

IN MEMORY OF BILL WILCKE

On November 18, 2013, our dear SARE colleague and friend, Dr. William (Bill) Wilcke, passed away.

Among a wide variety of activities to advance sustainable agriculture, Wilcke served as the Minnesota State SARE Coordinator from 1996-2004, and was also elected to the NCR-SARE Administrative Council in the mid 1990s. He co-chaired the University of Minnesota's Small Farm Task Force from 1997-1998, was a founding member of the Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships Board, served on the Minnesota Organic Advisory Task Force, was a member of the Sustainable Agriculture Network Steering

Committee, and was a board member of Compatible Technology International. He served on the Board of Directors of the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture from 1994-1999, and provided interim leadership as Acting Administrator from 2000-2002. In 2002, Bill became the NCR-SARE Regional Coordinator and remained in that position until disability forced him to give up the position in 2010. Bill brought great credit, visibility, and leadership to the NCR-SARE program in his long career of service to sustainable agriculture and its people and communities. He was selected as the first-ever recipient of the NCR-SARE Hero Recognition.

Read more about Bill Wilcke's life, his contributions to agriculture, and donating in memory of Bill:

www.northcentralsare.org/Newsroom/Regional-News-and-Press-Releases/In-Memory-of-Bill-Wilcke

FARM TRANSITIONS TOOLKIT

Owners of farmland who are looking to transition their enterprise to the next generation of farmers can now turn to the Farm Transitions Toolkit, <http://landstewardshipproject/morefarmers/farmtransitionstoolkit>; a comprehensive resource released today by the Land Stewardship Project (LSP; www.landstewardshipproject.org) and the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA; www.misa.umn.edu).

"Whether you are a farmer, an absentee landowner who rents or leases your land to a farmer or simply someone with farmland in your family, the Toolkit provides a starting point for the important process of transitioning it to the next generation," said Karen Stettler, an organizer with LSP's Farm Beginnings program, www.farmbeginnings.org.

"The target audience for the Toolkit is those people who want to pass their farm on in a way that supports healthy rural communities, strong local economies and sustainable land stewardship," said MISA Executive Director Helene Murray. "Too often retiring farmers or people who find themselves in possession of family land feel pressured to make decisions that go against their own values. The Toolkit can help people align those values with the decisions they make as far as their land's future is concerned."

An online version of the Toolkit is at www.landstewardshipproject.org/farmtransitionstoolkit; paper versions can be purchased by calling 800-909-MISA (6472). This Farm Transitions Toolkit was developed through a collaborative project involving LSP, MISA, Farmers' Legal Action Group (FLAG; www.flaginc.org) and Appropriate Technology

Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA; www.attra.org). Its development was guided by individuals representing a number of organizations. This project was supported by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA, Grant # 2010-03107. To find more resources and programs for beginning farmers and ranchers, visit www.Start2Farm.gov, a component of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program.

LOCAL FOODS COLLEGE

Join us for the 2014 Local Foods College, beginning on Tuesday, January 21, 2014 and running through mid-March. The series of 8 sessions is designed for gardeners and farmers that are part of the growing community-based food system. Sessions focus on production, food safety and marketing skills.

The first session of the series will be held on the evening of Tuesday, January 21, 2013, and will continue on Tuesday evenings through mid-March. The series will be available via webinar at several locations throughout northern and central

Minnesota, and may also be viewed at a home computer. Registration is FREE with print-your-own materials. If you prefer to purchase printed materials, they are available: \$30 for printed materials for the entire series mailed to you, and \$25 for the Beginner Growers Manual.

Session topics include: Soil Quality and Fertility; Specialty Products: Asparagus, Garlic, Wild Foods, Harvester Handbook; Tree Fruit and Berries in High Tunnel; Post Harvest Handling and Storage, Peddling you Pickles Safely, Food safety for Famers Markets; Marketing Local Foods:

and Commercial Kitchens for Processing Local Food. The 2014 Local Foods College is supported by University of Minnesota Extension, the Statewide Health Improvement Program and North Country Community Transformation Grant. For more information and registration, visit: <http://localfoods.umn.edu/college> or call 888-241-0781.

Contact: Linda Kingery, Executive Director, U of M Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, 218-281-8697 (kinge002@umn.edu)

COMMERCIAL STRAWBERRY PRODUCTION IN LOW TUNNELS

Fresh, locally-grown strawberries in September? How about October? A research team led by Steve Poppe at the University of Minnesota's West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC) in Morris, MN is pushing the envelope on the strawberry season in Minnesota. "We're getting excited about the results. Not only are we seeing an extension of the strawberry season, but we're also seeing nice sized fruit and tasting a noticeably sweet strawberry," reports Poppe. Harvest began during the 3rd week of July, and continued well into October.

Lack of suitable varieties and production systems has prohibited growers from longer strawberry seasons in our region. This project builds on promising work

completed in Maryland by the USDA-ARS (<http://z.umn.edu/i2d>) and adapts it to Minnesota conditions to extend the strawberry season, improve fruit quality and reduce inputs.

The system being developed at WCROC in Morris uses newer day-neutral strawberry cultivars, which produce flowers and fruit continuously when temperatures are optimal for plant growth. Older day-neutral varieties have previously performed poorly in our region. However, newly released varieties show promise for better yields of high-quality fruit.

Visit the University of Minnesota's Low-Tunnel Strawberry blog to find information, photos and videos about

how to establish and maintain a productive low-tunnel strawberry system; including bed preparation, tunnel construction, pest management, harvest, and end-of-season clean-up.

<http://fruit.cfans.umn.edu/category/strawberries/low-tunnel-strawberry/>

For more information, contact Steve Poppe, Horticulture Scientist, U of MN WCROC, 320-589-1711, poppesr@morris.umn.edu

MINNESOTA NCR-SARE BIDS FAREWELL TO BETSY; WELCOMES JILL

Betsy Wieland, former Minnesota co-coordinator for the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) program, has begun a new position as chief of staff for Dr. Michael Schmitt, Associate Dean for Extension in the University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences. Minnesota SARE bids Betsy a fond farewell and thanks

her for her service to the program over the past two years. Aply stepping into Betsy's shoes, however, is Jill Sackett and we welcome her to the Minnesota SARE team. Jill is an Extension Educator who has worked out of the office of Rural Advantage in Fairmont, MN and is now in the Mankato Regional Extension office. She will serve as Minnesota Co-Coordinator along with Kate Seager,

who works out of the MISA office on the St. Paul Campus. If you have any questions about NCR-SARE grants, or Minnesota SARE Travel Grants or Mini-Grants, contact Kate: kseager@umn.edu, 612-625-8235, 800-909-6472; or Jill: sacke032@umn.edu.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND OTHER EVENTS

Winter is the season of conferences and workshops! Registration is already open for most of these events, and you can often save money by registering early. Another money-saving method is to volunteer to help at conferences. See conference web pages for information about volunteering.

December 2013 – March 2014. *Farm Legal Issues Webinar Series.* Farm Commons delivers fast-paced webinars that help farmers move forward on the legal issues that affect their farm operation. Our webinars are engaging and practical- this isn't just theoretical learning! <http://farmcommons.org/webinars/>

January 2014-March 2014. *Local Foods College.* The Regional Sustainable Development Partnership in northwestern Minnesota offers this series of eight webinar sessions on Tuesday evenings. More in-depth coursework and discussion sessions are also available. <http://localfoods.umn.edu/college>

January 10-11, 2014. *Minnesota Organic Conference & Tradeshow,* St. Cloud, MN. A major event for organic and sustainable farmers in Minnesota and surrounding states. Large tradeshow, dozens of workshops, delicious organic meals, plenty of networking opportunities! Organized by Minnesota Department of Agriculture. www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/conference.aspx

January 16-17, 2014. *Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference & Trade Show,* St. Cloud, MN. The conference includes sessions of interest to large- and small-scale growers. The Trade Show showcases the latest in equipment, seed, tools and more. A Beginning Grower Workshop will be offered on January 15. Organized by Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association, www.mfvga.org/.

January 23-24, 2014. *Midwest Value Added Agriculture Conference,* Wisconsin Rapids, WI. The MVAAC's goal is to bring farmers together to network and learn about

local projects and resources available to help their profitability and sustainability. Organized by River Country Resource Conservation and Development Council. www.rivercountryrcd.org/valad.html

January 23-25, 2014. *Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference,* Ames, IA. Our farming journey starts with the soil under our feet, and Iowa is blessed with some of the world's best. This year will continue last year's focus on building soils through cover crops and extended rotations. <http://practicalfarmers.org/events/annual-conference.html>

January 24-25, 2014. *Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Winter Conference,* Aberdeen, SD. "Honoring Our Roots- Celebrating 35 Years" is this year's theme. Keynote speakers: Melinda Hemmelgarn, Will Winter. Pre-conference workshops begin on Thursday, January 23. http://npsas.org/component/eventbooking/?task=view_event&event_id=38&Itemid=355

February 1-2, 2014. *Immigrant & Minority Farmers Conference,* St. Paul, MN. Note a location change from past years: the 2014 Conference will be held at the University of Minnesota Continuing Education and Conference Center, on the St. Paul Campus near the State Fair Grounds. Minnesota Food Association, Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women of Minnesota, USDA- Farm Service Agency and Natural Resource Conservation Service are the host agencies and along with planning committee members and sponsors have joined together to offer this conference. <https://www.thedatabank.com/dpg/362/donate.asp?formid=ImmConf14>

February 8, 2014. *Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota Annual Conference,* College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, MN. This year's theme is "Back to Our Roots." Topics have been chosen based on results of online voting; and family programming is returning, so that the ENTIRE farm family can come. www.sfa-mn.org/

[conference/](#)

February 18-19, 2014. *Conservation Tillage Conference,* St. Cloud, MN. This conference will send you home with hands-on, how-to information in nearly every aspect of conservation tillage. Whether you are an experienced steward looking to fine-tune what you are doing, a crop consultant who helps growers, or a novice looking to get your feet wet, this conference is for you. Offered by University of Minnesota Extension. <https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/conservation-tillage-conf/home>

****Back-to-Back Soil Conferences!** The Conservation Tillage Conference in St. Cloud ends at 12:15 pm on February 19th, and the Midwest Soil Health Summit begins in Alexandria at 6:00 pm on February 19th. You can catch them both!**

February 19-20, 2014. *Midwest Soil Health Summit,* Alexandria, MN. The Summit will convene some of the most innovative farmers and researchers in the Upper Midwest for two days of networking, speakers, panel discussions and breakout sessions – all geared at improving the health of your soil. Offered by Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota. www.sfa-mn.org/midwest-soil-health-summit/

February 27 – March 1, 2014. *MOSES Organic Conference,* LaCrosse, WI. The MOSES Conference has grown to become the country's foremost educational and networking event for the organic community. This year's event marks the 25th anniversary of this remarkable gathering! <http://mosesorganic.org/conference/>

Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture

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This newsletter is supported by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA)—a partnership between the Sustainer’s Coalition and the University of Minnesota College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) the University of Minnesota Extension; the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCRSARE) Professional Development Program (PDP). Send story ideas to MISA, 411 Borlaug Hall, 1991 Upper Buford Circle. St. Paul, MN 55108, (612) 625-8235, fax (612) 625-1268, e-mail: misamail@umn.edu. Editorial board members: Helene Murray, (612) 625-0220, murra021@umn.edu; Beth Nelson, (612) 625-8217, schre002@umn.edu; Bill Wilcke, (612) 625-8205, wilck001@umn.edu; Jane Jewett, jewet006@umn.edu and Kate Seager, (612) 625-8235, kseager@umn.edu. Please send address changes directly to: Kate Seager, kseager@umn.edu, MISA, 411 Borlaug Hall, 1991 Buford Circle, St. Paul, MN 55108. You can find more University of Minnesota Extension Service educational information at www.extension.umn.edu. Also check MISA’s home page at www.misa.umn.edu. Our mission statement: To help bring people together to influence the future of agriculture and rural communities to achieve socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable farms and communities. To stimulate thinking and discussion about sustainability, we try to present items that reflect different points of view. This being the case, we aren’t promoting and don’t necessarily agree with everything we publish.