VALUE-ADDED // LOCAL FOOD HUBS // FARM-TO-SCHOOL // LETTERS YOUNG GUNS // MAIN STREET
JULY/AUGUST 2015

Dakotafire

SPARKING RURAL REVIVAL ONE STORY AT A TIME.

Plus:
GROWING UP IN THE HOTEL ON MAIN
See page 48

PIE
PRAIRIE IDEA EXCHANGE

CONNECTING FARM & TOWN

Agriculture and the small towns that depend on it can make each other better.
Page 7

SCALING UP LOCAL FOOD

Farmers come up with creative ways to meet consumer demand
Page 27

0 7>
7 25274 26787 3

Dakotafire
SPARKING RURAL REVIVAL
ONE STORY AT A TIME

PUBLISHER & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Heidi Marttila-Losure, *heidi@dakotafire.net*

STAFF WRITER
Wendy Royston, *wendy@dakotafire.net*

CONTRIBUTORS
Peter Carrels, Rebecca Froehlich, Cole Hinz, Paula Jensen, Erik Losure, Sofia Losure, Amara Klipfel, Briella Klipfel, Ken Schmierer

SALES & MARKETING DIRECTOR
Laura Ptacek, *laura@dakotafire.net*

EDITORIAL OFFICE
P.O. Box 603, Frederick, SD 57441
605-290-3335

PARTNERING NEWSPAPERS
Armour Chronicle
Britton Journal
Clark County Courier
Corsica Globe
Delmont Record
Dickey County Leader (Ellendale)
Faulk County Record
Groton Independent
Ipswich Tribune
Kulm Messenger
Langford Bugle
Roscoe-Hosmer Independent
Tri-County News (Gackle)

DISTRIBUTION SPONSORS
Arlington Community Development Corporation
Beadle and Spink Enterprise Community
Kulm Economic Development Corporation

SPONSORS OF THE PRAIRIE IDEA EXCHANGE
BUSH FOUNDATION
GROW SOUTH DAKOTA
dakotaresources Economic and Leadership Development

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Dakotafire is sparking a revival in rural communities of the Dakotas and beyond by encouraging conversations that help rural residents rethink what's happening and what's possible.

Dakotafire magazine is published six times per year and owned by Dakotafire Media, LLC. Subscriptions are $25; see information at **www.dakotafire.net/getfiredup**.

Dakotafire magazine is published six times per year and owned by Dakotafire Media, LLC. All content is copyright ©2015 Dakotafire Media. All rights reserved. Content in this magazine should not be copied in any way without written permission from the publisher. PRINTED IN THE USA.

CONTENTS

Volume 4, Number 4 JULY/AUGUST 2015

DakotafireMedia @DakotafireMedia

3 Letters

4 **From the Editor:** Conversations among neighbors

6 Contributors

7 **PRAIRIE IDEA EXCHANGE: Connecting Ag & Community**

8 **Infographic:** Seeing trends, making connections

9 What are you noticing about the connection between ag and community where you live?

10 So you call yourself a 'farmer'

13 **Infographic:** Where should ag development go?

16 What new ways of doings things would help agriculture and communities to make each other better?

18 *What's possible:* How to have a better conversation about large ag development

20 *What's possible:* Young Guns hit the mark for involvement in DeSmet

21 *What's possible:* Adding value can multiply benefits for agriculture, rural communities

23 *What's possible:* Venture brings food lovers around farmyard table

24 *What's possible:* Dakotas' Farm to School efforts still in early stage

27 *What's possible:* Jumping local food system hurdles

32 *Column:* Why so much regulation? Because we don't trust each other.

34 10 Things you may have wondered about agriculture

37 Prairie Idea Exchange sponsors

38 *Column:* Feeding the World, but feeding it what and for how long?

40 California drought may give lift to Dakota agriculture

43 Soil gets recognition this year

45 **Dakotafire Café:** Reimagining Main Street

48 **Postcard:** Growing up in the hotel on the corner of Main

COVER: Slavic Heritage Farm outside Anamoose, N.D., is collaborating with other local producers to create an ag presence in their town and lay the groundwork for food hubs in North Dakota. Here the Petrovic children take a work break in the wagon. They are, from oldest to youngest, Ivana, Leona, Milana, Evan and Adrian. See story on p. 27. *Photo by Julia Petrovic of Slavic Heritage Farm*

NEXT ISSUE: Energy

EXPERT HEART CARE WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Puneet Sharma, MD

Sanford Heart Care in Aberdeen

When it comes to your heart care, Sanford Aberdeen understands you shouldn't have to decide between comfort and quality. And with one of the region's leading experts in heart care close to your home, the decision is simple.

Puneet Sharma, MD, is an experienced interventional cardiologist and offers radial artery catheterization, a more comfortable way to diagnose and treat heart conditions. You also have access to our extensive network of expert cardiologists, ensuring you receive the best cardiac care each and every time.

Cardiology services include:

- Adult heart screens
- In-clinic care
- Cardiac catheter procedures – through groin or wrist
- Cardiac rehabilitation
- Chest pain network
- Nuclear medicine services

Call (605) 725-1700 to schedule an appointment.

sanfordaberdeen.org

SANFORD HEART

018002-00453 5/15

Real-world training for a world of opportunity.

Learn the skills that are in demand with state-of-the-art training and map out a future you'll love.
Visit lakeareatech.edu and start your journey.

NATIONALLY RANKED A TOP TWO-YEAR COLLEGE

lakeareatech.edu

Watertown, SD

LAKE AREA TECH

It's your world.

I really look forward to reading the issues as they arrive in the mail! I liked Jeff Glover's article about the Maple River. Keep up the good work.

—Bernice Rollo,
Aberdeen, S.D., formerly of Frederick, S.D.

We received the May/June issue of *Dakotafire* as an insert to our issue of the *Lake Preston Times*. We really enjoyed reading the publication, and we congratulate you on the new venture.

—Charles J. and Donna Hendricks,
Lakewood, Colorado

Thank you for your contribution to saving the small towns of South Dakota! I just read your May/June 2015 issue, and pulled out four pages of "MUST SEE, or MUST DO" and I texted a friend about the Quilters Corner!

You are making a difference by making people aware of what we have to offer. We live on a fifth-generation family farm by Nunda; our "little darlings" went to school in Rutland. The voices that are raised in your magazine are our own! Thank you!

—Kathy Sebert-Bortnem, *Volga, S.D.*

I received the May/June edition of your *Dakotafire* magazine in my snail mail and was blown away reading it — what a great service you are providing to rural South Dakotans! I am a proud native of Lake Preston, S.D., and always refer to my home as being South Dakota even though I have lived in Arizona for 33 years.

Your magazine is a great hit in my neighborhood, especially with the two little girls who live across the street from me. Their mom has been reading the Laura Ingalls Wilder book series to them so I showed them your magazine, as I had seen the ad for the annual DeSmet pageant in it. The little girls, ages 5 and 3, just sat there with their huge eyes wide open —agog with the thought that I actually grew up in the neighborhood of where the Ingalls girls grew up!

Keep up the great work in publishing *Dakotafire*!

—Jean (Bergan) Robertson-Tomlin,
Hereford, Ariz.

SEND US YOUR LETTER

Have something to add to our regional conversation? Send it to **heidi@dakotafire.net**, or mail to **Dakotafire Media, Letters, PO Box 603, Frederick, SD 57441.**

Show the region how YOUR business is helping to build a better community!

Advertise in Dakotafire and reach thousands of community-minded folks in North and South Dakota.

For details, go to **www.dakotafire.net/advertise**

Or drop
Sales & Marketing Director
Laura Ptacek a line!
605-380-8141
or laura@dakotafire.net

Black Knight
Pools • Spas • Games & Things

saunas
-Saunatec
-Finnleo

Hot Tubs
-Hot Springs
-Limelight
-Hot Spot

Pool Tables
-Olhausen Billards
-American Heritage
-Connelly Billards

shuffleboard
-Champion

Pools

Foosball
-Valley
Swim Spas
-Hydropool

Games
-Darts
-Poker Tables

826 6th Ave. SE • Aberdeen, SD 57401
605-226-9074 • blackknightpools@yahoo.com

Conversations among neighbors

by HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE

Editor Heidi Marttila-Losure can be reached at heidi@dakotafire.net.

One blessing of being back on the farm where I grew up is that I'm reminded often of the family members who lived, raised their families, and made their living on this place.

Two of those voices from the past came to mind as we were working on this issue focused on agriculture.

The first voice was my father's. He and my Uncle Arnold farmed in partnership on what was then called Marttila Brothers Farm. My father was born in town during the years when the farm was rented to relatives because my grandfather's health was too poor for farmwork. But the family moved back to the farm soon after, and my father never lived elsewhere—"except when I was in the service," he'd add.

Soon after my husband and I moved back to the farm, my dad and I were discussing some topic about managing the land. By that point my uncle had died, and my father had retired; the land was rented to a neighbor. My father was not a forceful speaker usually, but the conviction in his voice stuck with me: "I want to have *neighbors*," he said. He was saying, we have to make farming decisions in such a way that we don't ruin our neighbors' ability to make a living nearby.

I don't think this is a very unusual point of view around here, though it does go against some common business principles that hold competition as an inherent good. And while I think it does show generosity of spirit, the neighbors aren't the only ones who benefit when we consider their needs and wants.

In rural places like the Dakotas, we are acutely aware that we need our neighbors in a way that people in larger communities might take for granted—neighbors are the ones who may have the equipment we need to borrow to get the job done, or the teenager who can take care of our animals while we're gone. Neighbors are also the ones who take a turn on the church council or township board, so we can rotate off of them once in a while. They help to hold up the community; we benefit when they are here, and we notice when they are gone.

The second "voice" came through some papers that we found after my uncle passed away. Unbeknownst to me, my uncle had been the secretary for the local chapter of the Farmers Union, and we ended up with a moldering briefcase full of aging paper—canceled checks, receipts, and a record book of minutes in my uncle's small cursive writing. I recognized many names of neighbors, including some whose funerals I've attended in recent years.

My uncle didn't have much for formal education; he had to drop out of school in the eighth grade when his help was needed on the farm. (He worked to educate himself through reading, all through his life.) And I wouldn't consider him a very political person. But in his briefcase were position papers approved on the local level and passed up to the national organization. Here's some wording from the 1967-68 Proposed Program and Policy Statement of South Dakota Farmers Union:

> *"We consider family-type farms to be the keystone around which our highly successful agriculture system has developed. We believe further that the interest and welfare of the Nation is inherent in the preservation of a family-farm pattern of agriculture. … It is not entirely coincidental that this Nation, in which family farming has thrived, is also the Nation in which democracy has enjoyed its greatest achievements.*
>
> *"To direct agricultural policy away from the historic and traditional family farm concept toward greater centralization of productive resources into large corporation-type farms overlooks worthy economic and*

human values that must be protected. Our Nation's best interest lies in the strengthening of a system of agriculture which protects the right of families to private ownership of land and which, throughout our history, has been an integral part of the rural business community as well as a stabilizing force in the Nation's economy."

It also provided a definition of a "family farm": "an agricultural production unit which can be efficiently operated by a typical full-time operator family that furnishes most of its own labor."

I share these voices from the past not to advocate for the positions they represent, though I do think they make points worth considering, but for other reasons: First, to show that this conversation about how we should farm is not new. It was common 48 years ago, and even further into our region's history. Second, the conversation isn't reserved only for "activists," in the negative way that word is used today.

"How we should farm" was something that everyday folk talked about and debated—and, when they had convictions about these ideas, they advocated for those convictions in the way they thought best, keeping in mind that they were often talking to neighbors who might not agree but whose relationship they valued.

Today, our communities, both local and global, are still being affected—both positively and negatively—by how we farm. The conversation is still relevant. I don't think it helps our communities to shy away from these conversations, even if they are difficult. I invite you to join the conversation both with your voice and your listening attention. ✶

Among my Uncle Arnold's papers was a program from a national convention that included a picture with this caption: "WHICH WAY RURAL AMERICA," theme of the Minneapolis convention, was portrayed in a huge, colorful backdrop. It showed a small rural town and surrounding farms on one panel; the same town broken down and surrounded by a huge corporation farm on the other. The speech by Tony T. Deschant, national president, urged farm people to work closely on farm problems with those in small towns and cities tied to agriculture. In working closely with others who care about what happens to rural America, he said, 'we can multiply ourselves many times over.'"

Dakotafire coverage area and points of interest from this issue.

The best finds are off the beaten path.

GRANARY RURAL CULTURAL CENTER

40161 128th St • Groton, SD 57445 • 605.715.7117 • www.granaryfinearts.org

OLD TIME MUSIC & ICE CREAM SOCIAL
Sunday, July 19 • 1-4 pm

LIVING HISTORY FALL FESTIVAL
Saturday, Sept. 12 • 10 am – 4 pm

SPECIAL EVENT:
PHIL BAKER IN CONCERT!
Thursday, July 9 · 2:30 pm
Free Admission • Concessions available
One child's bike will be given away!

Check www.granaryfinearts.org for more details and for a map and directions.

Campus Open Dawn to Dusk
Gallery Hours: Thur./Fri. 1-7pm June - Aug. • Sat./Sun. 1-4pm June - Sept.

Rehabilitation Services designed to get patients back to living.

ManorCare skilled nursing and rehab centers provide a comprehensive regime of specialized rehabilitation services, each one designed to move you one step closer to your recovery goals.

We offer:
- **Complex medical care**
- **Intensive rehabilitation**
- **Skilled nursing**

For additional information or tour, contact:

400 8th Avenue NW
Aberdeen, SD 57401
605.225.2550

manorcare.com/Aberdeen

ManorCare Health Services

You know you're living in an agricultural community when ...

... there are an abundance of plumbers, electricians, carpenters and concrete workers. Farmers are a resourceful, hands-on kinda group, and those who have roots in farming or leave the farm to live in town often do that sort of work.

—**Peter Carrels,** *freelance writer, Vermillion, S.D.*

... our church has a blessing of the seeds, water and soil in the spring, and a harvest festival in the fall.

—**Heidi Marttila-Losure,** *editor, Frederick, S.D.*

... discussion of the weather centers around precipitation that is measured in hundredths.

—**Wendy Royston,** *staff writer, Ethan, S.D.*

... my teacher left school early one day to go to the sale barn and watch her cows be sold.

— **Sofia Losure,** *graphic artist, age 9, Frederick, S.D.*

... even the "town" kids get a sense of country life when they see a tractor working in the field, sometimes right in their back yard!

—**Laura Ptacek,** *sales and marketing manager, Ipswich, S.D.*

... when a "traffic jam" is actually just 10 cars stuck behind a slow-moving tractor.

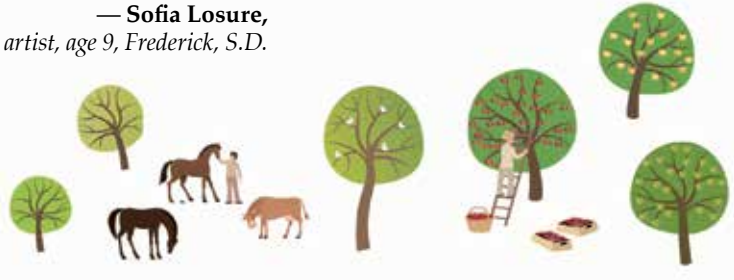
— **Cole Hinz,** *Westport, S.D.*

... community/school/church events are scheduled around planting and harvest.

— **Paula Jensen,** *freelance writer, Langford, S.D.*

... you hear a child describe the colors of the rainbow in terms of tractor brands!

—**Rebecca Froehlich,** *freelance writer, Vermillion, S.D.*



PIE
PRAIRIE IDEA EXCHANGE
Spicy, fruitful conversation, served regionally
PIE4.US

CONNECTING AG & COMMUNITY

HOW CAN AGRICULTURE HELP TO CREATE BETTER COMMUNITIES, AND HOW CAN COMMUNITIES HELP TO CREATE BETTER AGRICULTURE? · JUNE 10, 2015

The topic for our June Prairie Idea Exchange gathering was building connections between agriculture and our communities.

We grounded the conversation in two basic ideas: First, our Dakota communities exist because of agriculture. The nature of the relationship has changed as agriculture has changed, but it is still strong. Second, whatever other disagreements we may have, those of us who live in the Dakotas want our rural communities to survive and thrive.

The conversation aimed to describe what's happening with this relationship between agriculture and communities, as well as to imagine how ag and communities could each make the other better.

What follows are the stories that resulted from that conversation. Read. Consider. Then join in the conversation at **www.pie4.us**. Ideas from that online forum will appear in the September/October issue. **Turn the page and enjoy a slice of PIE!**

Join us for a conversation about agriculture and communities!

You're invited to a Dakotafire Café event in at the new Front Porch restaurant in Langford, S.D., in August. *See* ***www.pie4.us*** *for details.*

PIE
PRAIRIE IDEA EXCHANGE

Seeing trends, making connections

What first comes out of the Prairie Idea Exchange process looks a little chaotic: A messy pile of sticky notes record the essence of the ideas that come out of the small-group conversations.

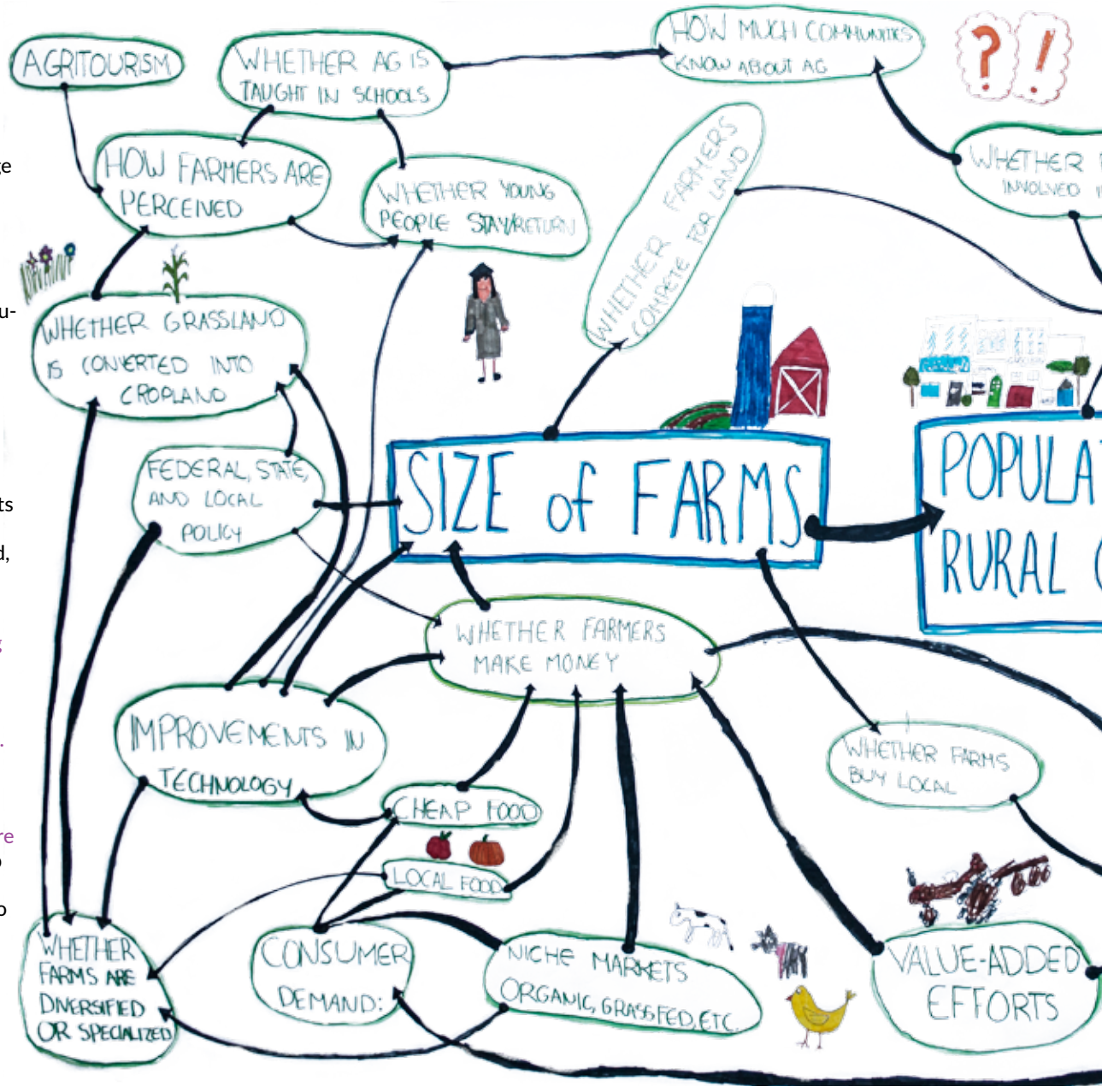
But from that chaos, some patterns eventually start to emerge.

Participants mark those ideas that seemed particularly important or resonant to them. Then the sticky notes are grouped with similar ideas. Once they are in clusters, we can step back and see which ideas come through loud and clear—through repetition, or by votes of importance—and which ideas are more "noise" than "signal," to use the engineering terms.

This time, we refined the results even further, looking at what ideas are connected, and what affects what. **This basic systems map is the result.** It's a big-picture view of what participants saw happening and, to some extent, what caused what's happening.

Here's how to read the graphic:

- Travel along arrows starting at a dot, and going toward an arrowhead. The thing where the arrow starts (dot) affects the thing where the arrow ends (arrowhead).
- The effect can be positive, negative, or neutral. Neither end of the arrow is necessarily a solution, or a problem; it's just something that participants saw happening.
- These ideas, and the arrows connecting them, are one possible view of what's happening. The map may not be complete (in fact, it certainly isn't), and other ideas from other viewpoints could also be valid, even if they contradict what's here.
- By seeing and thinking about the connections between the ideas on the map, we can start to understand how making a change in one area could affect others.



"What are you noticing about the connection between ag and community where you live?"

Graphic by Sofia Losure, age 9. Additional illustrations by Amara Klipfel, age 7; Erik Losure, age 6; and Briella Klipfel, age 6.

Participants in the Prairie Idea Exchange came from a variety of backgrounds, and they saw a variety of things happening between agriculture and communities. Here are some of the things that they noticed, plus a little deeper exploration of those ideas.

Agriculture has a significant effect on the Dakotas' economies.

One participant pointed out that ag affects so much in the state—it's vital for the economies of small towns, but it also has a signficant impact for Sioux Falls and other population centers. All of the inputs and equipment need for agriculture are also part of the equation.

"(If you take) ag out of the equation, there is no South Dakota," he said, because that is the reason people settled here in the first place, and in large part it is still the reason that communities have remained here.

Agriculture is evolving.

Participants described the change in agriculture on both ends of the size scale—the number of small, sometimes urban farmers is increasing, and the size of very large farms is also increasing.

What is decreasing is what has been called "the agriculture of the middle"—not small but not big farms that are operated mostly with the labor from one family.

Change in number of farms of various sizes, 2007 to 2012

	2012	2007	% change
SOUTH DAKOTA			
1-139 acres	10649	8513	▲25.09%
140-999 acres	11628	12802	▼-9.17%
1,000-1,999 acres	4075	4362	▼-6.58%
2000+ acre	5637	5492	▲2.64%
ALL SIZES	31989	31169	▲2.63%
NORTH DAKOTA			
1-139 acres	7325	6104	▲20.00%
140-999 acres	12775	14016	▼-8.85%
1,000-1,999 acres	4424	5369	▼-17.60%
2000+ acres	6437	6481	▼-0.68%
ALL SIZES	30961	31970	▼ 3.16%

2012 Census of Agriculture

According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, the number of farms in South Dakota actually went up 2.63 percent since 2007—a change almost entirely brought about by an increase in small farms, those 139 acres or fewer.

In North Dakota, the number of small farms also increased significantly—by 20 percent—though the total number of farms in North Dakota decreased.

Many of those smaller farms are niche producers growing or raising a product that serves a particular consumer desire, such as wineries, organic produce, pastured pork or grassfeed beef. PIE participants saw that sector of agriculture growing considerably.

Both states lost significant numbers of farms between 140 and 1,999 acres.

Continued on page 11

Participants hear about the conversation agreements before starting to talk with their small groups.

So you call yourself a 'farmer'

by PAULA JENSEN

Fewer people are calling themselves "farmers," and it's not just because there are fewer of them.

"Farmer" was the most common job title in both North and South Dakota from 1978 until at least 1996, according to an article published by NPR on Feb. 5, 2015, titled, "The Most Common Job In Every State." Sometime between 1996 and 2014, the most common title in the Dakotas changed from "farmer" to "farm manager."

Participants in the Prairie Idea Exchange noticed that fewer people in their communities call themselves "farmers" and more call themselves "ag producers," or say they "run a farm business."

Some participants thought there might be a stigma to the title of farmer, that it may be judged as being "just" a farmer.

Many still embrace the title, however.

"I always introduce myself as a farmer first and am proud of that title even though people often respond that I don't 'look' like a farmer," said Bill Hansen, a farmer, loan officer, and economic developer from Centerville, S.D.

"We need to call ourselves farmers," said Joel Erickson of Langford, S.D.

Erickson is a farmer and strong advocate for the agricultural industry as a South Dakota Wheat Growers board member and participant in the 2015 South Dakota Ag and Rural Leadership (SDARL) program. Erickson always introduces himself as a farmer, but he follows up with the more specific title of livestock producer, even though he also grows crops.

The general public's vision of a farmer is that they produce crops, livestock and dairy products. However, as the SDARL participants recently learned on their trip to the Black Hills area, a farmer can also manage a winery, operate a lumber mill, or raise specialty livestock.

As a rural leader and advocate for agriculture, "there are times when we must take off our farmer hat and put on our businessman suit," Erickson said. "Sometimes farmers take offense to that comment, but we all need to be working for the education and betterment of agriculture, not just our own operations." ✳

Farming: A career that could make you happier, according to 'self-determination theory'

Farmers can't control the weather. But they do have some say in what job they do when and who they choose to work with.

Those traits might farming a career well-suited to satisfaction and happiness, according to a psychological idea called Self-Determination Theory.

The theory proposes that in order to live a good life, you must fulfill certain innate psychological needs to provide the foundations for motivation and well-being. These needs are not learned, but fundamental parts of human nature.

The theory identifies three needs that underlie human goals and behaviors:

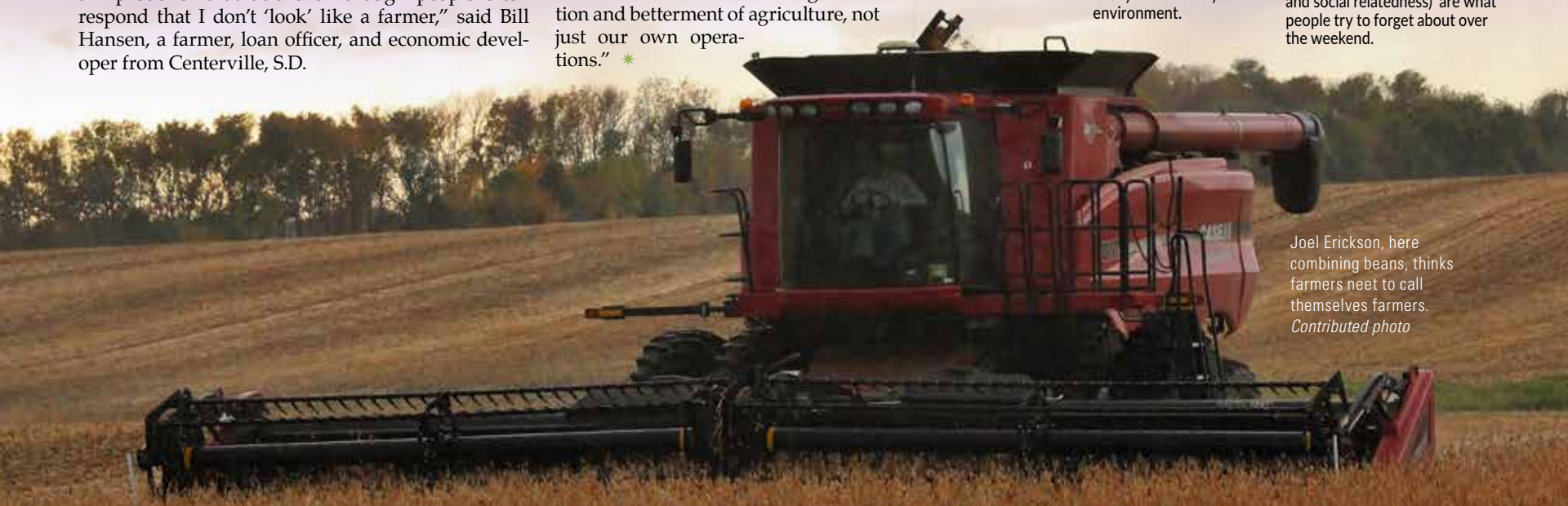
1) The need for **Autonomy** – a sense of willingness and choice in your actions.

2) The need for **Competence** – a need to effectively manage and control yourself and your environment.

3) The need for **Social Relatedness** – a need to be understood, appreciated by, connected to, and cared for by others.

Having these needs met is more likely to make a person happier than having a higher income, some researchers have found. For example, a survey of 6,200 lawyers reported in May in the *New York Times* found that being on track to be a partner in a top law firm had no correlation with happiness, while those in public-service jobs were the most likely to report being happy. The researchers believed that the lawyers lost a sense of purpose and control over their own fate as they climbed the career ladder.

Or we could just do sociology by country radio: Country songs have plenty of nostalgia for farm life, while 9-to-5 jobs (typically with less autonomy, competence, and social relatedness) are what people try to forget about over the weekend.



Joel Erickson, here combining beans, thinks farmers neet to call themselves farmers. *Contributed photo*

Continued from page 9

The size of farms makes a difference to rural communities.

"With larger corporations and bigger farms moving in, it is tough for the local, smaller operations to make it," one participant said. "It has a direct effect on a lot of these communities. ... Are both farmers and people who live in these communities shopping in the big city more because of that?"

The first issue of *Dakotafire* in Spring 2012 took a look at the population trend of 13 counties along the James River Valley in North and South Dakota: With just a few exceptions, the region has been been losing population since the 1930s.

In that issue, former South Dakota State Demographer Mike McCurry cited the mechanization of agriculture as one of three reasons for the outmigration of youth from the region. As machinery and other technology made farming less work, farms required less labor, and some of the youth who in previous generations worked on the farm left to make their livelihoods elsewhere. (The other two reasons McCurry gave for for the departure of youth were education and opportunity.)

Participants also noticed that many farms are in the process of being transferred to the next generation. Some farms are sold when this transfer happens; because larger farmers can afford to pay more for land, they often outbid smaller operators, which further consolidates land into fewer hands.

Participants did note that some kids are coming back to farm, despite the assumption that young people don't want to work in agriculture.

This size of farms affects rural communities beyond just population, because large farms tend to operate differently.

From *Dakotafire*'s Summer 2012 issue:

> *Large farms take advantage of economies of scale and buy what they need in massive quantities. For many of these purchases, they go to larger communities or directly to suppliers to negotiate better prices. In large-scale livestock operations, many of the inputs are part of the contract with the corporation, so there is not even an option of shopping in the local community.*
>
> *Small and mid-sized farms, on the other hand, are more likely to spend money in their local communities. "Farms with a gross income of $100,000 made nearly 95 percent of their expenditures locally," according to ("A Report of the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production: Community and Social Impacts of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations."). ... Farms with gross incomes higher than $900,000 spent less than 20 percent locally.*
>
> *When money is spent locally, it has a multiplier effect—a dollar spent at the local elevator or hardware store is more likely to be spent again at the grocery store or restaurant. In vertically integrated farming systems, those dollars go to shareholders who likely do not reside in the rural farming communities. The money leaves and does not return.*

Are there ways in which large farms

Continued on page 12

VISIONcare ASSOCIATES

WE OFFER
THE HIGHEST QUALITY EYECARE
IN A FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

At **Vision Care Associates**, we only offer the **newest technology** in digital lens design and lens coatings combined with the newest and most unique designs in **fashion eyewear.**

With 20 offices located in Northeast South Dakota and Nebraska, chances are you can find us in a town near you!

800.287.5020 www.visioncareassociates.net

FCSAMERICA.COM

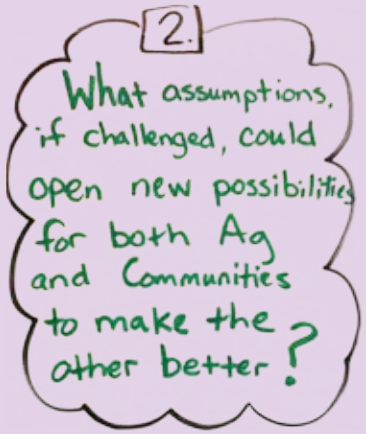
AGRICULTURE WORKS HERE.

Farm Credit Services of America is built for today's agriculture. Along with specialized products and services that give you an edge, we have the financial strength and capacity to help you grow.

SEE FOR YOURSELF BY CALLING 800-658-3964.
4835 SIXTH AVENUE SE
ABERDEEN, SD 57402

Farm Credit Services of America

Crop Insurance // Real Estate Loans // Operating Loans // Country Home Loans®
AgDirect® Equipment Financing // Cash-Back Dividends



The second question in the Prairie Idea Exchange invited participants to consider what assumptions might be impeding new ideas.

Facilitator Joe Bartmann, vice president of programs for Dakota Resources, said he tries to make sure assumptions are not labeled as good or bad.

"It's really about just knowing that they are there and that they influence what we decide to do in the world," Bartmann said. "If we start labeling some bad, then people may start to feel attacked or shamed.

"Assumptions are just ways we've learned to see the world, and they are built into just about every statement or question. So this is the dance of identifying, in a way that does not judge people, which of the mindsets or worldviews that are alive in our communities might be unintentionally getting in the way."

Here are some of the assumptions that participants came up with (some have been reworded for clarity):

- *Big is the only way, and the inevitable way.*
- *Young people want to move away.*
- *It's cheaper to shop in a big town.*
- *Youth view: "There's nothing to come back to."*
- *A farmer is "just" a farmer.*
- *Evolution of agriculture is bad.*
- *Farmers have to make it on their own, alone.*
- *You can't farm without government money.*
- *Rural communities are already dead; nothing can be done to help them.*

YOUR TURN

What assumptions would you add to the list? Share your thoughts at **www.pie4.us**.

Continued from page 11

could spend locally?

Perhaps. But it would go against the efficiencies that made the farm operations get larger in the first place.

The size of farms can affect the social capital of communities.

From the Summer 2012 *Dakotafire* issue:

Since the economic ties of the community are not as strong when farms are larger, it is not really a surprise that the social ties in the community weaken with larger farm size as well. Large-scale farmers are in a constant competition with one another for more land, which can reduce neighborliness, and when farmers don't shop locally anymore, their relationships to the small towns near their operations wither. Quite often, farmers expand into communities where they have had no historic social ties, and there is no incentive to build any.

"Everyone who has done careful research on farm size, residency of agricultural landowners and social conditions in the rural community finds the same relationship: as farm size and absentee ownership increase, social conditions in the community deteriorate," according to University of California-Davis sociologist Dean MacCannell.

The social capital in rural communities, or the "glue" of trust and interdependence that keeps communities connected, declines. "Numerous studies have shown lower quality of life, greater poverty and crime, lack of social services, and lowered civic participation in communities dominated by fewer larger farms as opposed to numerous small farms," according to the Pew Commission report.

Farms are less diverse than they used to be.

Many farms that once had livestock no longer do; livestock have moved to more concentrated operations, often indoors.

This, coupled with the fact that crop prices soared a few years ago, has led to another change that participants noticed: Many acres of grasslands, once used as pasture, are being converted to cropland. One participant voiced concern over the loss of this grassland.

"Once it's gone, it's gone," she said.

There is sometimes a lack of communication between farmers and the community.

"There is no communication," one participant said. "It's hard to have communication when you don't even know something is happening until it's happening. And whoever is coming in and wanting to do this facility hasn't talked to the neighbors, hasn't talked to anyone. And you're feeling under the gun because you have so little resources compared to big ag."

A lack of communication between agriculture and communities is perhaps connected to another thing that participants noticed: Town and ag folk don't understand one another as well as they once did.

"If you're not communicating, people assume the worst," one participant said. "The more transparent you are, and the more you educate, the more willing people are to accept new possibilities and change their beliefs." ✷

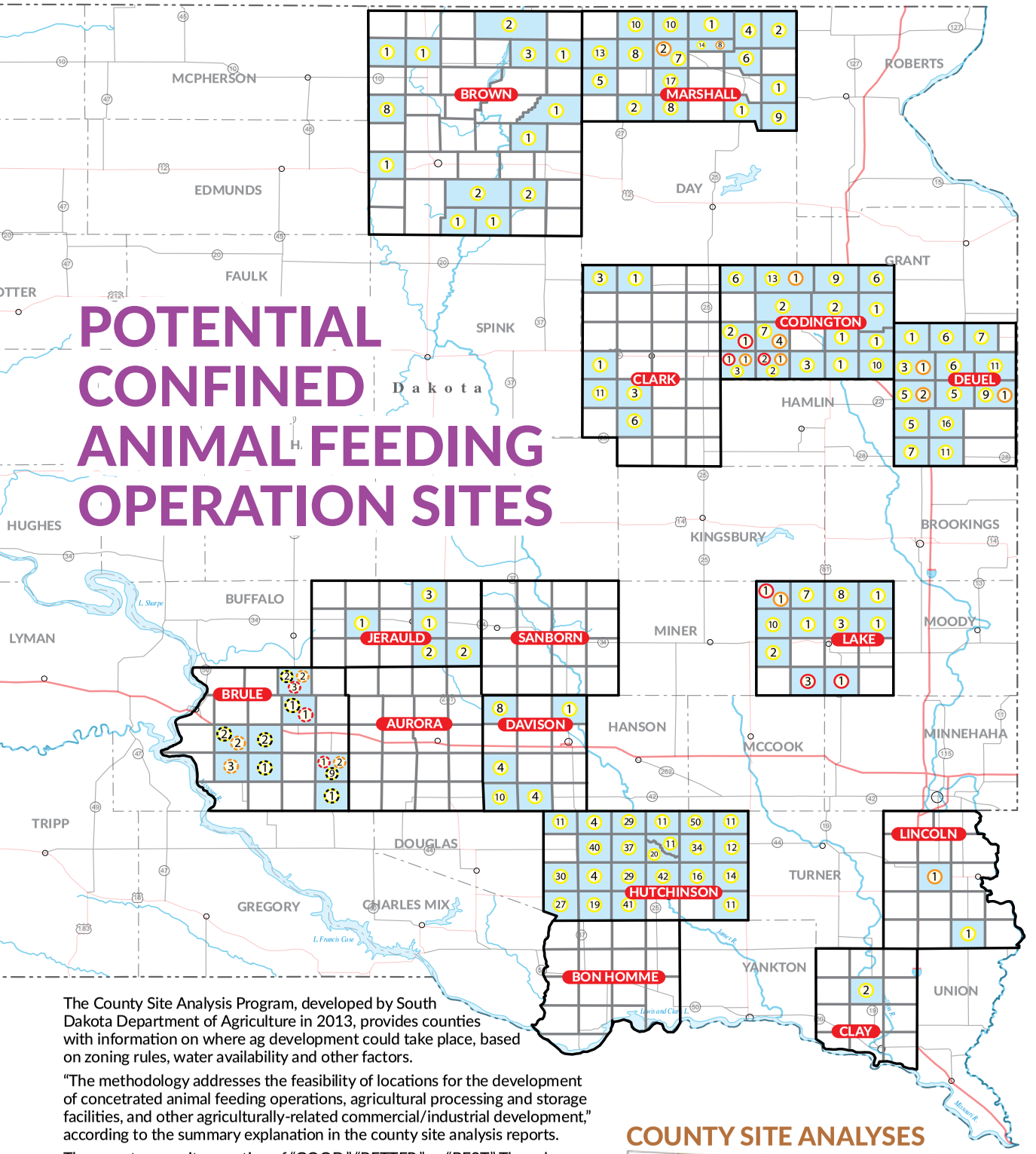
YOUR TURN

What are you noticing about the connection between ag and community? Share your thoughts at **www.pie4.us**.

ARLINGTON DAYS
2016
July 22nd - 26th
WELCOME
TO Fabulous
ARLINGTON
SD
Gambling on a Good Time
Featuring:
The Dweebs
&
DEUCES WILD!
DUELING PIANOS
www.arlingtonsd.com

WHERE SHOULD AG DEVELOPMENT GO?

POTENTIAL CONFINED ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATION SITES



The County Site Analysis Program, developed by South Dakota Department of Agriculture in 2013, provides counties with information on where ag development could take place, based on zoning rules, water availability and other factors.

"The methodology addresses the feasibility of locations for the development of concetrated animal feeding operations, agricultural processing and storage facilities, and other agriculturally-related commercial/industrial development," according to the summary explanation in the county site analysis reports.

The reports gave sites a rating of "GOOD," "BETTER," or "BEST." They also qualified some sites as "POTENTIALLY GOOD," etc., if there was some factor that could be improved to improve the rating.

COUNTY SITE ANALYSES

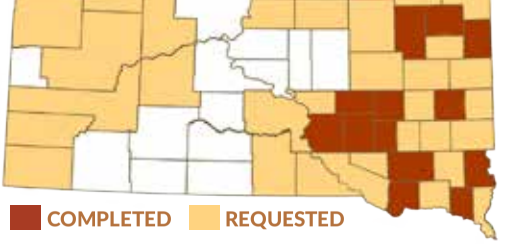
A railroad track that is currently unused in Bon Homme County, for example, would improve the rating if it were returned to use.

HOW TO READ THE MAPS

GOOD BETTER BEST

POTENTIALLY GOOD POTENTIALLY BETTER POTENTIALLY BEST

Number (4) indicates how many sites are located in that township with that rating.



POTENTIAL AG INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES

MCPHERSON EDMUNDS FAULK SPINK BEADLE HUGHES BUFFALO LYMAN TRIPP GREGORY DOUGLAS CHARLES MIX DAY ROBERTS GRANT HAMLIN CLARK KINGSBURY BROOKINGS MOODY MINER HANSON MCCOOK MINNEHAHA TURNER LINCOLN YANKTON UNION CLAY

BROWN MARSHALL CODINGTON DEUEL JERAULD SANBORN LAKE BRULE AURORA DAVISON HUTCHINSON BON HOMME

Find all the county site analysis reports completed to date:

www.dakotafire.net/ag-sites

Graphic by Cole Hinz and Heidi Marttila-Losure / Dakotafire Media

"What new ways of doing things would help agriculture and communities to make each other better?"

by WENDY ROYSTON

If the old adage that "as goes the farmer, so goes the farm town" holds true, making ag work is important to everyone in our rural culture. Bridging town folk and country folk can help our communities, counties and states flourish. But the effort has to be intentional.

Following are nine examples of how ag and economic development professionals in the PIE session think we all can work together to bridge the gap and move forward.

Participants share ideas in small groups.

1 Communities and farmers need to communicate better.

Since the success of rural areas depends on both those who live on paved streets and those who reside on gravel roads, we may need to re-examine and define what it means to be a part of a "community."

"A community can be as much as you want it to be, but it can also be as constrained as you want it to be," said South Dakota Secretary of Agriculture Lucas Lentsch. "The farmers and ranchers and producers across our countryside are absolutely a part the destiny of their hometown area (and) their local communities, in a broader sense. … (We need) the opportunity to communicate together and bring that sense of community together, and recognize that there aren't boundaries to it."

And the definition of "communication" is evolving as well.

"My dad's way is not my way, and the next generation's way is definitely different," Lentsch said, referencing his mostly-text communication with his daughter. "We think about the values of going to a meeting and going to town and talking, but the next generation 'has an app for that,' so what are we doing to make sure that our communities, in a global sense, are more relevant for the future? … We have to embrace the tools and technology of the day.

"It's a whole lot easier for someone to buy in if they get asked to join and they have a medium to join in that they are comfortable using. … It's figuring out how you balance that next generation of farmer with that next generation of small-business man on Main Street."

2 When both town and agriculture are involved, good things happen.

"Two heads" are better than one, as they say, so pooling the ideas and resources of both the country and town residents of an area can increase the group's collective powers and abilities. "The … (geographical) 'border' that goes around a town … (and) the ZIP code circle, and how those two (overlap) … needs to become a permeable line, and the farmers act in the community, are involved (and) offer their input in community planning and organizations and events, and the people in town somehow find a reason to put themselves out in the rural area and get a sense of what's happening there as well," said Kulm, N.D., farm wife and Dakotafire contributor Sarah Gackle.

Lentsch agreed.

"Our Main Streets don't stop at the end of town," he said. "Our Main Streets run throughout our counties. It's our ag economy that very much drives our Main Street business, and (one) can't happen without the other."

Besides, Midwesterners are known for working together.

"When you provide opportunities for the ag leaders and community leaders to hold meetings together, you get that true 'community' feel," Centerville (S.D.) Development Corp. Director Jared Hybertson said.

3 Change community meeting schedules to accommodate farmers.

If community leaders aren't expecting local bankers to abandon their duties to attend important meetings, they probably shouldn't expect farmers to, either. Being mindful of farmers' schedules can make it easier for them to have a voice in the goings-on of our communities—especially during the planting and harvesting seasons, when daylight and favorable weather are hot commodities.

"(Organizations need to) change some of their meeting schedules during the farm season … make it later at night, so the farmers don't lose as much (daylight), and they can make it to those meetings more easily," Gackle said.

Just an hour or two can make a whole world of difference in whether a farmer *can* attend a meeting, and the gesture may determine whether he or she *will*.

4 Agritourism can benefit rural economies as well as understanding of agriculture.

With the children of today's Dakotas mostly not raised on operational farms, an increasing number of people in our states have never stepped foot on anything more than an acreage.

"Most kids who are graduating from high school today are more than two generations removed from the family farm, and they don't quite have a connection to where the food comes from," said Todd Kays, executive director of First District Association of Local Governments in Watertown, S.D.

In that community, second- and third-graders are taken to tour farming operations large and small, to see, hear, touch and smell farm life. Similar agritourism is happening elsewhere in the state, but those sites are not well-known regionwide.

"It might promote more of those if the state did more with the (Department of Tourism) and agriculture working together to develop those," said Rita Anderson, director of economic development in DeSmet, S.D. "A lot of other states do a lot of that, and I think South Dakota has a big opportunity here that we really should be thinking about developing."

5 Require ag education in K-12 schools.

Farmers are often strong backers of local school systems, and often want no recognition for their generosity, several PIE participants noted.

"Many of us in economic development have really seen over the years a lot of big contributions from farmers," said Margot Gillette, executive director of Beadle and Spink Enterprise Community, based out of Doland, S.D. "They gather around the school systems really, really well."

One way schools can honor those gifts it by offering participation in Future Farmers of America,

4-H and other ag-based organizations, as well as using farm examples for math, science and other subjects, in addition to hands-on experiences. But, in order to do this, educators must first be educated on ag themselves.

6 Spend locally.

Community members should buy what they can from their local farmers, and vice versa.

"The values of the communities need to be reinstilled," Lentsch said. "Valuing your community or your local cooperative … and knowing that there's value in shopping local and being part of your friends' and your neighbors' (businesses), to help leverage your collective voice economically and on a local level is really important."

Continued on page 18

Participants listen during the Prairie Idea Exchange harvest.
Photos by Heidi Marttila-Losure

Is a large-scale ag project proposed near you? Here's how to have a better conversation about it

by HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE

When a large-scale agriculture project is proposed, people often get their armor on before the second word is spoken. The "anti" side can't see any possibilities for positives, while the "pro" side can't see how anyone could be opposed to progress. Once the armor is on, no one is going to be able to hear the other side, no matter what reasonable arguments are presented.

Community members are also often at a disadvantage in these discussions. The individual or corporation proposing a large-scale ag project has a business plan, financing, sometimes paid staff and often local or state government backing—all of which help them develop reasoning for why the project should happen. Community members have none of those advantages, and may not know where to start to gauge whether a project should happen.

With that in mind, here are some suggestions on how to have a more productive conversation with all parties—one that starts from a common value and builds from there.

Start here: **"Do you (or can we all) agree with this statement? 'I value this community, and I want to make sure my actions help it thrive.'"**

If you can't all agree with this statement—well, now you know who you are dealing with. But it's likely that you can find common ground with almost anyone on this. From that common ground, you can build a better conversation, and work to ensure that the proposed project reflects that common wish for a thriving community.

Here are suggested questions to follow up with:

Who will own the facility? If the owner is local, money from the operation is more likely to recirculate in the community. If the owner is not local, profit will go to wherever corporate headquarters are and likely will not return. If you are given a local person's name as owner, also ask about the percentage of ownership.

Who will own the animals? If separate entities own the building and the animals, there is potential for problems. Sometimes these arrangements are structured so that a large corporation owns the animals (where most of the profit is), while someone local owns the buildings (where most of the expense is).

Who owns the manure—i.e., who is responsible for the manure if there are problems? Some communities that have had issues with spills have found that this isn't always clear.

Who will work in the facility? If a facility is intended to give a local person a livelihood—if, for example, a farm kid is coming home to work in it—it means something different for the community than if no one from the community wants to work there.

How much will they be paid? Workers who are paid enough to live on can give back to the community in terms of time or effort; workers who aren't paid enough to live on instead take services from the community.

Who will do business with the facility? The facility will need to buy feed and/or other inputs from somewhere. Purchasing from local businesses can make a more positive impact on the community.

How much government support will the facility receive? Government funding gives a project an advantage over other efforts that did not receive such funding. Taxpayers also have a right to know how their money is being spent. You can search for most subsidy payments at **farm.ewg.org**.

How will the facility affect the neighbors? Odor is a common concern. Also consider traffic, potential disease vector, etc. A facility that you want for a neighbor should be able to list how they've considered these issues. ✶

Continued from page 17

Commitment to the livelihood of a community has to be a conscious choice.

"What you cherish, you defend, what you don't cherish you don't defend, and what you don't defend, you lose," Lentsch said, quoting retired South Dakota military officer Philip Killey. "If you cherish your Main Street businesses, you have to defend them, and you have to support them, because if you don't, you'll lose them."

7 Rural people need to realize that the success of their neighbors affects their own livelihoods as well.

"'Profit' is not a dirty word," Lentsch said. "We want each other to succeed. … When a Main Street business is doing well or a business ... is doing well out on a country road someplace … all of that is how we do better together."

Even though 80-mph interstates and the information superhighway make the "deals" at large chain stores faster and easier to obtain, sacrificing a few dollars here and there keeps local businesses alive and adds to the local tax base.

"You need to overcome your selfishness and say, 'This is still better for me in the long run,'" Onaka rancher Rick Rausch said.

In the end, rural consumers can "vote with their dollars and their forks," spending money and buying food in a way that supports the things they value.

As author and educator Anna Lappe, an expert on food systems, put it, "Every time you spend money, you're casting a vote for the kind of world you want." Those who have chosen to live rural typically do not desire a fast-paced world filled with "cookie cutter" foods, where everyone is a number and no one knows your story enough to care enough to say hello.

"Everybody kind of longs for that … community feel, supporting local businesses," Hybertson said.

8 Contact out-of-state or even out-of-county landowners and ask them to support their local community foundations.

Each spring and fall, millions of dollars leave our rural areas in the form of rent checks to landowner heirs. Most of the time, once that money leaves, it never returns. Appealing to these landowners, some of whom were raised on the land, and asking for their help grows our local economies through support of local endeavors, such as community foundations, schools and major fundraising projects.

"Nonresident landowners can play an important role in helping build sustainable communities in South Dakota," said Stephanie Judson, president of the South Dakota Community Foundation. "While they may no longer live in or never lived in South Dakota, most feel a strong connection to the state and may even call South Dakota 'home.'… I believe that if we provide the means and the opportunity, many nonresident landowners will want to be a part of supporting the community that is a part of their family's heritage. …It is imperative that we promote community savings accounts, school foundations, library foundations and other community resources as vehicles for helping our communities prosper."

9 Encourage value-added or stacked industries so that farmers can make a better living or add a returning child without needing more land (to combat depopulation trends).

Diversity can make small farms more successful, and diversity can make farm communities successful as well.

"It's not just on the farm," Lentsch said. "It's also those value-added development projects that happen within the community."

Enhancing farmers' raw goods—whether on the farm or at breweries, bread companies, ethanol plants or farmers markets—is good for communities' livelihoods and its survival more generally.

"As a state, we've seen what a lost generation looks like, by not having economic opportunity for them when the farm crisis of the late '70s and '80s hit. It took people out of the state," Lentsch said.

Strategic value-added agriculture can stand against that.

"It might be a feeding operation, it might be an ethanol plant, it might be a renewable-fuels expansion that we don't know about yet," Lensch said. "It's (about) having that opportunity add value to what we raise, but also creating those jobs locally that we otherwise might miss out on. It all comes back to an economy that drives opportunity." ✶

PIE
PRAIRIE IDEA EXCHANGE

YOUR TURN

What new ways of doing things would help Ag and Communities to make each other better? Share your thoughts at **www.pie4.us**.

MAPLE RIVER CAMPGROUND

Right on the Maple River, next to Frederick's Simmons Park

Four sites with 110V and water hookup
$20/night

Eight sites with 220V, water and sewer hookup
$28/night

Call 605-329-7088 for more information

506 5TH STREET, FREDERICK, S.D.

Miss an issue? You can still catch up.

Back issues of Dakotafire *Sparking rural revival one story at a time.* **for sale**

$3 each · **$2.50** for two · **$2** each for five or more **DAKOTAFIRE.NET/STORE**

Young Guns hit the mark for involvement in DeSmet

by WENDY ROYSTON

Sometimes, all it takes to get something done in a community is a few Young Guns.

"We decided that we needed to get some younger people involved," said DeSmet, S.D., Economic Development Director Rita Anderson.

Couple that with a "hometown boy" moving his family back to town and yearning for a networking outlet, and you're set.

Melding the new-to-town couple's desires, the town's needs and the community's branding as offering "frontier life," Young Guns initially met socially in 2011. Before long, however, the group, which consists of just as many rural couples as those who live in town, found ways they could be useful to the community.

The school was coming in over budget on its portion of a major community development project that included an event center, athletic complex and wellness center earlier this year, and a deadline was fast approaching to get a fence put in around the football field.

"The insurance company wouldn't let them finish the track until this fence was put around it," Anderson said. "The Young Guns organized and went in and put a fence around the whole complex, which saved the school $25,000. … If they hadn't stepped forward and done that so quickly, the school wouldn't have been able to hold any football games here this year."

The group organizes the Wilder 5K and 10K during Old Settlers Days; a summertime community picnic; a Halloween party; and Celebrate DeSmet, a new annual event held early in the year to celebrate the successes of the community and the people who made them possible.

"When we do these events, we really try to gear them around getting the younger people in the community and the older, experienced people in the community together, because that really doesn't happen a lot, other than in church," said Jason Baszler, Young Guns member and American Bank and Trust market president. "We try to encapsulate as much of the community as possible. Our group is just basically in charge of getting the group together and pulling it off."

DeSmet's Young Guns spark a variety of activities, such as the Day of Caring, a cleanup event (above): the Wilder Run, a 5K and 10K run during Old Settlers Day (the committee is pictured above right), and the Wilder Night Wine Tasting (the committee and the band is pictured at right). *Contributed photos*

Baszler, who moved back to DeSmet from Sioux Falls, said the group is fairly laidback, because that's what couples who are raising families and growing careers need.

"When you both work 40 hours per week, you come home, and volunteering is hard to do, because you want to spend time with your kids, so we try to do projects that are fun and worth being away," he said, adding that some projects also involve the children.

Anderson said the group has helped bring DeSmet and its rural area together.

"Of course, in a small town, everybody knows each other anyway, but it's getting those country kids in here, and a lot of them have now gotten involved in other committees," such as the housing committee and the school board, she said. "It's really done a lot to make the ag people feel included and needed as the future of DeSmet."

"We do have a good mix of ag producers in our group," Baszler agreed. "Sometimes these groups are known as young professionals groups, and I would say that with the way that farming is, it's just as big of a business as anyone else. But we don't look at it as a young professionals group, and not even young. … (It's for) anybody who wants to make a difference in the community, and it's a way to get new people who move to town in contact with other people." ✳

Adding value can multiply benefits for agriculture, rural communities

by WENDY ROYSTON

When "value" is added to local crops, the value is added to more than just agriculture.

"It's adding value all of the way down to your Main Street," said Ty Eschenbaum with the South Dakota Department of Agriculture.

The population of rural South Dakota counties has dipped an average of 8 to 10 percent each decade since the 1930s, but those declines could have been more drastic if the state were only producing raw commodities for export.

"Operations get bigger and technological advances allow less operators to farm more acres, and things are becoming more automated, and that means less families and less people," Eschenbaum said. "(We can't afford to) ship out our corn and soybeans along with our next generation of young talent, so that it can be further processed outside of our state's borders. … That's what value-added agriculture is all about."

Simply put, "value-added agriculture" seeks to transform commodities grown in the Dakotas into higher-value products that mean economic development and jobs for local people, such as through ethanol production or feeding livestock, according to Eschenbaum. The most important Dakota-raised commodity is neither planted in a field, nor butchered—it's the effort and talent of the region's people. That value can be preserved if efforts to increase ag-related commerce in the Dakotas continue to rise.

"There are other states using our corn (that was) grown in South Dakota, our cattle that are born in South Dakota, and probably our talent in the form of human capital that was raised in South Dakota, and they're putting the three together in one of our adjoining states, and they're making money off of it," Eschenbaum said. "Those are things that could be happening here. … In South Dakota, ag is our No. 1 industry, and that's what we're good at.

Dimock Dairy Cooperative employees Paul Voelker (left) and Troy Thelen (right) prepare cheese horns for the cooler. *Photo by Tina Roth*

By taking things that we've done, that have been grown on our land for generations, and coming up with value-added opportunities, (we are) helping people find good jobs and stay here if they choose to do so."

Cheri Rath, executive director of the South Dakota Value Added Ag Development Center, said it is important to remember that all successful ag-related ventures are adding value to the local economy, regardless of the number of jobs they provide.

"A few jobs in a small community are as important as a lot of jobs in a bigger community," she said. "There is a place for small, medium and large-sized businesses … whether it be ag or non-ag."

While larger farms are keeping "big ag" industries such as ethanol, biodiesel and the meat markets running smoothly and providing numerous jobs, the smaller, typically niche producers are offering an opportunity for collaboration in harvesting and growing businesses together.

"What that does is further diversify South Dakota, providing more opportunities to our communities, because there are more things they can engage in (and) … allowing for interaction

Continued on page 22

Continued from page 21

between community and farm," Rath said.

But the larger value-added ventures provide a completely different type of opportunity.

"If you get into the processing side, it tends to be very automated, and the jobs you provide can be very technical, so you can retain some youth or bring youth back," Rath said.

Large or small, value-added ventures can and do keep communities alive in many instances.

"Value-added can be the face of the community, especially in small towns, where there may not be a lot of industry," Rath said. "Because of the employment, because of the product, it can be the face of the community to the outside borders, (creating) some pride and some awareness of the town."

Dairy keeps local economy churning

"Dimock Dairy is helping keep Dimock alive," business manager Tina Roth said. "The post office is still basically open because we access and use it."

Dimock Dairy provides six full-time jobs to its namesake town of 125 in southeastern South Dakota, and the workforce doubles during the busy holiday and hunting seasons.

"There's a huge amount of pride associated with the name Dimock Dairy, and the good, quality product that is put out plays a huge role in repeat customers," said plant manager Darren Bigge. "(People) even generations removed from the farm, that have moved away to other states … make it a point to stop at Dimock Dairy and get some cheese" when they are in the area.

The families of almost all of the current producers have been associated with the dairy for generations, and some of them even were on its waiting list in the earlier years.

"It's been a staple in their farming histories," Bigge said, but "small dairy farmers are getting fewer and farther between."

The dairy has been threatened with closure a few times over the years, but locals rallied to keep the milk stirring.

"(The community) promoted the product to their family and their friends (by) sending it and giving it" as gifts, Roth said. "I don't think there's a Kurtenbach in the United States who doesn't eat Dimock cheese, and they live all over the place. They believe in the product, (and) they believe in Dimock."

The dairy's adherence to tradition has kept both itself and its producers in business over the years.

"We don't have all these machines that we just punch a button and watch it go. It's still (made) the old-fashioned way, and I think that's why we have a good product," Roth said. "(We're) working with our small farmers and giving them an outlet for their farmers … rather than them having to sell to bigger farmers, who probably take their (commodities) out of state to sell it."

Move to the country provides sweet retirement

LeRoy and Nancy Lohmiller moved to the Delmont, S.D., area from Baltic, S.D., seven years ago, to test the idea that "10 Acres is Enough"—which was the

LeRoy Lohmiller tends to two acres of raspberries at Farmer in the Dell in Delmont, S.D. *Courtesy photo*

title of a book Nancy had read.

A year after moving onto the 20 acres now known as Farmer in the Dell, the couple planted 2,000 raspberry plants. Today, raspberries cover 2 full acres at the farm, and Lohmillers now also grow black raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, blackberries and Saskatoon berries.

Initially, the plan was to grow enough berries to prepare specialty jellies, jams, sauces and syrups for area farmers markets, but the crop yielded better than expected. Even employing the help of several friends, family and locals in recent years, countless berries were missed, so last year they opened a "U-Pick-It" section to the business, allowing customers to walk the rows of berries, selecting their own, and pay by the pound.

"We've got people coming from clear over on the other side of the river for our raspberries now," LeRoy Lohmiller said. "It's kind of a novelty for some of them. There are some people who have never (picked berries). … Sometimes they will bring their children along, and sometimes it's just a mother or a couple, and they'll come out and pick it and enjoy it a while and get some good fruit."

The secret to the "good fruit" of a small berry operation, according to Lohmiller, is good fertilizer—mixed with a little extra sugar—and a lot of attention.

"You've got to keep busy, or you fall behind," he said.

Looking into the future, the Lohmillers are considering installing a commercial kitchen for processing the canned goods, in order to expand their market into area grocery stores. In the meantime, they will continue to raise a few calves, pigs, ducks and chickens, milk and, of course, pick berries. ✳

Venture brings local food lovers around farmyard table

by WENDY ROYSTON

Thanks to one local foods project, the consumer and the grower are literally seated at the same table.

"It's very good for people to meet their producer, see where their food comes from, and have a personal relationship with the person who produces a lot of their food," said Joan Williams of Cider Hill Farm in Arlington, S.D.

HarvesTable began in 2010, after Williams's husband, Gordon, saw a similar project online. The couple, who at the time were raising livestock and produce and selling handmade cheeses and breads, contacted two friends, a chef and a gardener, and the group has organized a few events each year since.

"The whole idea is to acquaint people and get them familiar with where their food comes from," Williams said.

The seven- to nine-course meal is made solely of local foods and served outdoors with table linens, china and wine glasses. A staff of three to seven people prepares the venue and serves the meal to groups of 25 to 80 diners on some of the 12 participating farms throughout the summer.

"We feed everyone at big, long tables, so you don't know who you're going to sit by," Williams said. "You meet people, and there is a lot of conversation that's really pretty interesting. … It's nothing like going to a restaurant—where you go and eat by yourself—to go and share a communal feast with people you don't know is really quite different. It is a little bit of a throwback."

In re-creating the harvest table atmosphere of yesteryear, the "handshake and a smile" feel of the food sales of days gone by has returned, too.

"There's a trusting relationship that develops that you're not going to get with the food that you buy at the grocery store," Williams said.

"People can tour the gardens when they come. They can look around before we eat, and then they can sit there and they feel good about where their food is coming from, because they can see it right there."

A majority of HarvesTable's customers are not directly related to farms, but are concerned with consuming locally grown, healthy foods.

"Most of them live in town, and maybe are far removed from agriculture or the rural roots of their ancestors," Williams said, but "they aren't naive. They're at the market buying food because they want fresh food … and they get kind of a kick out of coming back to the farm and seeing how things are done these days."

Many people are surprised by what the events offer, according to Williams.

"I think a lot of people kind of expect, more or less, a picnic, or a potluck," she said, but she and/or chef John Gilbertson carefully tailor a unique menu from fresh, local ingredients. "At Linda's (Gardens), I've seen him go out to the garden with a basket and (fill it with seasonal produce) and come and make something with it." ✳

Diners gather for a meal at Linda's Gardens in Chester, S.D.

Dakotas' Farm to School efforts still in early stage

by WENDY ROYSTON

The Farm to School initiative seems like a natural fit for the Dakotas, where both agriculture and the states' youths are valued, but officials with the program say there is some room to, umm, grow.

Produce from Linda's Gardens.
Photo courtesy Linda Krsnak

"It's kind of hard to get them to use local stuff, because there are so many rules that they have to follow," said Sue Balcom, director of the Foundation for Agriculture and Rural Resources Management and Sustainability (FARRMS) and the North Dakota Farm to School liaison for the National Farm to School Network (NFSN).

Sue Balcom

Holly Tilton Byrne

Many Midwestern schools file for exemptions from the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act that dictates what schools must serve for lunches, in order to qualify for federal reimbursements, according to Balcom—an indicator that they do not want to be told what they have to serve their kids.

"I don't know why it's such a tough sell in a state where we have an abundance of farmland and knowledge and a desire to grow things, (but) … I don't think we should force them into it," she said.

Some of the challenge is timing, according to Holly Tilton Byrne, community organizer for Dakota Rural Action and South Dakota state liaison for Farm to School with the national farm to school network.

"With the growing season being so opposite our school season, it can be a little difficult in South Dakota to be able to do the school gardens," she said.

More than 40,000 U.S. schools—or 44 percent—currently engage 23.5 million students through the National Farm to School Network.

"I would think that in North Dakota more schools than not are doing something that would fall under the auspices of Farm to School. We just have no way of recording it," Balcom said. "I think that probably every school does something. … Everybody should be doing this. … All you've got to do is get those kids outside, in a school garden, teach them something about agriculture, feed them some fresh food on their plates, and that's considered Farm to School."

Tilton Byrne agreed.

"There are a lot of schools participating in Farm to School," she said. "It's maybe even the way they've always done things … but they just aren't necessarily communicating with me about that on a regular basis."

In many schools across the Dakotas, meeting federal school lunch program requirements—especially since the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 increased stipulations—leaves little wiggle room in the budget to provide local foods on the lunch plate, so they are finding other ways to incorporate local foods. The Huron (S.D.) School District has partnered with a nearby farm for the fresh fruits and vegetables program, which is funded separately and makes nutritious foods routinely available to students on a "salad bar."

Through that partnership, "the kids are able to try really interesting items," Tilton Byrne said. "Sometimes they will get purple cauliflower or purple beans—something that's maybe not something they would try every single day, but it kind of opens up the variety of items they are able to consume and learn about and try."

Cultivating the future in local gardens

Through a partnership with Linda's Gardens in rural Chester, students at Flandreau Indian School have literally gotten their hands dirty, seeding, weeding and transplanting a variety of crops in the gardens' high tunnels.

"We wanted to start bringing in different fruits and different vegetables, and I think … taking them there and letting them help … just made the kids more open to trying new things," said Geriann Headrick, acting food service manager at the school. "It was a good opportunity for the students to go out and see and get their hands actually in the dirt and see what gardening and being self-sufficient and raising your own food was all about."

Before the program, Headrick said many students were clueless about the origin of their foods.

"They figured it came from a grocery store," she said. "To see where it came from opened their eyes a little bit, and for them to understand what can happen from one little seed, hopefully it awakens something inside of them, to say, 'we can plant our own radishes', or 'we can plant our own lettuce.'"

Producer Linda Krsnak agreed.

"We hope we … light a spark in their mind about their future and a possibility about something they could do and open their mind to something they've never been exposed to," she said. "This could be a possible career, or something they can take back home and … maybe start their own garden."

Students from across the nation come to attend the boarding school, but Tilton Byrne said even South Dakota kids need to be reminded of where their food originates.

"Even with us being a rural state, you'll find kids who have never been to a farm, so … exposing kids to that, and letting them know that this is something that everybody requires (because) everybody needs food (is key)," she said. "So often, you hear kids say that they are not interested in farming, or they would never want to have a garden or anything like that, but when you're able to actually put them in the situation that they're outside—they're working in a garden, they're getting their hands dirty—it encourages them to explore something and find a love for something that maybe they didn't realize they had. It can be really impacting, and we definitely need more people to grow food."

And other careers can result, too, depending on how the program is structured.

"You're actually training another generation of cooks by using local foods," Balcom said. "It's very scientific. You can probably use good food, healthy eating, good soil and gardening in any curriculum, because there are aspects of science involved, there is mathematics involved, there is fun involved."

Continued on page 26

Aberdeen Aquatic Center

- Leisure Pool
- 3 Water Slides
- Lap Pool with Play Features
- 380' Long Lazy River

10th Ave. SE & S. Dakota St.

605-626-7015

www.aberdeen.sd.us/aquatics

Lee Park Municipal Golf Course

18 Hole Course | Cart Rental | Club Rental
Driving Range | Snack Bar | Beer
Tee Times Daily
Golf Lessons by PGA Professionals
Hwy. 281 North | Next to Village Bowl

605-626-7092

www.aberdeen.sd.us/leepark

Wylie Park

Family Fun Headquarters!

Campground | Storybook Land | Land of Oz
Mini Train Rides | Carousel Rides | Balloon Rides
Paddleboats & Canoes | Mini Golf | Go Karts
Zoo | Bumper Boats | Bike Rentals

Hwy 281, 1 Mile North of Aberdeen

888-326-9693

www.aberdeen.sd.us/storybookland

What is Farm to School?

The National Farm to School Network (NFSN) advocates for healthier childhood diets by linking schools and preschools with local food producers and providing agricultural education.

Since the late 1990s, about 40,000 children in all 50 states have learned to become more connected to food sources through NFSN programming.

NFSN strives to link children with fresher, healthier food options by connecting local producers directly to schools, and to help children and parents make more informed menu selections at home. Programming consists of such projects as gardening, cooking and farm field trips, all of which aim to strengthen local economies and empower entire communities.

State liaisons help connect school districts with NFSN programming ideas. Locally, those leaders are Sue Balcom, director of the Foundation for Agriculture and Rural Resources Management and Sustainability (FARRMS), in North Dakota (sbalcom@farrms.org), and Holly Tilton Byrne, community organizer for Dakota Rural Action, in South Dakota (hollyt@dakotarural.org).

Source: *www.farmtoschool.org*

Continued from page 25

Farm to School programming has the power to improve society as a whole, according to Balcom.

"There are emotional and physical benefits to gardening. … The kids get to get outside and get some fresh air, and they get to learn about the cycle of life. … That is so important in a society that values youth like it does. Everything has a cycle, and I think farmers understand the life and death of life more than anybody, and we need to pass that on to kids. There are so many kids out there who have no idea where foods come from. They don't understand it."

Tilton Byrne agreed.

"Serving the food in the school system is important because it's getting really, really fresh, nutritious food … to the kids, the people who really deserve it the most. The food, so often, when it's local, is able to be picked at its peak ripeness, so the food tastes a lot better, so we're finding that students are more likely to eat that nutritious food when it's really fresh like that."

Growing food also empowers tomorrow's adults to care for themselves and their families, in the event of a major emergency.

"It's important for these kids … that they learn how to be self-sufficient, so they can grow and preserve their own foods," Balcom said. "In the event of unsettled weather—or perhaps a terrorist attack—we need to be able to feed ourselves, and the generations below my generation are just overwhelmed by the ideas of cooking and gardening, and those skills are life skills that everybody should have." ✷

PIE PRAIRIE IDEA EXCHANGE

Jumping local food system hurdles

by SARAH GACKLE

Getting local foods into local hands is a task much more difficult than setting up a produce stand.

That was the basic challenge taken up in Mandan, N.D., in April, when policymakers, customers, advocates, producers and people with every connection to local foods came together for the Summit on Local Economies, or SOLE, hosted by FARRMS and made possible by a USDA Rural Business Opportunity Grant. Attendees listened to current research in the field, new ideas for progress, and put their heads together to find solutions to their shared challenges.

Summit participants saw two major problems facing local food systems in the Dakotas: tricky government regulations and difficulty mobilizing to meet demand. But challenging assumptions and enacting innovative solutions could open the door to a new wave of business ventures in this sector.

Online extra!
As we were going to press, we learned of a food hub being formed in the Sioux Falls area. We'll have more about that on our website: **www.dakotafire.net**

Kristianna Gehant-Siddens works on making jalapeno jelly.
Photos courtesy Deuel Area Development, Inc.

Last year, Lillian Salerno from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Business Development in Washington., D.C., toured the Community kitchen in Deuel County in hopes of using it as a model in other communities.

CHALLENGE 1: REGULATION

Annie Carlson and her husband, John, run a pasture-fed meat farm in Mercer, N.D. One might guess she'd sleep soundly after her exhausting days, but she doesn't. In fact, after almost a decade of work building a strong, face-to-face business of pasture-fed meat, eggs, and baked goods, Annie feels it's all barely held together.

Her worry, she says, is toeing the line on regulations.

"It only takes the retirement of one official, and we'd be starting over from scratch," Carlson said. "That's terrifying."

Regulations for small-scale farmers are intended to be applied according to the interpretation of the current health district authority. For example, you can't sell eggs at farmers markets in Mandan, but you can in Bismarck. Or most health districts allow sales of pickles; however, if you would like to sell in Devil's Lake, you must send one jar from each batch to be pH-tested in the lab. This essentially eliminates the ability to sell because of the cost of shipping jars.

These difficulties can quickly multiply. Not only do North Dakota producers have to accommodate different health districts (it is not unusual for a producer to sell in multiple health districts), they also worry how interpretation of those regulations may change when the current authority retires. Producers trying to play by the rules find themselves walking a tightrope that could be cut at any time.

Getting creative

The Deuel County Community Kitchen is an example of how one community found a way to play by the rules and create a business incubator that increased entrepreneurial opportunity.

When Frank James, Dakota Rural Action director, and his wife, Kim, wanted to begin selling their jalapeño jelly, they ran into the "processing hurdle." In both Dakotas, farmers can market their unprocessed produce to anyone, but any cutting, shredding, slicing, or chopping must be done in a licensed and inspected facility.

The couple couldn't afford to build one, but there was a licensed kitchen at their local school. James

Continued on page 28

Continued from page 27

and a few other partners, including Joan Sacrison, executive director of Deuel Area Development, Inc., met with the superintendent of the Deubrook School District to discuss renting out the school kitchen to small start-ups in the food industry, like James and his wife. James recalls this meeting and says it couldn't have gone any smoother: "When we met with the superintendent, he said, 'Well, whatever you charge, it shouldn't cost much because you're all taxpayers, so you already paid for this kitchen.'"

The kitchen is now entering its third season. Chefs must submit a business plan and pay a one-time $25 fee, then $5 per use of the kitchen, and they must follow a list of requirements while using it.

Sacrison says she would like to see more local chefs take advantage of the kitchen, but she has also been excited to see how many other communities have contacted her for advice on how to replicate this model, and she readily makes the contracts and guidelines available to anyone who asks.

"Those who live rurally have so many visions for how to contribute and how to create a second income," Sacrison said. "Agriculture is a valuable option for them because it is always available in rural communities, even when a formal job might not be."

A new way of thinking

Some may argue that these kinds of innovative solutions are really only treating a symptom of a system that needs to change. Food safety regulations may actually make consumers feel less safe, less trusting of farmers, and more fearful of their products. Rather than simply regulating the producer's food handling, the policies could effectively regulate consumers' food decisions, an approach that may widen the separation between farm and table for the next generation.

Food systems analyst Ken Meter has customized research for various regions of the country, from coast to coast. At the SOLE conference he began his presentation by reminding the audience that good food becomes more than a good meal.

"Food is sometimes the last cultural artifact of a people," said Meter. A fourth-generation German-American may not know a word of German, except for the name of her favorite family recipe, something she makes to continue that heritage.

"We tend to think of people only as consumers who go to the store and buy something," Meter said. "But the relationship we have in and through agriculture is so much different than that." There is social value in a strong local food economy beyond the strictly economic realm.

Current policy creates barriers between consumers and the kind of food they are able to access, Meter said, hindering the positive cultural potential inherent in food that reflects the community in which it's grown.

"Usually people would create communities around climate and geography, because it affected what they could grow and eat," he said. "We're the first to think this is all a technological process separate from how we live and make meaning as a people."

Many local food advocates are working to change food policies. Carlson said her dream for the future of food policy is unregulated direct sales.

"If that customer sought me out to purchase my product, then the government should not have a say in our private transaction, whether at a farmers market or at my farm."

Producers may also need to challenge their own assumptions about what it looks like to be an entrepreneur: It may require more cooperation and collaboration than they are envisioning.

"There are a lot of independent thinkers in the local food sector," admits Tyler Demars, former director of community and cooperative development at Common Enterprise Development Corporation in Mandan. "It's not our intention. It just tends to be our personality."

DENTAL CENTER
DAVID LEE MERXBAUER, DDS
605-725-0800 • 1021 Circle Dr. Aberdeen, SD 57401
www.thebestdentalcenter.com
Like us on Facebook
Stop in for a chance to win a pair of tickets to the BROWN COUNTY FAIR CONCERTS!

CHALLENGE 2: MEETING DEMAND

In 2014, Meter did a study of the local foods systems in the Dakotafire region of North and South Dakota that was featured in last year's July/August edition of *Dakotafire* (see p. 30). His latest research segment covered the southwest corner and north central regions of North Dakota and was presented at the Summit On Local Economies.

According to Meter's study, if each resident in those areas purchased $5 of food directly from local farmers each week, farms would earn $10 million to $11 million in new income. The problem is, there isn't $10 million worth of locally produced food available to buy.

Local producers have a more difficult time increasing production than it might seem. For starters, seed isn't the only input. There's also every other aspect of a business taking place for each of these producers, and more than likely, they are fulfilling every role: marketing, finance, safe practices, research and development, and labor ... lots and lots of labor.

And meat is a whole different animal (pardon the expression). The push and pull goes all the way down the line from the supplier to the processor. For example, because of the limited number of meat processors in the state, Carlson must give a date and number of pigs to be processed six months ahead of time, and a lot can change in six months.

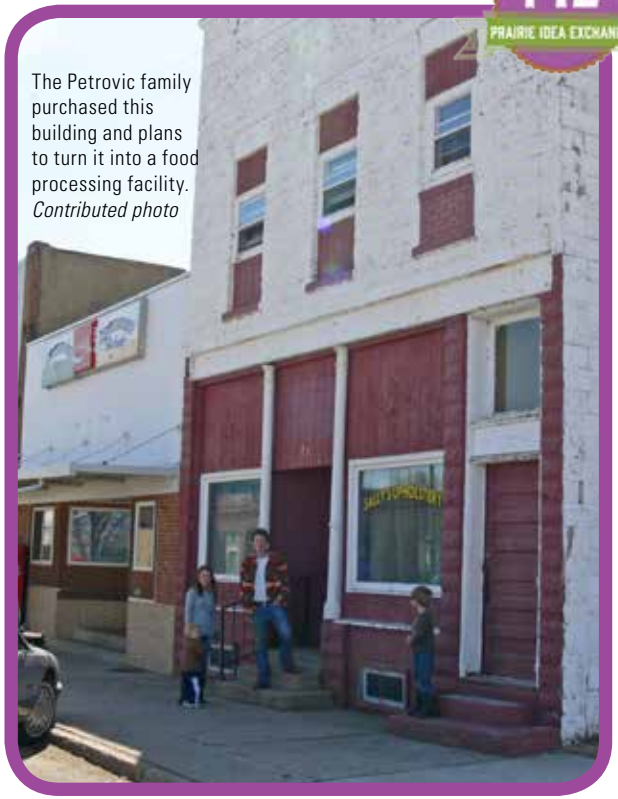
Some producers have started working collectively with other growers to ease the burden of supply. This arrangement often starts as a "production node," where a group of producers begins collaborating. From there, it can evolve in myriad directions.

Near Anamoose, N.D., Mirek and Julia Petrovic are launching their production node, which they hope can transition into a full-scale food hub in the future. The Petrovics operate Slavic Heritage Farm, which is a very active node in and of itself, bringing in regular "wwoofers" who offer work in exchange for room and board (see wwoof.net for more information on this cultural exchange experience). They sell fruits and vegetables at farmers markets and direct from their farm. They recently purchased an old post office in Anamoose, and they have big dreams for how it could transform their current operation.

They plan to convert the basement into processing and storage facilities, rent apartments from the upper-level rooms to help with cash flow for their food hub business, and eventually include a small store and bakery for those living in and visiting Anamoose. They also hope to renovate a large room upstairs into a commercial kitchen where they and other producers can process extra product to sell.

Continued on page 31

PIE
PRAIRIE IDEA EXCHANGE



The Petrovic family purchased this building and plans to turn it into a food processing facility. *Contributed photo*

OUR VISION is to be seen by our customers as the most *honest* and *dependable* providers of seed, consulting, and services to their farms and businesses.

- CORN
- SOYBEANS
- ALFALFA
- SORGHUM
- SUNFLOWERS
- SOYBEAN TREATMENT

Roscoe SD Warehouse
13464 335 Ave
605-287-4170

Webster SD Warehouse
741 W US Hwy 12
605-345-7333

www.scherrseed.com

From Dakotafire's July/August 2014 issue:

The community-building potential of local food

The main story in *Dakotafire*'s July/August 2014 issue started with these words:

"The 2012 Census of Agriculture paints a rosy picture for the economics of agriculture in the Dakotafire region.

"Actually, the picture is beyond rosy. You could call it golden."

The report presented the results of an economic analysis of the Dakotafire region, which caught the numbers at a phenomenal peak: "Sales of farm products increased by a staggering 93 percent from 2007 to 2012, to $3.6 billion in crops and livestock sold in 2012. … For many farmers, (2012) was the year they'd dreamed of: Everything went right."

That picture has changed since then, as crop prices have dropped significantly. But even at the peak, wealth in the ag sector did not translate directly into increased wealth for everyone in the region, for improvements in communities, or more healthful food.

"You have this situation where farmers are making money in a sense, but they are also shipping a lot of money away from the region in the course of doing well," said food systems analyst and report author Ken Meter.

The report used data to show that by consumers buying more food locally, and by farmers buying more inputs locally, the region as a whole could be considerably better off.

Farmers buying more inputs locally is the best place to start, Meter said.

"What could you do to grow as a region to grow new fertility—bringing animals back to the land, doing more crop rotation, planting in ways that could be sustained with inputs you can actually generate from the region?"

See the issue at **dakotafire.net/issue/dakotafire-july-aug-2014/**

Counties in the Dakotafire region:

Stutsman, N.D.	Edmunds, S.D.
Lamoure, N.D.	Marshall, S.D.
Dickey, N.D.	Day, S.D.
Logan, N.D.	Spink, S.D.
Brown, S.D.	Clark, S.D.
McPherson, S.D.	Faulk, S.D.

See the full report

The "Dakotafire Region Local Farm and Food Economy" report put together by the Crossroads Research Center is available online:
www.dakotafire.net/local-food-report

= $756 million in potential wealth sent out of the region each year

Continued from page 29

"We want to help producers reach their full potential," Mirek said. Currently, they have 11 growers interested in supplying the hub, and others who are not growers but interested in using the commercial certified kitchen.

The Petrovics have a long road ahead, but they are off to a great start. Food hubs are not new, but they can be difficult to replicate sustainably. Most hubs are funded largely by grants and work best in a large urban setting with dense producer and corporate consumer populations—hospitals, schools, elder care facilities, etc. Still, even in low population-density states like North and South Dakota, the problem isn't finding enough consumers, it's having enough producers.

During his days at Common Enterprise Development Corporation, Demars worked on a feasibility study funded by the USDA and FARRMS to determine what it would take to start a food hub in North Dakota.

The result of his study was that demand is there. To remain sustainable, however, the hub would need to reach $1 million in annual revenue, which translates to 133 acres of land dedicated to produce in a concentrated region (accessible for easy pickup and drop-off by the food hub) in order to meet the demands of consumers in that same area. To put it plainly, Demars says, "To push forward with food hubs would set North Dakota back."

Demars and a team of partners and volunteers instead launched something that the urban population of Bismarck and Mandan are already familiar with: a grocery store. The BisMan Community Food Co-op's goal is to source 20 percent of all their goods locally by their fifth year of business. That means all meat, dairy, bakery, produce and most value-added goods as well will be supplied locally through a variety of producers in the area. Their model lowers the risk for producers trying to scale up, because of the increased predictability in sales through a grocery store model.

Demars said the first step toward local food hubs is local collaboration in any form. "We need local food producers to start looking around their communities to figure out, 'Which other producers here would complement my operation? Who else would be willing to build something bigger that we could offer to our community?'" Demars said. "When those production nodes start multiplying across the state, we'll be in a position to begin filtering them into the large base of consumers who have expressed interest in something like a food hub."

John and Annie Carlson are making those connections as they continue to scale up to meet demand. "We have to keep reaching that next level of customers," she said.

Morning Joy Farms has scaled up significantly every year it has been in business because of overwhelming demand. Last year the Carlsons joined with three other farmers to create a buying club. Customers log onto their website, click the items they want and give an amount, and their order is delivered to one of the prearranged monthly drop-off points. They're selling more than ever. "Even as my freezer is dwindling, the club is still growing," says Annie.

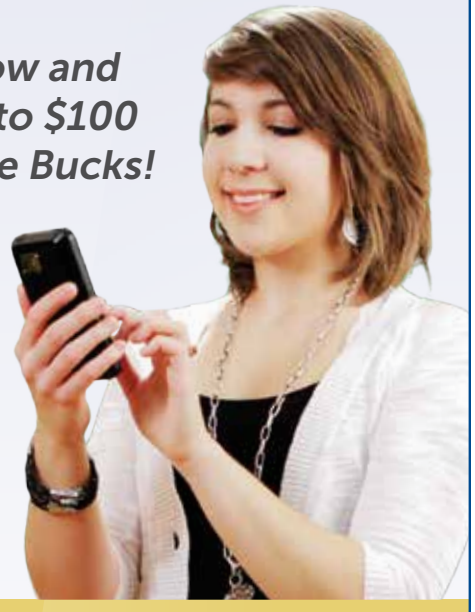
This kind of success is a symbol of what is possible through collaboration and a new perspective that isn't so new. "We're probably the first society in the history of the world to consider agriculture separate from community," says Meter. "And we are victims of the communities we build for ourselves."

A life disjoined from a sense of the land and what it offers will undermine the progress of any community in the end. But society seems to be making slow movements back to that new-old way of thinking.

"It's a movement I see happening in every state," says Meter. "People want better food choices, fresher food. They want to know a farmer." ✶

How Can My Banking Be Easier?

Learn how and earn up to $100 in Bundle Bucks!



DACOTAH BANK
Here for you.℠

BANKING • INSURANCE • MORTGAGE • TRUST

Call. Click. Come in.

800-881-5611

dacotahbank.com MEMBER FDIC Insurance and Trust not FDIC Insured.

Why so much regulation? Because we don't trust each other.

by HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE

When regulation comes up in conversation, the tone is often negative—a critique of government creating complication and expense where not too many years ago society apparently thought nothing of the sort was needed.

I don't think that many people reflect on just why it is that the amount of regulation in our nation has increased dramatically in the past generation or two. I think many opposed to regulation think that the reason we have more regulation is because the federal government has gotten too powerful and is overreaching into territory where it should not have any say.

There may be another way of thinking about the issue. I listened to a podcast recently featuring Wendell Berry (I've mentioned before he's my favorite author), who discussed the connection between trust and regulation. Based in his ideas, the actions that the federal government is taking to increase regulation are more symptoms than causes of a problem.

Two things are happening in our society now that have forced a change in how we do business, and that has led to more regulation:

The scale of our businesses has changed.

It used to be that we did business with people we knew: If, for example, a farmer had a hog to sell, he took it to the local slaughterhouse, which he trusted to do the work well. And, as Berry explained, if he had any question about it, he could stay and watch the work being done. That slaughterhouse often sold meat directly from that shop, so someone going to that shop to buy the meat might happen to be there at the same time as the farmer was delivering to the back. And, even without this chance meeting, the people involved in the transactions probably knew one another because they also lived in the same community and likely interacted in other ways.

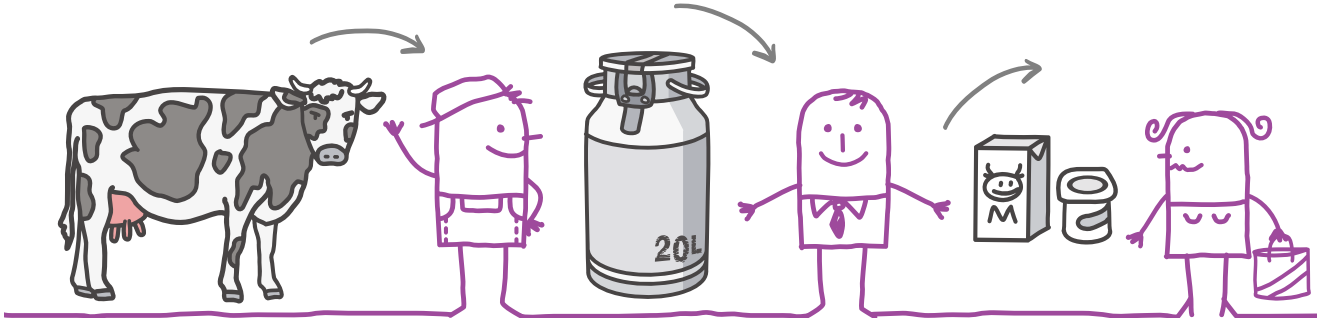
In that type of arrangement, little regulation was needed, because the people involved trusted one another. "Trust substitutes for a lot of regulation," Berry said in the interview.

The trust relationship worked as well as, or better, than regulation because the people involved recognized that they were mutually dependent on one another—and not just in a cold business deal, but as partners in creating a good community.

That power balance in the relationship doesn't exist in most of our dealings today. Large corporations selling goods need someone to buy them, yes, but it doesn't have to be us. They can likely sell it elsewhere. So if this one relationship with a customer can't be saved—well, there are others. I am not saying that most or even many corporations work so callously—only that the way the relationship is structured means they have the balance of power, and they can act callously if they choose.

You can look at this as the vertical dimension of the relationship: Where once the farmer, merchant (I'm including here processors also) and consumer all stood on the same level ground, now the role of the merchant has moved to the top floor of a corporate office building. Sometimes, the role of the farmer has moved up to an office building somewhere as well, as an increasing number of farms are corporately managed. The consumer is the only one still standing on the ground; it's hard to see what's going on in either corporate office from there, and they can't reach high enough to shake hands from there.

When that handshake can't happen, consumers, consumer advocates and



their legislators start to ask for a way to make the relationships fairer. Getting the merchant and farmer roles back down to the same level as the consumer isn't a strategy that is likely to have much success. There's too much money in the corporate offices. So, instead, the consumer faction asks for the farmers and merchants to play by fairer rules—also known as regulation.

Here's another dimension to this:

The location of our business interactions has changed.

The relationship between farmers, merchants and consumers hasn't just been stretched because the merchants and often the farmers went "up" in power level to corporate offices. It's also been stretched because the several players also went "away": that corporate office almost certainly isn't in the same community anymore. The common goal that the people in this interaction once had, of building a good place to live, is no longer a common goal, since the people who once served in the role of farmers, merchants and consumers now all live in different places. They are far less invested in the relationship than they once were.

The interviewer asked Wendell Berry at what scale regulation is required in business dealings.

"When people don't know each other," he answered. "The relationships of strangers have to be regulated, because people who don't trust each other call for the regulation. It becomes a public need."

This is Berry's point: Regulation happens because people call for regulation when they don't trust the other party. By this way of thinking, too much regulation is the fault of the lack of trust in our relationships, and not the overzealousness of our government, which is responding to that "public need."

And if that's the case, what would be the remedy?

Ideally, we could get our business relationships back to a scale where we can know and trust one another again.

The local food movement and other "buy local" efforts don't necessarily have the reduction of regulation as a goal, but they could help significantly. If these relationships between farmers/producers, merchants and consumers were strong enough and plentiful enough, a whole lot of red tape could be cleared away with a handshake.

A version of this column was published on Dakotafire.net in May 2013.

PIE
PRAIRIE IDEA EXCHANGE

YOUR TURN

Agree? Disagree? How can we make the situation better? Share your thoughts at **www.pie4.us**.

Sunshine Bible Academy

God's Truth for Today's Youth

Since 1951

Sunshine Bible Academy exists to assist parents with raising their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord by integrating God's truth into all areas of life.

Comprehensive course offerings include fine arts, industrial technology, agri-science, foreign language and college credit options.

Sunshine Bible Academy is a non-denominational, evangelical school with highly qualified, committed faculty and staff.

Boarding is available for students in grades 8-12.

www.sunshinebible.org • 605.853.3071 • /sunshinebibleacademy

400 Sunshine Drive • Miller, South Dakota

PIE
PRAIRIE IDEA EXCHANGE

10 THINGS YOU MAY HAVE WONDERED ABOUT AGRICULTURE

by HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE & WENDY ROYSTON

Why do we see more water (sloughs, etc.) in the Dakotas than in Minnesota or Iowa?

From our March/April 2014 water issue: "We live in a part of the world described as the Prairie Pothole Region, named after a landscape of scattered depressions—some smaller, some larger—that fill with water during wet times and sometimes dry out completely in other seasons. The so-called 'prairie potholes' were formed after the glaciers of the Pleistocene Epoch moved through, unevenly depositing the rocks they carried and scouring the surface of the land."

The Prairie Pothole Region actually stretches into all three states. But Minnesota and Iowa drained much of that farmland fairly soon after the land was settled. Much Iowa and Minnesota farmland was swampy and would have been unfarmable without drainage. The Dakotas, with less rainfall and more variation in weather, didn't provide as much incentive to drain. At least, not until crop varieties stretched the Corn Belt north and west, and until excess water in the recent decade made it much more appealing. Iowa and Minnesota farmland was drained before Swampbusters provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill; farmers wishing to drain today have to show that what they are draining now isn't a certified wetland.

My grandparents used to have cows, pigs, sheep, dairy and chickens. Why do most farmers now have only one of those, or none?

The whole system was different a few generations ago—there were many buyers for whatever farmers sold, for example, whereas now there are just a few large buyers. Large buyers prefer to work with large producers.

This is what is meant by "vertically integrated"—livestock is done on a larger scale, and on a larger scale, fewer owners are involved all along the chain of production.

On this scale, farmers specialize in raising one type of animal.

Labor also plays a role here. The average age of farmers nationwide is increasing. Because raising livestock involves more physical labor than grain farming, as farmers age, they often phase out their livestock operations.

Why do cornfields somehow look more crowded than they used to?

That's the trick that has allowed corn variety developers increase yield. From our Summer 2012 issue: "Researchers have neared the natural limit on how many kernels can be grown per ear and how many ears can be grown per plant, but they have still been able to increase yield by creating varieties that are more tolerant of the stress of being very closely spaced in the field."

How much does it cost to plant an acre of corn?

This year, the answer is "more than you want to think about."

According to the North Dakota State University Extension office, producers who planted corn this spring are projected to harvest a deficit this fall. The cumulative cost of planting, fertilizing, insuring and protecting corn with herbicides, fungicides and insecticides, compounded with the costs of equipment and other incidentals is estimated at $501.13 per acre. Those same acres are expected to yield an average of 130 bushels per acre at a projected market value of $3.50 per bushel, for a return on investment of $455, or almost 10 percent less than the cost of planting.

How big is an acre?

An acre is 4,840 square feet—the equivalent of just under one-half of an average city block, and the length of two-thirds of a football field, squared.

How much does a cow cost?

According to North Dakota State University's Extension office, raising beef cattle will cost producers an average of $695 per cow in 2015. When that cow's calf is sold this fall, it's anticipated to sell for an average of **$1,157.38**.

Most of the cows you see in the field are part of a breeding herd—kept for many years, and having a calf each year. The cost to buy a breeding cow varies, based mostly on the cow's age. Even a very old cow now costs more than $2,000.

(Cost estimate includes projected prices for of pasture land, hay, feed, supplements, hired labor, veterinary and pharmaceutical supplies, marketing, facilities upkeep and utilities, gas, depreciation of equipment and other expenses. Profits assume 90 percent of calves born survive past weaning, and project an average male-to-female ratio and a sustainable number of heifers are retained.)

Why do chickens and pigs spend their whole life cycle in a building, but cows don't?

It basically comes down to the fact that it's easier to transport calories of corn (or other grain) than it is to transport calories of hay.

Chickens and pigs like to have some greenery in their diet, but they subsist just fine through their whole life cycle on grain.

Cows are different. While they can be fattened on grain, gestating cows, and those cows that have a calf, need to have grass. The calves don't do as well and in fact can die if the mothers are given a high-grain diet during this time.

Hay is bulkier than grain, making it more expensive to move. At this point, it is still cheaper to bring a cow to grass than to bring grass to a cow.

Hay is also expensive to make, and putting cows out on grass eliminates the cost of making hay.

This is actually an important fact to consider for those concerned about preservation of grassland—cow-calf operations are the reason there is still as much grassland left in the Dakotas as there is.

What are farmers doing with those big rollers?

This is in large part an equipment-saving measure. The rollers are typically used to even out the ground before planting soybeans. This is planning ahead for harvest—the bean head on a combine is set very low to the ground, so uneven ground could damage it.

Why is there so much stuff in the fields after harvest? (Or, why are farmers tilling less here?)

What you see on the ground is residue from the previous year's harvest. Leaving it on the ground typically means farmers are practicing no-till, which means farmers don't cultivate the ground before planting—they use a seed drill to basically insert the seed into the ground without disturbing it otherwise.

No-till has several advantages for the crops: The nutrients from the residue are returned to the soil, and the residue also helps to retain water in the soil. It also prevents erosion, and it prevents a crust from forming on top of the soil after a big rain. (If a crust forms, less water soaks in to get to the roots, where it is needed.)

Even farmers that are still doing some tillage are doing less aggressive tillage than they did in the past.

No-till is not used in organic agriculture, as herbicides are used for weed control in a no-till system.

Continued on page 36

Continued from page 35

Why are those big old barns not used anymore? And why do no new farm buildings look like that?

For that you can thank the round bale.

Barns used to have two levels because hay was stored above in a large hayloft, then pushed through openings in the floor to feed the animals that were housed below.

The hay that was stored there was either loose or in small square bales. Hay stored in either of those ways needed to have protection from rain; if it got too wet it would spoil.

Then came the round bale. Its big advantage is that it can be left outside in whatever weather, because it sheds water. Now farmers no longer needed to have the expense of a building to keep the rain off the hay.

New farm buildings are typically built for a specific purpose—for example, housing animals or machinery. ✳

THE PRAIRIE IDEA EXCHANGE IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY:

GROW South Dakota is a statewide non-profit organization that provides programs and loan products to advance housing, community, and economic development.

growsd.org

The Bush Foundation invests in great ideas and the people who power them. We encourage people and communities to think bigger and think differently about what is possible across Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and the 23 Native nations.

bushfoundation.org

Dakota Resources stimulates financial and human investment in communities that are invested in themselves.

dakotaresources.org

Please thank these sponsors for their support of distribution of *Dakotafire* in their communities:

Arlington Community Development Corporation

basec
BEADLE AND SPINK ENTERPRISE COMMUNITY

The Britton Journal & Langford Bugle

Clark County Courier
The voice of Clark County since 1880

dcp Corsica Globe, Armour Chronicle, Delmont Record

Dickey County Leader

Faulk County Record

Groton Daily Independent

Ipswich Tribune

K·U·L·M Economic Development Corporation

Roscoe-Hosmer Independent

Tri-County News

'Feeding the world,'
but feeding it what and for how long?

SEEDS *of* WISDOM

FARMERS AND RANCHERS ON FARMING AND RANCHING

by PETER CARRELS

During the last several years, I have engaged in a series of interviews and on-site farm visits with members of the South Dakota Grasslands Coalition. From those conversations I have become aware of a remarkable and surprisingly robust grass-roots movement taking shape and gaining momentum among agricultural producers.

This is a movement emphasizing soil health, conservation and naturalistic approaches to agriculture and food production, and it is a movement that is populated not by smaller operators focused on specialty crops or organics, but by large-scale farmers and ranchers.

I asked members of the South Dakota Grasslands Coalition to share their views on the expression, "Farmers feed the world."

Among the coalition's farmers and ranchers I spoke with, the expression is viewed as a successful and relatively accurate public relations jingle that doesn't address several critical aspects of farming, stewardship, and land management.

Some observers believe the "feeding the world" idea provides conventional, industrial agriculture with a façade of gentility, purpose and meaning. That message has received some scrutiny in recent years. Surveys and focus groups indicate increasing skepticism about the quality of food being produced by conventional farming and food producers. Today's consumers are intentionally and increasingly avoiding heavily processed foods and foods with connections to pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, GMOs, and chemicals, and they're gravitating to foods they view as safer and healthier. One former ConAgra executive said the movement is the greatest transformative consumer shift he witnessed in his 37-year career.

Members of the South Dakota Grasslands Coalition understand the public shift now underway because they share the same sentiments and desires as those consumers who prefer to eat healthy food. There is, coalition members know, a relationship between healthy land, healthy land management practices, and healthy food.

Jim Kopriva

Jim Kopriva

Jim Kopriva is a coalition board member, and he and his son farm and raise livestock in the coteau des prairie country of Clark County, S.D. Their award-winning 3,000-acre enterprise emphasizing perennial grasses is an anomaly in their rural neighborhood. What was not so long ago a region dominated by prairie and cattle has been converted to a landscape mantled by annual grains, especially corn and soybeans.

Kopriva's pet peeve is tillage, particularly fall tillage, and protecting soil health has become his passion. "Yes, we're probably feeding the world," he said, "but that simple notion and the emphasis on yields and production distorts the big picture. For example, while we are feeding the world, what are we learning about saving our soils? Much of the rest of the world has already desecrated their soil resources. In this country our soils have survived not because of stewardship but because they haven't been farmed all that long. If we don't change the way we treat our soils and the ways we farm, we won't be able to feed ourselves, much less others around the world."

"I believe we can not only feed

people but also protect and build our soil resources," Kopriva said. "To do that we need to eliminate tillage and practice serious crop rotations that aren't simply going back and forth with corn and soybeans. We must also add perennials to the land, and plant cover crops. If we expect to keep feeding the world we need to keep roots in the ground. That will keep our soils healthy and productive."

Rick Smith

Rick Smith

Rick Smith, who farms near Hayti, S.D., he enjoys describing his personal evolution as a farmer. While others in his area converted grasslands to grains, Smith has done the reverse.

"I'm still learning," he said, "but once I admitted that I was farming the wrong way and started paying closer attention to what I was doing to soils and water resources, I completely changed my approach to agriculture."

"Do American farmers feed the world?" Smith asked. "It's not some new revelation, really, but producing food is not just about farmers anymore. Consider all the people who build farm equipment and the scientists who create the chemistry and technologies used in farming. These are all a part of today's agriculture. What about the logistics, the modern transportation system needed to move food around the world? That's also a factor in feeding the world."

Like Jim Kopriva, Rick Smith references the need to look at a broader, bigger picture when discussing whether or not farmers do and can continue to feed the world. "My farm, like other farms, is a business, and I believe that three concepts must be met in order for my business to be sustainable," he said. "First, my business must be profitable. Second, it must function without harming resources, and third, it must contribute to the community and family. Today's agriculture might be feeding the world but is it sustainable? I don't think so, but it can be."

Doug Sieck

On Doug Sieck's 3,000-acre operation near Selby, S.D., the switch in land management came in 2007. "I learned that Mother Nature wants diversity," Sieck said, "and that just about the only places where we find large-scale monoculture is where human beings have interfered."

Doug Sieck

Sieck keeps a couple thousand acres in diverse grasslands, and plants annual grains on the remainder of his farm. He blends full-season cover crops throughout the annuals, with a goal to accelerate microbial activity. "I keep roots in the soil," he said, "and that keeps biological activity in the soil, and that helps build organic matter in the soil." Sieck's strategy maintains fertility without a steady reliance on synthetic fertilizers, and it also prevents soil erosion.

"This enthusiastic idea about feeding the world and producing more and more on the land needs to consider the long-term harm to soil and resources," Sieck said. "Are we growing the food to feed the world in a regenerative and conservative manner?"

Sieck would like to see more livestock exports. "Let's feed the world using more meat, with concentrated protein products and without such a focus on grains. Growing livestock can be regenerative for the land."

The present-day emphasis by many farmers on the here and now rather than the long term has and will continue to damage soils and resources, Sieck said. "Farmers put synthetic fertilizers on their land because they want results right away. Building soils takes time and patience through things like careful crop rotations and cover crops, but it's the better approach.

"We aim for feeding the world, but what about the world of the future? You can say that you have built the fastest car in the world, but the more important consideration is how far it can go." ✷

The world needs more than feeding, sustainable ag expert says

The expression "U.S. farmers feeding the world" is a distraction from more important agricultural issues, and a mischaracterization of farming's capabilities and objectives, according to Fred Kirschenmann, Jamestown, N.D.-area farmer and an internationally recognized expert in sustainable agriculture.

"The carrying capacity of the planet isn't about just feeding all the people who live on the planet," he said. "There are ecological considerations that must be part of the discussion, and a whole range of social and political problems and the concept of waste that are also part of this discussion. Climate change is another consideration."

The institutions and corporations of the current and dominant system, said Kirschenmann, want to continue specialization and increased production and yields on a few commodity crops using monoculture approaches to land use. "They use the expression because they think it gives them a moral high ground from which to pursue the type of agriculture they profit from," Kirschenmann said.

Kirschenmann suggests conventional agriculture and food institutions embrace business and land-use practices that highlight community and shared values and sustainability.

How successful have American farmers been? Kirschenmann points out that America's most agricultural state, Iowa, where much of the land is devoted to a single commodity crop, actually imports 90 percent of its food.

—Pete Carrels

California drought could give lift to Dakota agriculture

by REBECCA FROEHLICH

Some drought-weary Californians are seeking greener pastures—and at least a few are looking toward the Dakotas.

One of them is beekeeper David Bradshaw, who was featured in a short documentary called *Saving the Bees* by Brian Dawson.

"It would have to rain in biblical proportions to help California," Bradshaw says in the film.

The California drought has severely impacted his way of life. Bradshaw's bees cannot find the forage they need in the wild because the drought is slowly drying up their natural food sources. In 2014, Bradshaw spent more than $110,000 to feed his bees an artificial supplement to keep them alive.

Down to producing only eight barrels of honey last year, after producing hundreds in previous years, Dawson plans to take a new approach: sending his bees to the Midwest. North and South Dakota rank in his top choices for a potential new home.

Dawson's story is not unique. As the drought continues, ag producers in California are seeing opportunities in other places, including the Dakotas.

North and South Dakota are ready to welcome more producers like Dawson. Dairy farmers, producers of cattle feed, and organic vegetable farmers are some of those groups looking for a silver lining in the Midwest.

DAIRY

California has long benefited from its strong dairy industry. The state has the highest concentration of dairies in the country, and milk and cream are the state's top-selling agricultural products, according to the USDA.

David Bradshaw speaks about the decline in his honeybee numbers during the short film "Saving the Bees" by Brian Dawson. Below, a bee gathers nectar. You can watch the video at vimeo.com/112731645. *Image used with permission.*

But as the rain fails to come, the grass and forage that dairy cows depend on withers.

Groups in North and South Dakota, as well as many other states, have attempted to capitalize on California's drought by advertising the benefits of their states for raising dairy cows. The World Ag Expo in Tulare, Calif., included dairy recruiters from many Midwestern states, as well as Idaho and New Mexico. Jon Davis of Lake Norden, S.D., employed a campaign of several billboards in California, including one with a slogan reading, "No Base, No Quota, Milk Your Cows in South Dakota."

Despite the enthusiasm of the recruiters, Tim Petry, the extension livestock marketing economist at North Dakota State University, sees major movement of dairy cows as implausible.

California had exactly the same number of dairy cows on Jan. 1, 2015, as it did a year before (1.7 million), Petry said. South Dakota and North Dakota's dairy cow populations remain significantly smaller, with 98,000 and 16,000 milk cows, respectively.

Moving a dairy can be costly, and adjusting to a new area after years of tradition can seem like a major risk for family-based dairies. Challenges to drawing the California crowd remain.

Petry asserts that the scenario most likely to lead to major movement, unrelated to the drought, is the expansion of urban areas in California leading to flight of business to areas more friendly to agriculture.

CATTLE FEED

Recently, California almond farmers have come under fire for contributing to increased water usage during the historic drought. Yet, according to the California Department for Water Resources, many of the crops that actually require the most water are those grown as fodder for cows.

California and South Dakota both rank in the top five producers of hay throughout the nation from 2004-14, according to the USDA-NASS Annual Crop Report. South Dakota had a 7 percent increase in hay acreage from 2013-14, while California's levels remained the same. Alfalfa production was at its lowest in California since 1974. Hay stocks dropped 8 percent in California, while they increased 10 percent in North Dakota and 11 percent in South Dakota.

It's likely that as hay and other feed crops become more difficult to grow in California, prices will increase

there, and lower feeding costs could become a benefit to raising cattle in the Dakotas. Farming outside of a drought area would be more sustainable, both economically and environmentally. California operations moving cattle production for the sake of feeding costs is a possibility.

The other possible benefit to North and South Dakota is that California farmers and ranchers will import hay from Midwestern states, rather than paying for expensive food in-state. However, hay is very difficult and costly to transport, Petry says, possibly nullifying any savings.

Despite the uncertainty of success in exporting hay to California, the state continues to bring in feed from the Dakotas. Drought or not, corn feed is in demand in California for livestock besides cows.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

California produces half of the world's fruits and vegetables. As the drought has increased in severity, higher consumer prices for fruits and vegetables were predicted. In June 2014, the California Farm Bureau projected that the average American family would spend $500 more over the year due to the drought. The current projection from USDA's Consumer Price Index is that fresh fruit prices will rise as much as 3.5 percent, and fresh vegetable prices will rise as much as 3 percent.

There's not much that Midwestern farmers can do about the price of avocados, but they could help in some areas: they can offer more competitive prices for local consumers on produce such as tomatoes, potatoes, sweet corn, leafy greens, and onions. At least, as long as they have supply to meet the demand. Growing adequate quantities of fruits and vegetables would be just the start: The California system of getting produce to the rest of the country has a lot of infrastructure in place that local farmers would have to build—agreements with buyers, cleaning equipment, a way to transport produce and so on.

All that would take time and money. And it's a risk to plan on such a big investment when it's essentially a bet that the rain will continue to stay away from California. (The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association recently expressed some hope for more precipitation in California this winter.)

Unless, of course, the investment was viewed as a way to diversify agriculture in the Dakotas. Then the California drought could be viewed as just a spark that helped people think differently about what's possible here—and we could all be thankful when the rain comes. ✷

IT'S TIME TO GET READY ...

Dakota LOCAL FOOD CHALLENGE

RETURNS SEPTEMBER 12-25, 2015!

Let's get local together.

More information will be in the September/October issue.

Can't wait? Learn more or sign up: www.dakotafire.net/golocal

BASEC ALLY SPEAKING:

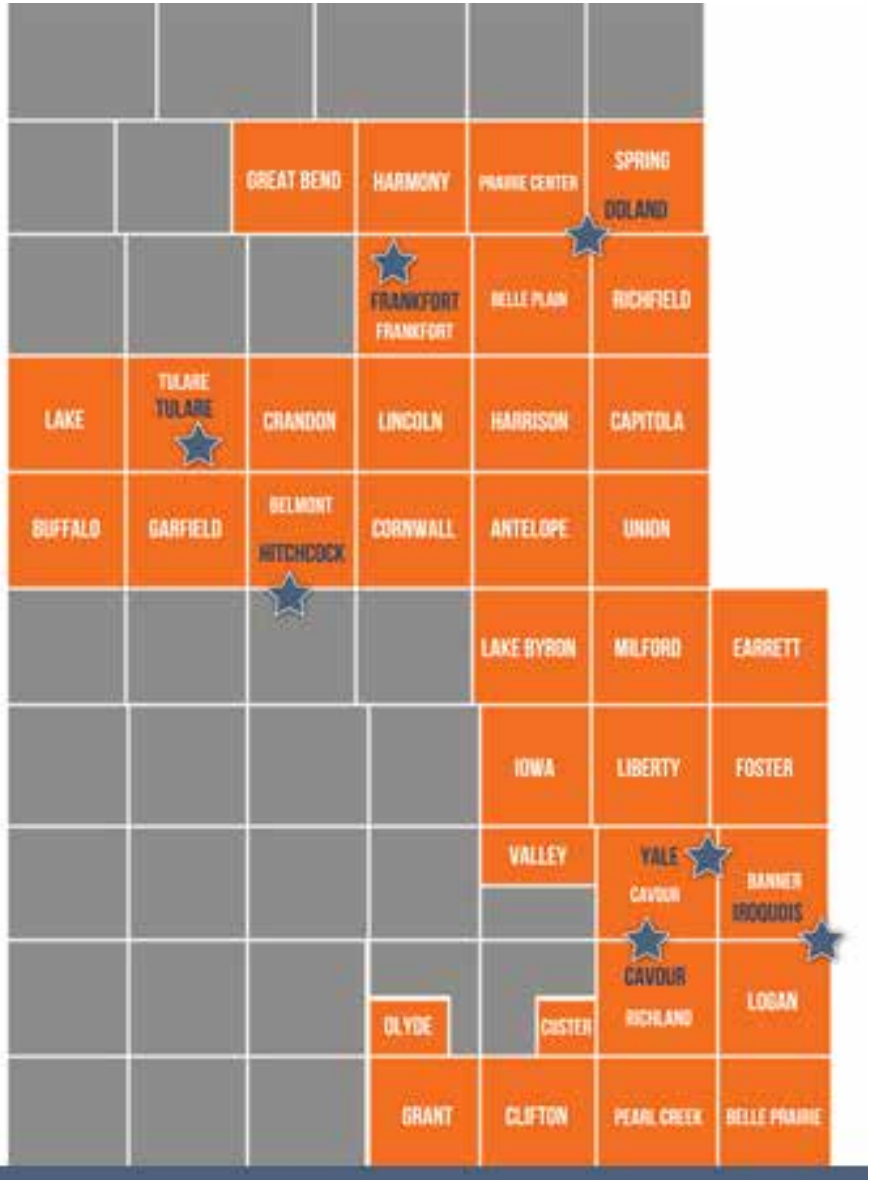
WE'RE HERE FOR YOU.

Since 1995, the Beadle and Spink Enterprise Community, Inc. (BASEC) has been helping individuals and business owners open the doors to their dreams through business and home loans, as well as community development assistance.

Headquarted in Doland, SD, BASEC serves the belivers of tomorrow in Beadle and Spink Counties.

Contact us if we can help you!

basec



WWW.BASEC.ORG | 605.635.6165 | BASEC@SANTEL.NET

Soil gets recognition this year

Some world leaders have set aside 2015 to make sure we aren't treating our soil like, well, dirt.

"Soil is not dirt," said Fred Kirschenmann in a TedxManhattan talk entitled "Soil: from Dirt to Lifeline." "Soil is in fact a very vibrant living community. In fact, soil scientists tell us now there are more living things beneath the surface of the soil than above the surface of the soil."

Understanding of humans' dependence on that underground system of life is what the UN General Assembly wants to highlight by declaring 2015 the International Year of Soils (**http://www.fao.org/soils-2015/en/**).

In addition to spreading the word about the importance of soil to human life in terms of food production, as well as the role that soil plays other areas such as in mitigating climate change and reducing poverty, the UN General Assembly hopes to influence policy-making toward the protection of soil, and to improve soil monitoring globally.

Many U.S. organizations have joined in honoring the Year of Soils—from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, which has put out an informative calendar, to smaller-scale events such as the Family Science Day in Dickenson, N.D., in November, when elementary students will enjoy a day of soil science activities and see an IMAX film on the topic.

Teachers who might wish to incorporate soil into their lessons can find many activities and resources at **http://www.soils4teachers.org/lessons-and-activities**.

The link also provides a way to look up information about "state soils," or soils with particular interest to each state. In North Dakota, the state soil is Williams; in South Dakota, the state soil is called Houdek.

Making the Year of Soils a local celebration shouldn't be too terribly difficult. After all, the main resource and "textbook" is located right under our feet. ✳

NORTHERN FORT
Playhouse
A summer repertory stock company performing in the south barracks of Historical Fort Sisseton State Park

Join us to celebrate our 10th season!
A Special Night of Song:
Playhouse CABARET
THURSDAY, JULY 16, 7 P.M. • *All seats are reserved* • $20 • *Includes beverages and hors d'oeuvres*

2015 Summer Season

Forever Plaid
JULY 10, 18, 25 (at 7:30 p.m.) and **JULY 12** at 2 p.m.

Around the World in 80 Days
JULY 11, 17, 24 (at 7:30 p.m.) **JULY 15** at 2:30 p.m. & **JULY 19** at 2 p.m.

TICKETS: Adults $13 • Children $7
Dinner Theater $30 • Lunch Matinees $26
Discounts available for groups and season tickets. Rides from Aberdeen, Groton and Webster available! $8 per person.

Entertaining & Delicious: Wine & Cheese on Friday • Dinner on Saturday • Lunch on Sunday

Fort Sisseton State Park is located ten miles southwest of Lake City.
605-467-3247 • www.northernfortplayhouse.com
Look for us on Facebook!

SANFORD
Aberdeen

BACK IN ACTION

How Sanford helped a young athlete recover and get back to the activities she loves

Chelsea Weig remembers it well. She was playing in a high school basketball game on a Friday night when the unexpected happened.

"I felt something pop in my shoulder," the 16-year-old Ipswich High School student says. "Then I felt the pain, and I knew something wasn't quite right."

Her mother, Lacey, decided a trip to the emergency room at Sanford Aberdeen Medical Center was in order that same evening. After an evaluation, Chelsea was referred to orthopedic specialist, Daniel Lister, MD.

A few days and one MRI later, Chelsea learned she had torn a ligament in her left shoulder, causing her shoulder to dislocate. It was not the news she was expecting.

"I will admit I was a little hesitant to go to the emergency room at first," Chelsea remembers. "I thought I just had a bad bone bruise, but it was much worse. So I'm glad my mom insisted that we go that night."

Just like Chelsea's injury, the events that followed happened very quickly.

"I was so impressed with how fast they made everything happen," Lacey says. "She was hurt on Friday, saw Dr. Lister on Tuesday, had her MRI on Thursday and then scheduled her surgery."

After consulting with Dr. Lister and weighing the pros and cons of the treatment options, surgery seemed the best option for Chelsea.

"I want every patient I see to know all of their options before making any decisions," says Dr. Lister. "We offer surgical and non-surgical options that fit your specific needs and lifestyle."

Because of Chelsea's active lifestyle and love for sports, the Weig family felt more comfortable having her shoulder surgically repaired.

"I hurt my shoulder near the end of the basketball season, and I wanted to give myself a chance to come back next season without wondering if it had healed all the way, or if I'd hurt myself again," Cheslea says. "And I wanted to be able to lifeguard in the summer as well."

Dr. Lister performed Chelsea's surgery at the beginning of March, and the Weigs could not be happier with the results.

"With the minimally invasive procedures we provide here in Aberdeen, it's amazing how quickly patients can return to normal activities," says Dr. Lister. "We do general orthopedics, but we also offer arthroscopic knee and shoulder procedures as well as joint replacement for shoulders, hips and knees."

Now that summer is here, Chelsea's only real evidence of her injury are the tiny scars that remain on her shoulder. She continues physical therapy at Sanford Ipswich and is ready to lifeguard and hopefully play volleyball and basketball next season.

"I am so grateful for the care Chelsea received from Dr. Lister and rest of the team at Sanford," Lacey says. "It's never easy to put a child through surgery – at any age – and he made us feel comfortable and confident we made the right decision. And what's even better is that we didn't have to travel far to find this kind of care."

Dr. Lister and Lacey both encourage anyone experiencing pain to have it checked. Far too often people ignore problems, which can lead to bigger issues.

"We want to see you sooner rather than later," Dr. Lister says. "Often times we can find simple solutions that can relieve your pain."

Chelsea, like her mother, was also grateful for the personalized care she received at Sanford Aberdeen.

"Dr. Lister really understood what my goals and needs were and genuinely wanted to help me return to my active life," Chelsea says. "He made me feel comfortable from the start, and I knew everything would be OK."

Call (605) 725-1700 for an appointment or more information.

018002-00461 6/15

Reimagining Main Street

by WENDY ROYSTON

Main Street, Arlington, S.D., needs a coffee shop.

Almost all 22 Arlington residents in attendance at the Dakotafire Café held there to discuss visions of a **"wildly successful Main Street"** May 27 thought a coffee shop would be successful on the city's Main Street, even though coffee can be purchased at a variety of other local businesses and eateries.

"You're looking at a different clientele of coffee drinkers, rather than … the morning coffee drinkers who go to their favorite place here in town and sit for a few hours and talk," one participant said, suggesting the shop should carry "fancier" coffee drinks, such as lattes and cappuccinos, ground coffee beans, sandwiches and books, and offer WiFi access, sofas and soft music.

Another attendee agreed that a coffee shop would help fill what he described as "a few holes on our Main Street."

"When you sit down and really look at it, our Main Street is fairly active. It takes care of you from the time you're in diapers—at the daycare—takes care of your financial needs, gets you through school through the 12th grade, and it takes care of your spiritual needs, as the churches are on Main Street," he said. "We have a fairly active Main Street. We've just got a few holes that we haven't figured out how to fill."

Other needs identified by residents of Arlington during the gathering included a larger community room, a computer repair business and a handyman.

Current trends in Arlington

include an apparent "evacuation" of businesses from Main Street, including the grocery and hardware stores and the city offices.

"They're not gone; they're just not on Main Street," another resident said.

Participants also indicated business hours at many local shops are not convenient for local patrons.

Building a destination together

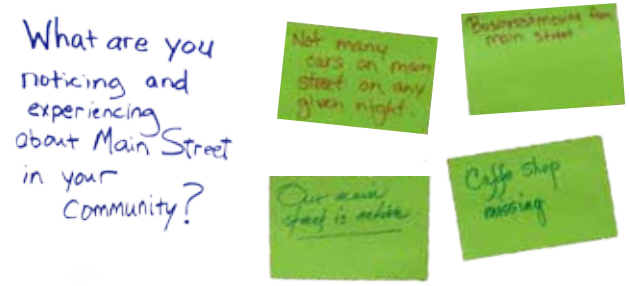
Also during the gathering, three local shop owners—Gaylene Christensen, Betsy Lingbeck and Randy Bullis, who were featured in the May/June edition of *Dakotafire* magazine, which focused on "Reimagining Main Street"—spoke about the evolution of their businesses in Arlington, and how they work together cooperatively to make Arlington a destination for antiques and other décor.

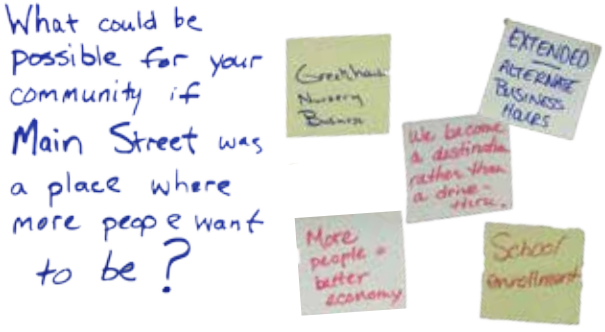
Each refers his or her customers to the others, and they have little "bits" of the other businesses

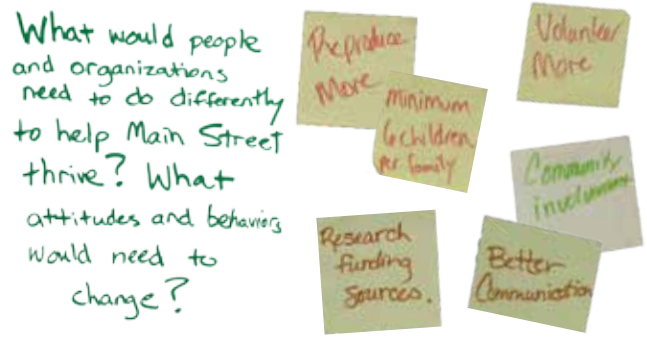
Continued on page 46

Participants share some smiles and good conversation at the Dakotafire Café in Arlington on May 27. Photos by Jason Uphoff

Here is a sampling of the ideas generated at the Main Street Dakotafire Café in Arlington:







Continued from page 45

in their own shops. For example, Chistensen has an oil diffuser in her business, The Prairie Porch, that attracts a lot of attention.

"I always tell them, 'You have to go down to Flowers by Betsy!'" she said. "They've usually already been to (Bullis's shop, Bits of Yesterday)."

A sign by the door at The Prairie Porch asks customers, "Have you been to … ?" and lists a handful of local businesses.

"It's a great working relationship, because we can have people come into town, and they stay an hour or two and go through all of the shops," Bullis said.

"It's unbelievable how many people come to Arlington for antiques," Christensen added.

Advice from down the road

Liz Hannum, who works with entrepreneurially minded students at Northern State University in and co-owns a handful of Aberdeen, S.D., businesses, also was featured in the May/June edition of *Dakotafire* magazine and spoke to the Arlington crowd about her work with entrepreneurs in other nations, as well as how a new organization helping potential business owners reimagine what's possible for entrepreneurs through an organization called StartHUB.

The group meets weekly to discuss business ideas, and has created an online voting system for people to "try out" entrepreneurial ideas by polling an audience to take the guesswork out of starting a new business.

"If you get 800 votes of support, that's 800 people saying they will be your customer next week. Essentially, we're providing proof of concept. … Sometimes, it's just about getting feedback and supporting local businesses," she said, and warned against seeing that process as a threat. "In small towns, it's really easy to think of your neighbor as competition, and really, they're not. What we're doing on Main Street in Aberdeen is—instead of competing over the same 3,000 who walk up and down the street every day—trying to grow that to 6,000 people. We're putting a restaurant next to a restaurant next to a restaurant, and becoming a destination. … We have a lot of empty spaces and dead-looking areas on Main Street."

StartHUB is working on offering assistance with the first month's rent for new downtown businesses.

"We're trying to create an opportunity for people to try out new businesses," she said. "We hope that they succeed, and we'll try to get them there … (by) talking through any barriers." ✷

Liz Hannum speaks about her experiences in boosting entrepreneurial activity in Aberdeen. *Photo by Jason Uphoff*

PIE

PRAIRIE IDEA EXCHANGE

Spicy, fruitful conversation, served regionally.

PIE4.US

FOCUS ON

MAIN STREET

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

What was in the magazine again?

- Placemaking can help Main Streets become attractive for more than just business transactions.
- Towns need both highway business development, as well as a strong Main Street. They serve different purposes.
- Empty places on Main Street are an opportunity to do something different.
- Businesses can work together to make their community a destination.
- Social media can help bring people to out-of-the-way locations.
- Customer service is vital in rural areas.
- Communities that support their entrepreneurs will have businesses that support communities.

Miss the issue? Want to share it?
Find all the stories at dakotafire.net.

The Prairie Idea Exchange project has four parts: 1) a gathering of economic development professionals; 2) reporting in *Dakotafire* magazine; 3) community input—online, on postcards, on our forum page (www.pie4.us), and in person at a Dakotafire Café event, 4) and with a final report in the magazine that reflects the feedback. Here's what we learned on the topic of Main Street.

FROM WWW.PIE4.US AND READER RESPONSE POSTCARDS:

What is your favorite Main Street? What makes it awesome?

"Willow Lake, S.D. New sidewalks, new building fronts, gazebo and benches." *—alumnus from Nebraska*

"Gettysburg, from 1940-1985, was an awesome place—good economy, great business spirit and amazing school system." *—Bill Sheldon*

What are you seeing happening to Main Street in your community?

(In Willow Lake:) "Doing something with open lots and new storefronts. Beautiful Hometown Hotel. Was back for alumni reunion—What an improvement. Very clean!" *—alumnus from Nebraska*

If we imagine our downtowns to be wildly successful, what will people and organizations be doing differently? What attitudes and behaviors will change?

"I reside in Tucson, but wish for the town of Gettysburg, S.D., to return to its once vibrant condition." *—Bill Sheldon*

"Many times I'm frustrated that many longtime residents believe our downtowns (Main Streets) can go back to what they once were. I believe we need to think outside the box; parklets, funds to tear down old buildings, repurposing old buildings, incentives for new entrepreneurs, reduced rental rates, etc. But their desire to go back in time is not helpful. Can we come up with a whole new paradigm concerning 'Main Streets'...from what defined it for years, to a whole new way or definition of what they can be?" *—Joanie_Sac*

Want to add your own ideas?
The conversation continues at **www.pie4.us**.

Growing up in the hotel on the corner of Main

by KEN SCHMIERER

People have asked me if I have any special emotions about the Nodak Café/Hotel in Ellendale being demolished. Things end—tomorrow comes and yesterday fades. Hard to get overly emotional about the end of an inanimate object. History repeats itself ... buildings are renovated and restored, or they disappear. Sometimes the demolition people come and remove all vestiges of the history we remember.

The Hotel/Cafe that was on the corner always brought back a flood of memories. When I lived there it was Walt's Cafe and the Hotel Ellendale. I lived there for eight of my most formative years. It is not a leap of faith to say whatever it is I am, I started that journey there in the Hotel/Cafe on the corner of Main Street. You could say I have something in common with Paris Hilton, as we both grew up in hotels owned by our parents. I guess that makes me the Paris Hilton of North Dakota.

I had my own room on the second floor. My family had an apartment on the main floor next to the cafe and behind the hotel lobby. Room 25 wasn't exactly a penthouse, although it was only one floor from the top of one of the few skyscrapers in town. Ellendale wasn't New York and my friends were not the rich, famous and beautiful people. They weren't the debutantes and the politically well-connected. I will admit, Carol Redlin and Mary Susan Kee were politically connected, but there were no debutante balls in North Dakota. We had "The Queen of the Furrow" beauty contest, sponsored by some plow manufacturer trying to reward some farmer's daughter. I thought the girls in my social circle were every bit as beautiful as any debutante and more than wonderful … but when you have never been off the farm … well, you know how that goes.

Walt's Cafe and the Hotel Ellendale was selected by Travel Host as one of the 5,000 best facilities in the United States. Yes, it true, we had to purchase an ad in the book to earn that status. You have to take the honors, however they come.

I was allowed to order whatever I wanted whenever I wanted. My favorite dinner was four pieces of buttered toast and a double scoop of mashed potatoes with butter and no gravy. When I wanted to win friends and influence people, I would invite them over to the Hotel/Café, and we would order up heaping plates of french fries and as many cokes as we could drink. "If you want good friends you are going to have to buy them." And nothing spoke louder than those plates of fresh french fries and unlimited Cokes.

Hotel rooms in the big cities now go for $200 or more a night. I can tell you what we charged at the Hotel Ellendale in 1960: $2 a night! If you wanted a bath in your room, you would have to fork over $3, and you better get there early as we only had five of those rooms. For your $2 you got a sink in your room along with a community lavatory in the middle of each floor. No sink in that communal facility—just something they called a throne.

Marie Anderson was the chamber maid. I don't know what a real chamber maid is, but Marie would come into my room and make the bed at 9 a.m. whether I was up or not. One of the reasons I was installed in that particular room was that the laundry chute for the floor was in it. Marie came in with the used bedding and towels each morning and tossed them down the chute to the laundry room. A paying customer probably would not have been willing to suffer that indignity.

The basement of the hotel was my

The old hotel building in Ellendale, N.D., was torn down this spring.
Photo by Ken Schmierer

very own private Disneyland. Giant rooms, dark rooms, scary rooms, rooms that were never opened, even a food pantry! One room had giant fans at each end with no protective cage around them. Exposed blades. This was the drying room where they hung the sheets and turned on the fans. I guess that was before OSHA? It was great fun to turn up those fans and walk around the room as if we were in our very own hurricane. I sometimes threatened to throw my little sister into the fan if she didn't leave me alone. Maybe the most fun I had was to trick her into going into that room and then turn on the fans and scare the wits out of her.

Often I would gather a few friends to play hide and seek. I knew all the really good hiding places down in that dark, dank, dungy basement. The best hiding place was inside the laundry chute, where I could prop myself up above the opening. No one could find me. But the hiding place had one flaw—all the laundry in the hotel came down that chute.

My mother had babies faster than I could get rid of them in the drying room, so it seemed like we always had one old enough to torment me and another one in diapers. One day a disaster occurred that ended my use of the laundry chute and scarred me for life. I was perched up in the chute and the door opened and down came a plastic bag, *splat*, right on my head and burst open. It was full of my baby sister's diapers. Dirty diapers! Very dirty diapers! There was diaper stuff all over me.

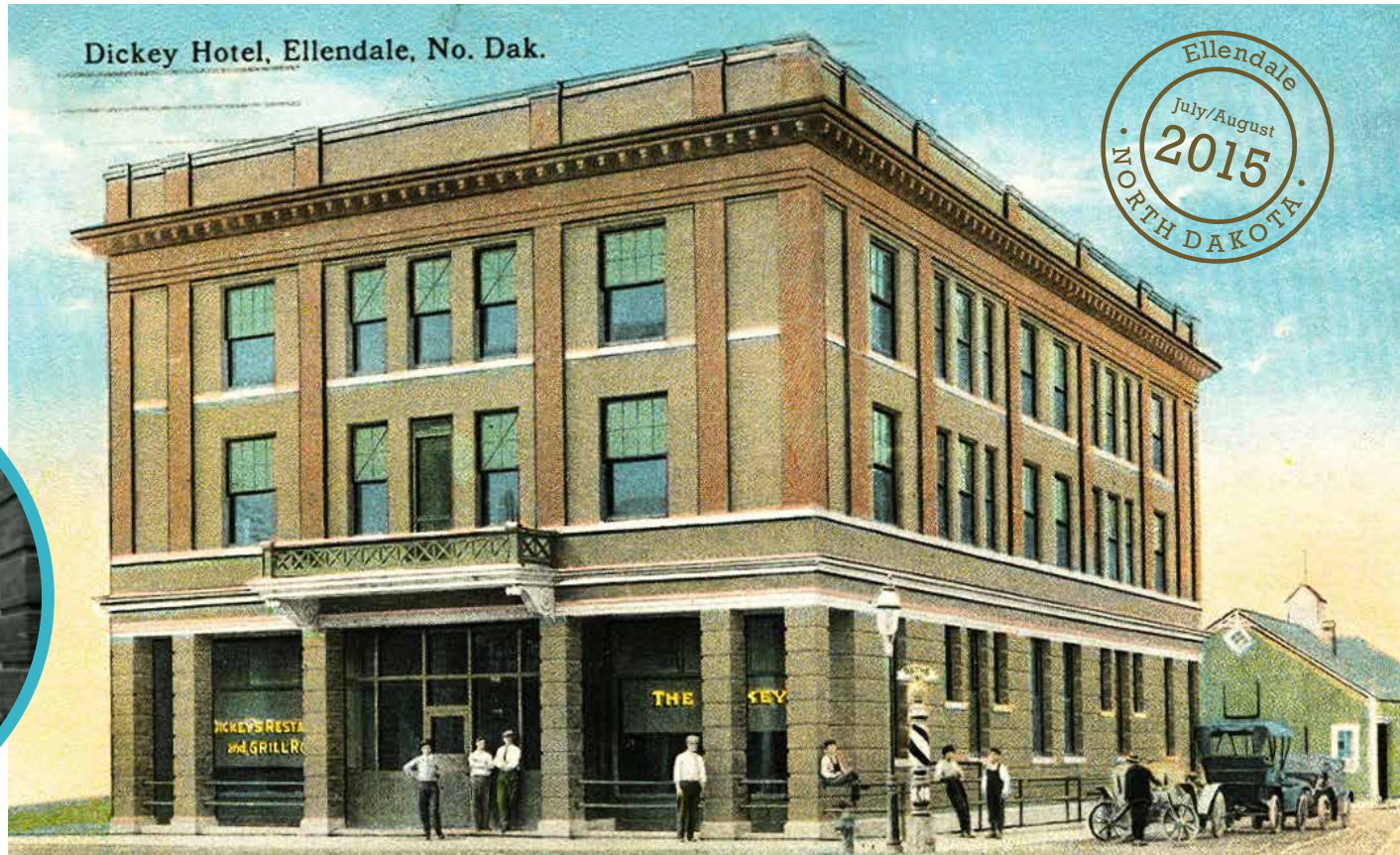
I have always wondered if that diaper stuff has anything to do with my baldness.

I guess I will miss the great old days growing up in the hotel. The building is now gone, but I still have all those memories and plenty more. They will be with me at least until I come tumbling down like the old hotel. ✷

Ken Schmierer *is a writer and photographer who returned to Ellendale to retire after spending his working years elsewhere. He sends out a regular email about interesting things going on in the town. Contact him at kschm1965@drtel.net.*

SEND US YOUR POSTCARD

In each issue of Dakotafire, we feature a "Postcard"—an evocative, (ideally) short story about an event, person or place, written as if you were telling the story to a friend. Some ideas: outdoors stories, the highlight of a big game, or a moment in history. Story must have a photo to accompany it. Digital images (a minimum of 1000 pixels wide) are preferred; you can also send a photo by mail. E-mail submissions to **heidi@dakotafire.net**, or mail to **Dakotafire Media, Postcard Submission, PO Box 603, Frederick, SD 57441.**



Dakotafire
SPARKING RURAL REVIVAL
ONE STORY AT A TIME

P.O. Box 603
Frederick, SD 57441

**********ECRWSS**********
LOCAL
POSTAL CUSTOMER

PRSRT STD
ECRWSS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
EDDM RETAIL

Avera Medical Group
Avera.org/live

Avera Medical Group has more than 200 clinics connected to 33 hospitals across a five-state region, so the most pressing thing on your mind will be finding the next tourist attraction.

Live better. Live balanced. Avera.