



From the Field

Fall 2009/Vol. 4 No. 3

From Farm to Table, Building a Better Food System in Southeast Michigan

Farm Profile

Sandhill Crane Vineyards

Katie Westra, FSEP Intern

Inside this issue:

- 2 Jennifer's Food for Thought
- 4 Internship as Learning Experience
- 5 Why to Buy and Eat Local
- 7 Young Food System Entrepreneur
- 8 FSEP Conference Promotes Local Food System Development
- 10 Fall Cooking with Local Ingredients
- 11 Upcoming Events

Sandhill Crane Vineyards is a family-owned vineyard and winery in Jackson, Michigan. I met with sisters and owners Holly Balansag and Heather Price on the deck outside of their tasting room, which overlooks the vineyard and is a peaceful and relaxing place to enjoy a glass of wine or two. Holly is the winemaker and Heather, in their own words, "does everything else" including marketing, updating the website, and the many other tasks involved

in running a business. In the short time that we spent together, they explained the winemaking process and the qualities that make their vineyard unique.

Sandhill Crane Vineyards started five and half years ago, but Holly and Heather's father has been making wine as a hobby for as long as they can remember. The first grapes were planted on their property over twenty years ago and it is hard to know exactly when the decision was made to

turn the hobby into a full-fledged business. When Sandhill Crane first started selling wines, they were worried that their location would detract from busi-

(Continued on page 3)



FSEP Leadership Team

- Getachew Abate, *MSU Product Center*
- Rena Basch, *Locavorious & Ann Arbor Township Clerk*
- Tom Bloomer, *Writer*
- Rodger Bowser, *Zingerman's Community of Businesses*
- Garry Bulluck, *Wayne County MSU Extension*
- Susan Cocciarelli, *C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems at MSU **
- Al Connor, *Michigan Farmers Union*
- Larry Gould, *Lenawee County **
- Tamara Harmon, *Wayne County **
- Robb Harper, *edible WOW*
- Rick Katterman
- Susan Lackey, *Legacy Land Conservancy*
- David Lutchka, *Jackson County **
- Jeremy Moghtader, *MSU Student Organic Farm & Agrarian Adventure*
- Leslie Mortimer, *21st Century Seeds of Hope*
- Brenda Reau, *Monroe County MSU Extension **
- Hank Reed, *Michigan Coalition of Black Farmers*
- Susan Schmidt, *The Henry Ford **
- Mike Score, *Washtenaw County MSU Extension & MSU Product Center **
- Matt Shane, *Lenawee County MSU Extension*
- Sharon Sheldon, *Washtenaw County Public Health*
- Matt Shields, *Michigan Dept. of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth*
- Deirdra Stockmann, *PhD Candidate—U-M School of Urban & Regional Planning*
- Joan Tobin, *Eat Local Food LLC*
- Phil Tocco, *Jackson County MSU Extension*
- Ginny Trocchio, *The Conservation Fund*
- Anthony VanDerworp, *Washtenaw County Dept of Planning & Environment*
- Van Varner, *MSU Extension-Southeast Region*

*denotes FSEP Board of Directors

Staff

- Jane Bush, *Business Development Specialist*
- Jennifer Fike, *Executive Director*
- Michaëlle Rehmann, *Farm to Food Service Program Director*

Interns

- Katherine Westra



Jennifer's Food for Thought...

A message from the Executive Director

Fall — my favorite time of year. The days grow shorter and the night air is cooler as the leaves turn their brilliant hues of orange, red, and yellow. It's also a great time to visit your local orchard and pick apples, raspberries, and other delicious fall fruit. Visiting a local cider mill and winery is a tasty fall treat.

Now that school is back in session, our Farm to School program is in full swing. Michaëlle Rehmann has been busy helping schools bring more locally produced healthy foods from area farms into schools in Southeast Michigan. We're pleased to announce that we recently received a \$50,000 grant from the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan to enable us to expand the Farm to School program into Detroit Public Schools (DPS). FSEP has partnered with DPS to create the "Harvest Michigan" program which features a locally grown fruit or vegetable on the school lunch menu each month. Eighteen schools have been selected across the district to participate in the pilot program. In addition to the health and nutrition benefits of eating locally produced food, the FSEP "Farm to School" program expands upon existing agricultural economic development efforts within the City of Detroit and across the region.



FSEP Business Development Specialist, Jane Bush presenting information about season extension at the Adrian Public Library on Sept 8.

Jane Bush, FSEP Business Development Specialist assisted Tom Murray, Executive Chef at Eastern Michigan University with sourcing from local farms for their first local food dinner on September 29. This 600-plate home-grown Motown dinner featured lamb from Hannewald Lamb, breads from

(Continued on page 8)

The Food System Economic Partnership (FSEP) is a nonprofit collaboration of urban and rural community and business leaders that exists to catalyze change in the food system of Southeast Michigan. We provide research, education, and outreach with urban and rural partnerships resulting in agricultural economic development opportunities, sustainable communities, and healthy local economies. The geographic focus area for FSEP encompasses the five counties of Jackson, Lenawee, Monroe, Washtenaw, and Wayne.

Sandhill Crane Vineyards

(Continued from page 1)

ness. The vineyard is tucked away and although it is only a few minutes from I-94, there isn't much else around. Despite their initial concerns, Sandhill Crane has loyal customers, many of whom have become friends. Both Heather and Holly expressed that the unexpected warmth of their customers is one of the greatest joys of their business. Heather expressed that it is one of the few industries where "everyone who comes is happy to see you, relaxed,



Owners Heather Price and Holly Balansag at the Sandhill Crane Vineyards tasting room

and in a wonderful and happy place." These loyal customers have contributed to the growth of Sandhill Crane Vineyards which now has between thirty-five and forty different wines. Depending on the season and the farm product, the tasting room usually has around twenty-five varieties available.

Sandhill Crane Vineyards is the perfect retreat for any afternoon and their products are available for purchase at the vineyard or at various retail outlets. However, great quality wines and a beautiful onsite tasting room are not the only reasons to purchase wine from Sandhill Crane. Buying wine from Sandhill Crane also supports the Southeast Michigan economy because they use 100% Michigan fruit in the crafting of their products. All of their apple wines are made with apples grown on their own property and they use their own cherries and

pears whenever they can. Raspberries and honey come from Jackson and they purchase all other fruit products from within a one hundred mile radius.

Any customer who sips a Sandhill Crane wine derives the additional satisfaction that they are enjoying a truly local product. Read more about the benefits of buying locally in this month's article, "Why to Eat and Buy Local" from our Farm to School Program director.

Fall is a busy time at Sandhill Crane as it is the peak season for making wine. This year Sandhill Crane is hosting several events to celebrate their wine including the upcoming "Cranes, Colors, and Cabernet" from October 16-18. Find out more information about this event and others, visit www.sandhillcranevineyards.com.

Sandhill Crane Vineyards is also a part of the Pioneer Wine trail which includes six vineyards in Southeast Michigan. A wine trail is a group of vineyards in a small geographic area that market together and put on trail-wide events throughout the year. This year the Pioneer trail is hosting The Big Grape Tour on November 14-15. Visit www.pioneerwinetrail.com for more information.

Katie Westra is an FSEP intern and student at the University of Michigan majoring in economics.



Food System Internship as Learning Experience

Katie Westra, FSEP Intern

When I began my internship with FSEP this past summer, I had limited knowledge about food systems and agriculture but was eager to learn more. My experience with FSEP has enhanced my understanding of food systems in many ways and I also had a unique opportunity to visit a few interesting places related to agriculture. Phil Tocco, a member of the FSEP leadership team, planned a day long tour for all of the interns with FSEP and MSU extension. At the beginning of the day, we all shared about our past experiences with farming and agriculture and like me, most of the other interns were new to the field.

We began the day at a dairy farm in Jackson county. As we walked around, the owner explained some basics about running a dairy. I was surprised how much technology goes into monitoring and milking the cows. Each cow has a monitor that counts the number of steps they take in a day in order to determine whether they are healthy or need some attention from a veterinarian.



Our next stop was the livestock auction. First we watched an auction for hay and straw and Phil filled me in on the difference between the two. I never knew that hay and straw was sold at auction or about all the consideration that goes into choosing the right variety. Inside the auction building, the auctioneer was selling cows. Since it was my first time attending a livestock auction, it was a whirlwind experience. Half the time I couldn't even tell who was bidding because it only takes a small nod or hand gesture.

We ended the tour at Chelsea Milling Company, responsible for Jiffy Mix. The head miller showed us around the factory which is six floors and talked us through the milling process. We also walked around the grounds of the plant where there are silos and where Chelsea Milling Company receives grain by train.

The tour arranged by Phil, and my internship with FSEP as a whole, has provided me with a great learning experience and introduction to food systems work. The three very different stops on our tour illustrate how complex and interconnected the food system can be.

FSEP intern, Katie Westra is from Maine and is an undergraduate student at the University of Michigan majoring in economics.

Why to Eat and Buy Local

Michaelle Rehmann, Farm to Food Service Program Director

There are many reasons to purchase local food, spreading across a variety of disciplines, beliefs and values. From economic value to social impacts, to the effect on our health and environment, we are beginning to understand and document the importance of local food. Whatever your reason for choosing to purchase local, the benefits to your neighborhood, community and region are vast.

Economic Impact

Agriculture is the second largest industry in the State of Michigan, contributing more than \$71.3 billion dollars to our state's economy in 2007. While much of the agriculture in Michigan is what we think of as commodity crops, corn, soybeans, wheat, etc.; fruit production from 2005 to 2007 increased by more than 15 percent according to a recent study conducted by the Michigan State University Product Center for Agriculture and Natural Resources. During this same time frame, vegetable production declined by slightly less than two percent. This may be due in part to the planting of more commodity or field crops on acreage that was previously in vegetable production as farmers attempt to get higher returns by producing crops that could be used as alternative energy sources.

According to a 2006 study conducted by the Michigan Land Use Institute and Michigan State University, at least 1,900 jobs and \$164 million in new net farm income could be added to our state if there was a concerted effort to grow and market more local food. Farmers are business people too and will grow only what they know they can sell. By purchasing locally grown produce from our area farmers, we are helping to create a market for farmers in our community and providing an avenue for economic development, as well as, contribute to the long-term sustainability of the farm.

While we often think of a large plot of land as a farm, urban farming across the country has taken hold and helped families become economically viable. An example of this is in Philadelphia where Somerton Tank Farms grossed more than \$68,000 in sales by growing

vegetables on a half-acre plot in the city. Although Somerton Tank Farms success did not happen overnight, in just four short years they were able to earn a living through small scale intensive farming. Similar success stories could quickly emerge from Detroit and surrounding communities as the demand for local food increases in our region.



Community Gardeners in Detroit have begun collaborating and selling their produce under the "Grown in Detroit" label. The effort coordinated by Detroit's Garden Resource Collaborative has experienced significant growth in a short amount of time. In 2005, they grossed just \$800, while a mere three years later these urban farmers collectively earned more than \$11,000. Gardeners like those in the city of Detroit will continue to benefit financially from the increased demand for fresh, delicious, locally grown produce. Furthermore, the demand for local produce may allow some to transform a hobby into a career path.

Social Impact

Increasingly we are becoming a separated society. In "Bowling Alone", author Robert Putnam describes how we have become disconnected from family, friends, neighbors and our communities as a result of our lifestyles, work environment and countless other causes. One way to reconnect to our community is by establishing a rela-

(Continued on page 6)

Grow & Buy Local.

fsepmichigan.org

(Continued from page 5)

relationship with a local farmer. By purchasing locally grown food we begin to strengthen the fabric of our communities as we learn who grows our food, what their interests are and why they farm.

Everyone has a right to access and eat good food. A 2007 study commissioned by LaSalle Bank examined the impact of food deserts in Detroit and found that more than one-fifth of Detroit households do not own cars and are unable to access a grocery store. Furthermore, approximately 550,000 Detroit residents live in an area that does not have access to a traditional grocery store. As a result, residents are eating foods high in sodium, sugar and fat, rarely consuming fresh fruits or vegetables. By creating a market for locally grown meat, fruits and vegetables within the city, we can increase the availability of products to those who are presently underserved by traditional food distribution methods.

Decrease the distance your food travels. The average dinner plate contains food that travels 1,500 miles to reach the consumer. By supporting local agricultural processes, natural and financial resources are conserved and greenhouse gas emissions are reduced. Additionally, by providing area farmers with an market where they can sell the food they grow to, the need for farmers to export their products decreases.

Health Impact

Lately it seems that not a week goes by that we don't hear of another food borne illness outbreak and large scale recall. By purchasing from local farmers we can learn how the farmer manages for pests and diseases in his livestock and crops and we can meet the people handling our food. As a

result, we minimize our risk and exposure to such outbreaks by knowing where our food comes from and how it was grown.

Food that is grown to withstand long distance transportation often is sprayed, waxed or treated in a way that will ensure a longer shelf life. The combination of shipping and chemicals may often deplete the natural amounts of Vitamins A, C, E and riboflavin found in our food. By purchasing from local farmers we can eat fruits and vegetables that have been allowed to ripen naturally and are rich in many vitamins and antioxidants that are better for our health.

By buying local we establish a diet that is rich in seasonally appropriate fruits and vegetables. The vegetables that are available throughout the different seasons have the vitamins and nutrients our bodies need during the year. For example broccoli and brussel sprouts are both very high in Vitamin C and grow in the cooler parts of the year when we are more susceptible to catching a cold.

Sources:

See the Local Difference: Regional food systems become essential ingredient for Michigan's future., Patty Cantrell. Michigan Land Use Institute. (February 2009).

Michaëlle Rehmann is the FSEP Farm to Food Service Program Director

Find out more about where to
buy food locally with our
resources on page 9

Young Food System Entrepreneur Launches CSA

Brenda Reau

Alexandra Reau is a 13 year old junior high student that has created a new Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) business called "Garden to Go" located in Petersburg. Alexandra participated in FSEP's Monroe County Youth Farm Stand Project last year and enjoyed growing and marketing produce so much she decided to develop a small CSA as her summer job.



Alexandra Reau and her "Garden to Go" fresh tomatoes

Alexandra entered the Prima Civitas Foundation youth entrepreneurs contest in February that involved writing a business plan. She won first prize in the junior high division and received \$300 in start-up funds.

Alexandra recruited eight members through promotional brochures, Local Harvest.org and word of mouth. She grew almost a half acre of sustainably grown produce. Members picked up their produce each week in reusable baskets that they returned the following week. They also received recipes each week featuring the fresh produce that they were receiving.

Alexandra promoted her CSA as offering top quality, ultra fresh produce. She only took one or two members each day and would harvest the produce within an hour of when the member arrived for pick up. This allowed her to spread out the harvest and pick produce at its

peak.

Alexandra enjoyed working in the garden and getting to know her members. She plans a career in engineering and was delighted to get to know three of her members who are engineers.

For a young person to succeed in business they need supportive parents. Alexandra's parents Mark and Brenda Reau provided assistance. Her father assisted with plowing and helping her with plant and her mother helped with marketing and promotion.

Alexandra has received a lot of inquiries about her new business. In addition to this article she is being featured in the upcoming issue of Future CEO Stars Magazine and the Prima Civitas Foundation Newsletter. She has also been asked to teach a workshop about her experiences at the Small Farms Conference and interviewed for a case study by a Michigan State University student.

Future plans are to expand the garden next year and accept more members. Anyone interested in additional information can contact Alexandra as gardentogo@cass.net

Brenda Reau is the FSEP Education and Outreach Committee Chair and County Extension Director at the Monroe MSU Extension.



Entrepreneur Alexandra Reau delivering a CSA share to member Mary Janecki.

Annual FSEP Conference Promotes Development of the Local Food System

Brenda Reau

The fourth annual FSEP Conference was held on June 19 at the Lenawee County Intermediate School District Tech Center with 160 individuals in attendance. The objective of the conference was to educate participants about local food system opportunities in production, processing, marketing, distribution, sales and consumption of locally grown foods.

Conference participants were inspired by the keynote presentation by Kamyar Enshayan, highlighting the work that has taken place in Iowa to move local foods into institutions. Attendees also chose from eighteen concurrent sessions that focused on the local food system.



Kamyar Enshayan, Director of the University of Northern Iowa's Center for Energy and Environmental Education presenting the keynote address

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 2)

Zingerman's, and greens, potatoes, and apples from AppleSchram Farm, and other delicious local food. Jane has also been busy in the field helping farm and food businesses with business counseling. Free one-on-one business consulting sessions are held monthly at the Chelsea Public Library. Over the last few months, she has conducted presentations at the Adrian Public Library and Ida Branch Library to share information about the benefits of crop diversification and extending the growing season through the construction of unheated greenhouses, called hoop houses. If you are interested in scheduling an appointment with Jane, please call her at (517) 231-2240 or email bushj@ewashtenaw.org.

I want to thank our interns that worked with us this past summer including MSU students Jonathan Benaderet and Stacey Choate, Schoolcraft Community College student Melissa Karlak, and U-M students—Katie Westra, Laura Sunday, and Angie Bozell. Much of the FSEP's work could not be done without the dedication and enthusiasm of our student interns. Thanks also to the U-M University Research Opportunity Program, U-M Nonprofit and Public Management Center, and FSEP Leadership Team member, Phil Tocco of Jackson MSU Extension for making these internships possible.

There have been some recent leadership changes within our team including Garry Bulluck with Wayne County MSU Extension who is now serving as the Leadership Team Chair. We'd also like to thank Ruth Blackburn for serving as our first Farm to School Coordinator and as a valued Leadership Team member, and we wish her the best in her future endeavors. ■

2009 FSEP Conference

(Continued from page 8)

Ninety eight percent of participants who completed the conference evaluation reported as a result of the conference they have a better understanding of local food system opportunities. Eighty three percent also reported that they understand the mission of FSEP as an organization and the work it is trying to accomplish.

Conference participants also reported actions that they plan to take as a result of 2-the conference. Sixty seven percent of respondents said they plan to educate others about local food system opportunities and the same number also reported that they plan to develop collaboration with others involved in the local food system.

One of the highlights of the conference was the local foods lunch prepared by the LISD students enrolled in the food service and hospitality program under the direction of Chef Corbett Day. Local foods from each of the five counties involved in FSEP were featured in the lunch that was both flavorful and attractive.

Brenda Reau is the FSEP Education and Outreach Committee Chair and County Extension Director at the Monroe MSU Extension.



FSEP conference attendees enjoying the delicious lunch prepared by Lenawee ISD culinary arts students and sourced from five counties in Southeast Michigan

Local Food Resources

Visit the **FSEP website** at www.fsepmichigan.org/consumers for links to CSAs, farmers' markets, and how to make the most of local food by eating seasonally

Search for **U-Pick farms & farmers' markets** by county, product or region at www.michiganfarmfun.com

For farmers' market shopping tips check out www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu and click on "for shoppers"

Going on vacation? www.localharvest.org is a national database that can find local food wherever you are

Here are some more excellent websites:

<http://thefarmersmarketer.com/>

<http://www.csafarms.org/>

<http://localfoodannarbor.ning.com/>

<http://www.slowfoodhuronvalley.com/index.html>

<http://www.slowfooddetroit.org/>

FSEP is working on developing a comprehensive local food guide for Southeast Michigan. If you're interested in volunteering on this project or learning more, please contact Jennifer Fike at (734) 222-6859, or fikej@ewashtenaw.org

Fall Cooking with Local Ingredients

Katie Westra



One of the challenges for someone starting to incorporate more local food into their diet is learning to eat seasonally. Eating seasonally means taking advantage of the unique fruits and vegetables that are available during each part of the year or learning preservation techniques to enjoy them during the fall and winter. It is exciting to go to the farmers' market each week, or pick up a weekly CSA share, and see what different products are available. However, eating more local food can also mean encountering some unfamiliar fruits and vegetables and learning to cook with them.

As fall approaches, apples, beets, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, winter squash, and pumpkins are just a few of the local foods that will become available in the area. Pumpkins are a familiar image in the fall because of Halloween and Jack O'Lanterns but they can also make tasty and fun recipes. Mashed pumpkin can be used in cakes and muffins and the seeds can be saved and toasted to make a delicious snack. Now is a great time to stop by your local farmer's market, pick up some fresh fruits and vegetables, and try some new recipes! Below is a recipe for an easy pumpkin cake.

Easy Pumpkin Cake

- Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease a 9x13 pan with butter and dust with flour.
- Combine flour (2 cups), baking powder (1 tsp), ground cinnamon (2 tsp), baking soda (1 tsp), and salt (1 tsp salt). Mix well.
- Combine granulated sugar (1 1/2 cups) and canola oil (1 cup). Beat until light. Add four eggs, beat after adding each one, until light.
- Beat in 1 3/4 cups of cooked and mashed pumpkin. Add the flour mixture and mix just until thoroughly blended.
- Pour the batter into the prepared pan.
- Bake 30 to 35 minutes or until the top springs back when you touch it.
- Cool completely on rack.
- When completely cool, frost with your favorite cream cheese frosting recipe and enjoy!

Source: Chesman, Andrea. *Serving up the Harvest*. North Adams, MA: Storey, 2007. Print.

~ Save the Date ~

Great Lakes Bioneers—Detroit

October 16-18 Marygrove College, Detroit. Great Lake Bioneers—Detroit annual conference promotes networking and collaboration among SE Michigan individuals and organizations working on sustainability and eco-justice issues. Michaelle Rehmann and Jane Bush will be presenting sessions at this informative conference. Visit <http://www.glibd.org/index.html> to register.

Cranes, Colors, and Cabernet Festival

October 16-18—Sandhill Crane Vineyards, Jackson. The festival begins on Friday night, October 16 with a gourmet local foods dinner paired with wines from Sandhill Crane Vineyard and is a benefit for “founding” nature organizations” working on the Festival including Legacy Land Conservancy.

Visit <http://www.sandhillcranevineyards.com/pages/events.html> for a full schedule of events.



Michigan Food & Farming Systems Annual Harvest Celebration : A Local Food Dinner and Benefit Auction

October 29—6:00-9:00 p.m. Woldumar Nature Center’s R.E. Olds Anderson Rotary Barn, 5739 Old Lansing Road, Lansing.

Tickets are \$50 and can be purchased online www.miffs.org/harvestcelebration.asp!

Northern Michigan Small Farms Conference

January 30—8:30a.m.-5:00 p.m. Grayling High School, Grayling, MI

For more information, visit http://www.msue.msu.edu/portal/default.cfm?pageset_id=26792





Food System Economic Partnership
705 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 8645
Ann Arbor, MI
48107-8645

Phone: (734) 222-6859
Fax: (734) 222-3990
E-mail: fikej@ewashtenaw.org

We are on the web!

fsepmichigan.org

FSEP is a non-profit collaboration of urban and rural community and business leaders that exists to catalyze change in the food system of Southeastern Michigan. We provide research, education and outreach with urban and rural partnerships, resulting in agricultural development opportunities, sustainable communities, and healthy local economies. The geographic focus area of FSEP encompasses the five counties of Jackson, Monroe, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties.

FSEP Partner Organizations:

Governments

Jackson County
Lenawee County
Monroe County
Washtenaw County
Wayne County
State of Michigan—DELEG

Farm Business Organizations

Michigan Coalition of Black Farmers
Michigan Farmers Union

Businesses/Community Organizations

Agrarian Adventure
The Conservation Fund
Eat Local, LLC
edible WOW
The Henry Ford
Legacy Land Conservancy
Locavorious
21st Century Seeds of Hope
Zingerman's Community of Businesses

Sponsors

Chelsea Milling Company
C.S. Mott Chair of Sustainable Agriculture
Grazing Fields Egg Cooperative
Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
SYSCO Food Services of Detroit
United Bank and Trust

Resource Providers

MSU Extension
MSU Product Center for Agricultural and Natural Resources
University of Michigan