

Community Assistantship Program

**HomeGrown: Sustainable Agriculture and Local
Foods in Central Minnesota**

Prepared in partnership with
Sustainable Farming Association of Central Minnesota

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May, 2007

CAP Report 121

May 2007

CAP is a cross-college, cross-campus University of Minnesota initiative coordinated by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.

Funds for this project were generously provided by the Sustainable Farming Association of Central Minnesota and CURA.

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SFA-CM Through the LensVideo Project

HomeGrown:

Sustainable Agriculture and Local Foods in Central Minnesota

Final Report

Grantee Organization: Sustainable Farming Association of Central MN

Project Coordinator: Kristen Blann, 218-330-9612

Report date: 5/21/2007

The idea for producing a local program promoting central Minnesota's organic and local foods movement was born in 2004 - 2005 in discussions among managers and board members of the Crow Wing Food Co-op and the Sustainable Farming Association, Central Minnesota chapter. We were all involved in sustainable agriculture/local foods movements, and were seeking a way to educate the public about what was happening here in central Minnesota, to nurture a reawakening about the benefits and value of ecologically responsible, locally grown food, and to cultivate economic support for individuals and businesses who were trying to make this their livelihood. Lakeland Public TV's "Through the Lens" independent TV production program provided the perfect vehicle to carry the idea forward. However, as fully employed and overcommitted community members, we lacked the time and expertise to get the ball rolling. At the winter 2006 SFA annual meeting in Little Falls, the newly elected board of SFA-CM chapter provided verbal encouragement to move forward with trying to get a student intern working on the project.

In the late winter/early spring of 2006 I applied for CURA-CAP (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs - Community Assistantship Project) assistance, a university affiliated program that provides U of MN student salaries in exchange for their service to outstate community organizations for a nominal matching fee. In spring (4/12/06) I received word that with an Initiative Foundation and SFA-CM match, our grant proposal would be funded and we would receive full student support. Immediately I applied for I.F. matching funds as well as sought verbal/email approval from the board leadership (since the SFA-CM board was not scheduled to meet before the granting deadlines), which I received. On 4/21/06 we received notice that we would receive the grant if we were successful in obtaining IF matching funds. Sue Peterson (SFA coordinator) and I wrote and submitted a grant to the Initiative Foundation for the match.

In May, I reviewed resumes of numerous candidates. 5/17-18 I spent 4-5 hours interviewing student candidates at the U of MN campus in St. Paul and Minneapolis. I selected Emily Stephenson based on her excellent quality writing samples, past experience with video production, and knowledge and interest in sustainable agriculture. In June 2006, Emily spent 3 days in central Minnesota, reviewing SFA materials, books

on sustainable agriculture, and reviewing outlines and scripts that I prepare for her (6-8 hours of my time). Over the next 6 weeks, we communicated via email to develop a film schedule, after requesting input for who to interview via email and consulting SFA materials.

Emily and I also attended the June board meeting in Motley, MN, where we explained the project. At this meeting we received verbal confirmation of organizational support and approval of the financial arrangements. The support of the board had also been implicit in the grant application which Sue (the SFACM coordinator) and I had jointly submitted to IF.

During the latter half of July, Emily spent 2.5 weeks in Brainerd area filming, obtaining over 12 hours of footage. We received 2 days of free training and equipment from Lakeland Public TV. I also accompanied her for 3 days of the filming, including going to Buckwheat Growers, 7 Pines Farm, Crow Wing Food Co-op, Middendorfs, and twice to Al Jabs' Nokasippi CSA. I also helped her set up some of her appointments with Chris Barnier, Whole Farm Co-op, Beck Family Farms, Lost Lake Lodge, Prairie Bay, farmer's markets, BrambleBerry Farm, etc.

In late July after completing the paperwork we received the match from Initiative Foundation. Around August 8-9 Emily completed her last interview with Brian DeVore of Land Stewardship Project. She turned the footage over to Lakeland Public TV and we received training on video editing software in Brainerd. It then took Lakeland a full month (rather than 2 weeks) to transfer the film to digital media for editing, by which time Emily's employment was over and she had started fall semester as a full-time student. She agreed at this time to save up her paid hours and spread them over the fall during the school semester to complete the editing by late November. On Oct 4 she also attended a full day class on the editing software that Lakeland Public TV had installed on her computer.

Emily was an excellent worker, very self-motivated, and very enthused and interested in the project. She continued to work on the editing throughout the fall and winter. In January despite some technical problems Emily provided sample footage at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbTTYazdzE4>. She worked with Lakeland in February to troubleshoot problems with the digital footage on the hard drive, and in March delivered the edited program in 1 hour 19 minute version. Tom Wild of Lakeland condensed the footage to a 30 minute segment. AJ Fossen and Tom Wild of Lakeland Public TV were also very helpful and professional, and provided positive feedback on Emily's work throughout the process.

The program aired for the first time on May 8, 2007. Copies of the DVD are still limited, but can be purchased from Lakeland pTV directly for \$15. The program may also be viewed online at the following link(s):

http://www.lakelandptv.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=97&show=2

http://www.lakelandptv.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=9&video=260

Finally, on behalf of myself and SFA-CM, I sincerely regret the unusual and unforeseen circumstances that led to our extended delay in following through completely on our matching grant obligations. I hope that all is well that ended well.

Sincerely,

Kristen Blann