycrop.org*

FEB. 20-22 • Marbleseed 2025
La Crosse, WI | *Learn more at marbleseed.org/events/organic-farming-conference*

MARCH

MARCH 19-20 • Midwest Grazing & Soil Health Summit
Willmar, MN | *Learn more at sfa-mn.org/midwest-grazing-and-soil-health-summit*

PFI Current Enrollments

From January - March 2025

Habitat Incentives Program

ROLLING APPLICATION

practicalfarmers.org/habitat-incentives-program

Beneficial Insects Cost-Share

ROLLING APPLICATION

practicalfarmers.org/beneficial-insect-cost-share

Research Trials

ROLLING APPLICATION

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

1-on-1 Grazing Consultations

ROLLING APPLICATION

practicalfarmers.org/grazing-consultations

1-on-1 Land Matching

ROLLING APPLICATION

Contact Martha McFarland at martha.mcfarland@practicalfarmers.org or call our office at (515) 232-5661.

Cover Crop Business Accelerator

OPENS JAN. 6-FEB. 14

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

Labor4Learning On-Farm Position Applications

OPEN FEB. 3-MAY 31

practicalfarmers.org/labor4learning

N Rate Risk Protection Program

APPLICATION CLOSES APRIL 30, 2025

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

You're Invited!

2025 Midwest Covers & Grains Conference

Great Wolf Lodge | Baraboo, WI | Wednesday, March 5 | 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Post-Conference Social Hour | Moosejaw Pizza & Dells Brewing Co. | 4:15 p.m.

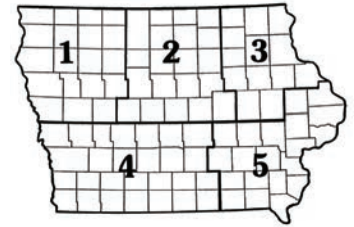
The Midwest Covers & Grains Conference brings together Midwestern farmers to promote successful farming using extended rotations and cover crops with or without livestock. The conference includes farmer-led sessions for experienced practitioners and for those looking to add small grains and cover crops for the first time. Come explore these topics and network with other farmers and service providers!

Visit the website to learn more: practicalfarmers.org/midwest-covers-and-grains-conference

Supported by ADM re:generations. This work is supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, under agreement number NR233A750004G053.

Welcome, New Members!

From July 26, 2024 through Oct. 29, 2024



DISTRICT 1 - NORTHWEST

- Marshall Banks – Akron
- Keith Behrens – Meriden
- Clint Berentschot – Inwood
- Melanie Bloom – Marathon
- Dennis Bollmeyer – Hinton
- Johnathan Boogerd – George
- Londa Boogerd – Hull
- Bryan Borchers – Akron
- Brock Boyle – Danbury
- Nathan Brenner – Wallingford
- Jerry Brus – Denison
- Del Carlson – Albert City
- Cody Davelaar – Rock Valley
- Mark Dieters – Inwood
- Tyler Feldhacker – Sioux Center
- Austin Fluit – Larchwood
- Blake Fonken – Lake City
- Adam Glienke – Washta
- Roger Groth – Ida Grove
- Daniel Gustafson – Kiron
- Tyler Hofer – Larchwood
- Jason Hunziker – Adair
- Mark Jansma – Maurice
- Jeremiah Jauer – Hinton
- Brian Kilker – Le Mars
- Josh Kovarna – Hinton
- Chris Kovarna – Merrill
- Dale Kraayenbrink – Sioux Center
- Jason Kreber – Lawton
- Brian Larson – Fort Dodge
- Brad Meyer – Rock Rapids
- Joel Mueller – Paullina
- Jerry Muilenburg – Orange City
- Darrel Newberg – Merrill
- Tyler Reimers – Defiance
- Leonard Rozeboom – Rock Rapids
- Russ Schelle – Breda
- William Schreurs – Alvord
- Dennis Schrick – George
- Marty Schumaker – Carroll
- Tye Steffen – Greenville
- Tim Tapper – Cherokee
- David Treinen – Remsen

- Kyle Ullrich – Denison
- Chris Ullrich – Kiron
- Diane Wernimont – Auburn
- Kyle Westra – Alton
- Fred Wirtz – West Bend
- Jason Woods – Sioux City

DISTRICT 2 - NORTH CENTRAL

- Sam Beenken – Buffalo Center
- Corey Bjuström – Whittemore
- David Bonin – Belmond
- Mike Borcharding – Latimer
- Kevin Butt – Iowa Falls
- Timothy Collogan – Grand Junction
- Jamie Courtney – Ames
- David Denhaan – Ames
- Rachel Deutmeyer – Ames
- Jon Flattery – Fort Dodge
- Emma Flynn – Ames
- Cynthia Freese – Grundy Center
- Jason Haglund – Story City
- Brian Harle – Kanawha
- John Harrington – Haverhill
- David Hayes – New Providence
- Roy Helmers – Reinbeck
- Rickey Henning – Jefferson
- Scot Horner – Geneva
- Shane Jensen – Greene
- Mason Kolbet – Rudd
- Jake and Betty Kraayenbrink – Ames
- Mark Kriegel – Tama
- Bill Kruse – Grand Junction
- Kyle Kuhn – Gowrie
- Kevin Lambert – Dayton
- Ronnie Leerhoff – Plainfield
- Charles Legler – Corwith
- Dale Lenz – Ames
- Charles Lloyd – Nevada
- Eric Lühring – Dike
- Kyle Mehmen – Osage
- Brandon Moe – Ogden
- Brian and Chris Nimmo – Nevada
- Eddie Noteboom – Reinbeck
- Justin Ostrander – Jefferson

- Joseph Popp – Osage
- Stacy Porter – Melbourne
- Mitchell Reeser – Iowa Falls
- Robert Sharp – Conrad
- Hyeonji Song – Ames
- Brad Thill – Algona
- Eric Vobr – Cresco
- Wayne Warehime – Gowrie
- Grant and Nicole Woodley – Clarion
- Eileen Wuebker – Story City

DISTRICT 3 - NORTHEAST

- Eric Andersen – Cedar Falls
- Kevin Bontien – Postville
- Dylan Berns – Luana
- Allison Bishop – Mt. Vernon
- Nathan Boyle – Elma
- Luke Breuer – LaPorte City
- Tim Burrack – Arlington
- Tim Cota – Dubuque
- Hilary Davis – Mc Gregor
- Brendan Drtina – Cresco
- Doug Gaul – Farley
- Brian Gilchrist – Center Point
- Carrie Gildersleeve – Dubuque
- Gerry Gillmore – Springville
- Caleb Hamer – Hudson
- Scott Hilgerson – Elkader
- Vicky Hinsbrock – Decorah
- Linus and Elaine Holthaus – Ossian
- Keith Johnson – Luana
- Jerry Kauffmann – Farley
- Jeremy Kriener – Fort Atkinson
- Collin Malcom – Postville
- Tom Melcher – Castalia
- Cody Meyer – Dorchester
- Scott Ness – Waterville
- Rebecca Ohrtman – Decorah
- Jeff Osmundson – Volga
- Tim Pecinovsky – Calmar
- Ronald Pecinovsky – Calmar
- Aaron Pfeiler – Holy Cross
- Daniel Ploessl – Holy Cross
- Jay Puffett – Strawberry Point

- Carol Puls – Sherrill
- Alex Recker – Arlington
- Iowa Food System Coalition, Christopher Schwartz – Waterloo
- Dan Steffen – Peosta
- Harvey Ulfers – Waterloo
- Randy Vogeler – Vinton
- Quentin Vsetecka – Cresco
- Bryce Warnke – Fredericksburg
- Sydney Weldon – Decorah
- Mitch Weymiller – New Albin
- Lee Zapf – Garnavillo

DISTRICT 4 - SOUTHWEST

- Greg Bartelma – Runnells
- Beck Benton – Exira
- Jacob Beyer – Knoxville
- Justin Brower – Carlisle
- Mary Buchanan – Harlan
- Noel Connor – Prole
- Jess Cruse – Council Bluffs
- Trent Davison – Bedford
- Ryan and Mallory DeZwarte – Kellogg
- Tre Edwards – Saint Charles
- Richard Faris – Mount Ayr
- Isaac Fichter – Sidney
- Mike Follmann – Massena
- Declan Gross – Earling
- Michael Haag – Greenfield
- Jill Hagenkord – Johnston
- Drew Hardisty – Thayer
- Chelsea and Eric Hayes – West Des Moines
- Tyler Heath – Avoca
- Chip Henrichs – Macksburg
- Tyler Hetzel – Malvern
- Jerry Hoover – Guthrie Center
- Allen (Jay) Hoskinson – Dallas Center
- Noah Hunter – Earlham
- William W. Hunter – Earlham
- Robert and Melanie Hutchinson – Oakland
- Justin Jackson – Hartford
- Todd James – Corning
- Travis James – Corning
- Curtis Johnson – New Market
- Sue Keenan – Kellogg
- Thelma King – Clarinda
- Jerome Kline – Missouri Valley
- Kenneth W Kline – Missouri Valley

- Mara Kline – Missouri Valley
- Katie Klingensmith – Des Moines
- Dan Knoll – Dallas Center
- Scott Koenigsfeld – Des Moines
- Will Larson – Diagonal
- Steven Lee – Polk City
- Garrett Leighton – Griswold
- William Lundquist – Moulton
- Leah Maeder – Indianola
- Tyler Moeckly – Polk City
- Dana Morgan – Corning
- Joe Nichols – Des Moines
- Ellen Paulson – Pleasant Hill
- Joel Petersen – Exira
- Jo Pisel – Johnston
- Bob Rasmus – Winterset
- Austin Reed – Indianola
- Jodi Reese and Terry Langan – Griswold
- David Rolek – Van Meter
- Dan Rosener – Creston
- Mike Scheffler – Hancock
- Gary Schulte – Earling
- Josie and Justin Sieren – Centerville
- Robert Slayton – Casey
- Justin Voyles – Bedford

DISTRICT 5 - SOUTHEAST

- Eric Adam – Washington
- Alexandria Adams – Fairfield
- Renee Belknap – Mediapolis
- Kenna Bell – Iowa City
- Brian Bourgeois – Mechanicsville
- Matthew Christner – Birmingham
- Ron Claussen – Bettendorf
- Brian Collett – Ottumwa
- Curtis Cronbaugh – Belle Plaine
- Taylor Daniels – Hedrick
- Nate Daufeldt – West Liberty
- Benjamin De Boef – Searsboro
- Amy Dewulf – Bennett
- Adam Disterhoft – Marengo
- Susie Duke – Searsboro
- Randy Ferguson – Swisher
- Ethan Fetzer – Wayland
- John Garrity – Coralville
- Faye Gerig – Marengo
- Taylor and Stephanie Getting – Oxford
- Levi Geyer – Parnell
- Bob Grout – Kalona
- Ronnie Gruenhagen – Bluegrass

- Jerry Havill – New Liberty
- Chad Hayes – Wapello
- Gregory Holcomb – Martelle
- Jason Kane – Deep River
- Zachary Kinrade – Maquoketa
- Jared Kriegel – Brooklyn
- Dustin Kriegel – Hartwick
- Gary Kriegel – Malcom
- Nicholas Kriegel – Malcom
- Greg Krogmeier – Mount Pleasant
- Shane Mairet – Muscatine
- Clinton Mikesell – Webster
- Jarrad Mohr – Baldwin
- Brett Mowrey – Rose Hill
- Gary Mowry – Bennett
- Ryan O'Toole – Letts
- Michael Reed – Mount Vernon
- Cole Reighard – Ottumwa
- Devlin Rupe – Eldon
- Troy Schlapkohl – Durant
- Todd Schroeder – Stanwood
- Ross Sieren – Keswick
- Jerry Stoltenberg – Walcott
- John Stutzman – Mt. Pleasant
- Scott Tholen – Tipton
- Jacob Thompson – Montezuma
- Randy Tompkins – Marengo
- Larry Van Den Berghe – New Liberty
- Bernard Vittetoe – Keota
- Derek Von Ahsen – South Amana
- Bowen Yoder – Williamsburg

DISTRICT 6 - OUT OF STATE

- Kay Countryman – Westminster, CO
- Shane Dykstra – Fulton, IL
- Grace Dykstra – Fulton, IL
- Zach Dykstra – Fulton, IL
- Jacob McRoberts – Matherville, IL
- Vickie Renick – LaGrange, IL
- Tate Statler – Polo, IL
- Sydney Steinle – Dorrance, KS
- Matthew Bailey – Villard, MN
- William Barnum – Brownsdale, MN
- Eric Benson – Springwater, MN
- Garrett Bohach – Rochester, MN
- Todd Boster – Cambridge, MN
- Brad Davis – Cokato, MN
- Justin Decker – Hardwick, MN
- Todd Donley – Byron, MN
- Jason Ebnet – Albany, MN

- George Foster – Princeton, MN
- Braden French – Cottonwood, MN
- Glenn Hahn – Hayfield, MN
- Sam Hansen – Sargeant, MN
- Darby Harder – Bingham Lake, MN
- Brent Hilbert – South Haven, MN
- Jacob Holst – Kellogg, MN
- Martin Krocak – Montgomery, MN
- Yuzhi Li – Morris, MN
- Scott and Dawn Lightly – Oakland, MN
- Kevin Louwagie – Cottonwood, MN
- Steven Louwagie – Marshall, MN
- Alec Marxen – Hutchinson, MN
- Charlie Olson – Cottonwood, MN
- Nicholas Pieske – Hadley, MN
- Joe Sheely – Brownsdale, MN
- Jonathan Slinden – Grove City, MN
- Kaleb Storm – Winona, MN
- Todd Vagts – Lanesboro, MN
- Bruce Wachholz – Lewiston, MN
- Laurie Beach – Pilot Grove, MO
- Dade Christy – Slater, MO
- Elizabeth Christy – Nelson, MO
- Linda Daniels – Brunswick, MO
- James Davis – Blythedale, MO
- Donald Esser – Blackwater, MO
- Lynn Fodge – Paris, MO
- Nicholas Garkie – La Grange, MO
- Kurt Herman – Brunswick, MO
- Eddie Hoff – Boonville, MO
- Larry Kerns – Clarksdale, MO
- Timothy Kueckelhan – Boonville, MO
- Terry Leshner – Westboro, MO
- Phil Lloyd – New Bloomfield, MO
- Travis Rowe – New Cambria, MO
- Aaron Smith – Eagleville, MO
- Randy Stelle – Shelbyville, MO
- Deb Thummel – Sheridan, MO
- Ryan Wood – Independence, MO
- Garrett Yackley – Taylor, MO
- Dennis Abels – Amherst, NE
- Ryon Adams – Seward, NE
- Jared Aden – Farnum, NE
- Aleta Ambler – Anselmo, NE
- Bart Beattie – Sumner, NE
- Andrew Blessin – Kenesaw, NE
- Seth Fenner – Gothenburg, NE
- Morgan Fouts – Elm Creek, NE
- Jeremy Grant – Meadow Grove, NE
- Matt Graves – North Platte, NE
- Gary Hall – Elmwood, NE
- Clark Jensen – Bennet, NE
- Chris Johnson – Bloomfield, NE
- Jordan Keithley – Falls City, NE
- Cody Kuester – West Point, NE
- Ryan Langemeier – Hooper, NE
- Thomas Lauby – Lexington, NE
- Gus and Stephanie Leigh – Neligh, NE
- Brian Meyer – Johnson, NE
- John Oehlerking – Elmwood, NE
- Robert O'Neill – Overton, NE
- Clint Osborne – Lexington, NE
- Randy Owens – Carroll, NE
- Keegan Pope – Avoca, NE
- Lara Schenck – Kearney, NE
- Cecil Schriener – Hildreth, NE
- Thomas Schroeder – Wellfleet, NE
- Seberger Household – Lexington, NE
- Warren Snodgrass – Orchard, NE
- John Steffen – Hartington, NE
- Mike Stille – Pawnee City, NE
- Mark Strnad – Genoa, NE
- Glen Thoene – Hartington, NE
- William Thomas – Ashland, NE
- Marilyn Todsens – Omaha, NE
- John Voelker – Nebraska City, NE
- Jason Vonrentzell – Osmond, NE
- Casey Walkup – Curtis, NE
- Isaac Watson – Edison, NE
- Clint Weeder – Pierce, NE
- Arlyn Werner – Syracuse, NE
- Marcus Wilhelm – Syracuse, NE
- June Ridgway – Shaker Height, OH
- Jay Foster – Garden City, SD
- Ryan Lammers – Yankton, SD
- Garret Meier – Clark, SD
- Matthew Mulder – White Lake, SD
- Jeffrey Paulson – Garden City, SD
- Christopher Drape – Seattle, WA
- Thomas Becker – Turtle Lake, WI
- Justin and Darci Daniels – Viroqua, WI
- John Gehl – Hartland, WI
- Jill Hepburn – Cedarburg, WI
- April Prusia – Blanchardville, WI
- Chris and Jennifer Reichert – Sheboygan Falls, WI

DISTRICT 7 - INTERNATIONAL

- Lianjessi Socarras – Caguas, Puerto Rico

Thank you

to our newest lifetime members!

**Bryan and Ashley
Beachy**
Leon, IA

**Tomoko Ogawa
and Simon
Oberholzer**
Bern, Switzerland

**Rod and Cindy
Richardson**
Tama, IA

**Muriel
Strand**
Sacramento, CA

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

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

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

MEMBER INFORMATION

Contact Name(s)*: _____

Farm or Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

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

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

JOIN OR RENEW

1. I am joining at the level of:

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

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

- 0
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11 or more

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

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

4. How did you hear about PFI?

MEMBER BENEFITS

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

- Announcements
- Perspectives
- Field Crops
- Horticulture
- Livestock

Please add my farm to PFI's:

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

SUSTAIN PRACTICAL FARMERS WITH AN ADDITIONAL DONATION

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

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

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

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

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

PAYMENT

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

Additional Donation = \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT = \$ _____

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

Name on card _____ Number _____

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

PRACTICAL FARMERS *of Iowa*

1615 Golden Aspen Drive, Suite 101
Ames, IA 50010

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Waterloo, IA
Permit No. 901

Young Farmers

Kole, Larson and Ellie Wise, children of Ben and Megan Wise, stand at the gate to watch the ducks, geese and turkeys at the Westbrock field day in Waverly, Iowa, on Sept. 15, 2024.

