

Rollin' Oats Journal

A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION OF LINDEN HILLS CO-OP GROCERY & DELI

Land Stewardship Project CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

BY SARAH JOHNSON

66 **W**e have to be willing to take on political and economic power in this country." The late U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone, helping the Land Stewardship Project celebrate its 10th anniversary in 1992. 10,950 days sure fly by, don't they? Last October, members of the Linden Hills Co-op selected the Land Stewardship Project as one of their 2013 green patch recipients. Over the past 30 years (or 10,950 days, depending on how you're counting), this nonprofit has worked to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, promote sustainable agriculture and educate communities about policies that result in a fairer, more environmentally sound and healthier food system.

In the first edition of the Land Stewardship Letter, now the organization's quarterly newsletter, co-founder Ron Kroese wrote that the newly formed non-profit was "intended to be not only a source of information, but of inspiration—a vehicle for the exchange of ideas on how we can most effectively work together, and as individuals, for the cause of land stewardship."

Since their beginning, this Minnesota-based company, now employing 29 and boasting 3,100 households throughout 36 states, Canada and Mexico, has been involved with everything from premiering plays (1984's "Planting in the Dust") and debuting films (1993's "Houses in the Fields") to holding family farm breakfasts at the state capitol in St. Paul. Clean Up the River Environment, their 1992 initiative to address pollution problems on the Minnesota River, was spun off as a separate nonprofit organization in 2000 and its 1997 publication *When a Factory Farm Comes to Town: Protecting Your Township From Unwanted Development*, was so successful a second edition was published in 2006.

But the two seminal initiatives the Land Stewardship Project might be best known for are its Farm Beginnings Program and the fight to stop factory farms in Minnesota. "In the past 15 years, we have stopped 34 factory farms from being established and have helped more than 350 farms get started in the state," says Mark Schultz, Land Stewardship Project Associate Director. "There's a reason you see more factory farms in Iowa than Minnesota today."

Founded in 1997, Farm Beginnings provides firsthand training for sustainable methods of farming. Open to beginners and established farmers looking to change their operations alike, it offers classes on such topics as financial planning and production techniques. "We kept hearing from our members that there was a huge need to train the next generation of farmers," said Schultz about the program that boasts more than 550 graduates in its 16-year history. They have also started the Farmer Network to allow members to share their experiences and mentor those in the beginning and intermediate stages of production.

The battle against factory farms has



Editor's note: Recognize Anna Racer? She used to work in our Natural Home department!

After graduating from LSP's Farm Beginnings program, Peter Skold and Anna Racer started Waxwing Farm, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operation in Webster, Minn. During the past 16 years, over 550 people have graduated from Farm Beginnings in Minnesota, which is a national model for training new farmers.

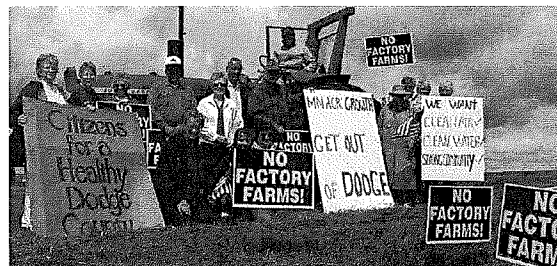
never been an easy fight. In 1999, the Land Stewardship Project released a special report titled "Killing Competition with Captive Supplies," an exposé on how meatpackers were using exclusive contracts to close the pork market. In 2004, their work even garnered the attention of the New York Times when they opposed Governor Pawlenty's Livestock Advisory Task Force, which recommended the weakening of local government control. The vaunted publication called the task force "a blueprint for the destruction of family farming in Minnesota."

A 14-person board of directors, including local restaurateur Kim Bartmann, governs the Land Stewardship Project, who operate three offices in Lewiston, Montevideo and Minneapolis with an annual budget of approximately \$2 million. They are funded by a combination of membership dues, course fees, government grants and support from private foundations and have won numerous awards including the Edible Communities Local Hero Award in 2010 and being selected as the Clean Water Action Outstanding Grassroots

Organization of the Year in 1994.

In addition to the Land Stewardship Letter, their website offers a plethora of information through fact sheets, videos and the Bar to the Ground podcast. Schultz added that they are not just a rural focused organization, with 1/3 of their members living in the Twin Cities metro area. "We also work in the city on urban agriculture projects such as the Hope Community Garden and the Growing Neighborhood Access to Healthy Food initiative in the Phillips neighborhood," he shared. Their 2013 CSA Farm Directory is available free on their website and offers information on 78 farms in Minnesota and Wisconsin selling CSA shares this year.

Any member based organization, whether it be the Linden Hills Co-op or the Land Stewardship Project, will tell you that they are only as strong as the people who join and support them. As they look to the next 30 years, what Ron Kroese wrote in the first newsletter still rings true today: "The success of this newsletter, and indeed of the LSP as a whole, depends on your participation."



Farmers and other rural residents in southeast Minnesota's Dodge County worked with LSP to successfully fight the onslaught of large-scale factory farms. Rural grassroots organizing is a key component of LSP's work.

FYI Co-op Shoppers

Cedar Summit Needs Our Help

We've recently learned that a high voltage power line is slated to traverse Cedar Summit Farm, a New Prague dairy farm that's been in the Minar family since 1926. The Minars want us to know that despite this unfortunate development, they are determined to continue operating as Minnesota's premiere 100% grass fed, organic dairy far into the future. However, the Minars have some difficult decision-making ahead: Will they remain on the land they've carefully tended for generations, despite the disruption of power lines? Or, will they seek new land at considerable cost?



Thanks to Minnesota's "Buy the Farm" amendment, power companies must purchase properties impacted by new lines at fair market value. So, the Minars at least have the option to sell. However, the law does not clearly address the question of relocation expenses. If the Minars purchase new farm land, they will incur substantial costs to move their farm buildings, herd and equipment, not to mention the years and expense necessary to regain organic certification. As we go to press, over two thousand people have already signed Cedar Summit's petition to the Minnesota House's Energy Policy Committee asking them to clarify the law.

You can stay in touch with the Minars during this pivotal time via their facebook page. Of course, the co-op will share more information as it becomes available. In the meantime, let's all raise a glass of cold, frothy, cream-on-top Cedar Summit milk as we wish the Minars well!

Drop Your Books, Benefit the Library

Beginning Sunday, April 7, Linden Hills Co-op will be accepting used books for the Friends of the Linden Hills Library Used Book Sale, which will be held on Sunday, May 19 as part of the Linden Hills Festival. The last day to drop off books at the co-op will be Friday, May 17. All proceeds from the Friends Used Book Sale will benefit the collection and programs of Linden Hills Library.

Call for Green Patch Nominations

Did you know your co-op supports the Land Stewardship Project? In fact, each time you forego a paper bag and instead drop a "green patch" into the bucket at customer service, you're contributing to LSP's good work. Each green patch is worth 5¢—and all those patches add up to thousands of dollars donated every year to member-selected environmental groups.



Last October, the co-op membership selected LSP and the Will Steger Foundation from a slate of ten worthy nominees. Now's YOUR chance to nominate your favorite local, environmental nonprofit for the 2013 election. Nomination forms are available at customer service or www.lindenhills.coop/community/donations.

Hand in your nomination by August 15, 2013 so we can put it to a vote during the October election. Don't forget to support the program year round by forgoing paper bags in favor of reusable.