

# Women, Food & Agriculture Network

## Three Interns Work on Local Farms



*Interns and mentor farmers from left to right: Kate Hogg and daughter Isabel, Virginia Moser, Laura Krouse, Solveig Hansen, and Linda Nash.*

*by Denise O'Brien*

During the spring of 2001, Women, Food and Agriculture initiated its first intern program. With support from the Ben and Jerry's Foundation, we were able to provide stipends for three pairs of host producers and interns. Several women in need of summer help responded to our announcement of this program in the March 2001 newsletter. They were awarded the internships and given responsibility of finding an intern.

Virginia Moser, who operates Wildwood Gardens, found intern Ann Schoonover within her alliance of food producers. Ann is a neighbor who is just getting started with fruits and flowers for the alliance.

Susan Zacharakis-Jutz found intern Kate Hogg, a mother of three young children and a resident in a nearby city seriously considering creating a CSA or joining Susan as a producer. Susan's farm, Local Harvest, produces fruits, vegetables, lamb, pork, and goat cheese. Susan states, "Having the support of the intern program is so important in our efforts to build our CSA and expand the local foods community network. Having Kate, who comes from a neighboring community, has given us the opportunity to reach a whole other group of people in

our efforts to educate others about the importance of buying locally."

Linda Nash retained Solveig Hanson, a young woman recently graduated from Grinnell College and interested in farming. Linda's farm, Grown Locally, is a cooperative of several farms that produce food for CSA members and market to local nursing homes and institutions.

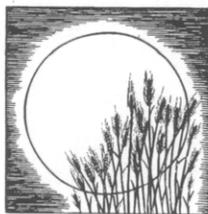
The three interns represented three generations—from a student recently graduated from college to a young mother with three children to a middle-aged woman with grandchildren. At the WFAN summer meeting, the women told stories of friendship and overcoming the isolation that is inherent to gardening and rural living. The intent of the internship program was to allow inexperienced, potential farmers to learn from women with experience. According to Virginia Moser, "The internship has been great. It's nice to have someone else in the garden with you. It seems to make the work go faster. Ann has learned so much and it has made me realize how much I actually know. Ann wants to start a garden of her own next year and I will help her with her planning. This will start this fall. This is all very humbling."

Mutual benefits were obvious to

*(Interns, continued on page 4)*

### Mission

The *Women, Food, and Agriculture Network* links and amplifies women's voices on issues of food systems, sustainable communities and environmental integrity.



## Calendar

**September 7, 2001: Human Health and the Environment: Iowa Problems, Iowa Solutions.** Hotel Fort Des Moines, 8:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Iowa Environmental Council's annual conference features three nationally renowned speakers: Pete Myers of the W. Alton Jones Foundation, Carolyn Raffensperger of the Science and Environmental Health Network, and Mark Fenton of Walking Magazine. Registration fee is \$20, which includes Iowa-grown lunch; registration deadline is September 3. For the conference agenda and to register, visit <http://www.earthweshare.org> or call 515/244-1194.

**September 7-9, 2001: Pioneering Self-Reliance, Conservation and Leadership Through Community Gardening.** 22nd Annual Conference of American Community Gardening Association. Salt Lake City, Utah. Tel: 801-531-7500. Website: <http://www.communitygarden.org/new/2001conf.html>.

**September 20-21, 2001: Indicators for Sustainable Production.** Scheman Building, Iowa State University, Ames. Government entities, community and non-profit organizations, and businesses can learn to use these tools for sustainable development. Registration fee \$25; registration deadline is September 14. Contact Marci Carter, Iowa Waste Reduction Center, at 319/273-8905 or email: [carterm@uni.edu](mailto:carterm@uni.edu).

**September 21-22, 2001: Beyond Cloning: Protecting Humanity from Species-Altering Experiments.** Health Law Department, Boston University School of Public Health, Boston, MA. The need for policies to prevent the alteration of the human species through genetic engineering. Registration: \$140. For information, contact Evelyne Shuster, [EvelyneShuster1@msn.com](mailto:EvelyneShuster1@msn.com).

**October 6, 2001. Iowa's Women in Public Policy Conference** on the 2002 campaign cycle. Conference will give women the tools to run effective campaigns for public office. Sessions: Deciding to Run, Organizing a Campaign, Running a Winning Campaign. Cost \$75 and \$50 for a campaign partner. Students \$25. For more information, please call Leann Brunnette at 515/440-2623.

**October 6-9, 2001: Taking Back the Food system: Strategies for Healthy Food, farms, and Communities.**

Community Food Security Coalition 5th Annual Meeting. Washington, DC. For information call 310-822-5410 or see website: [www.foodsecurity.org](http://www.foodsecurity.org).

**October 26, 2001: Baskets Overflowing.** Sinsinawa, Wisconsin 9:15 to 3:30, (across the river from Dubuque). Theme indicates the multiplication of power when everyone shares their bit of bread. Accent on family farm system of agriculture and new marketing movements, with witnesses and table fair. For information contact: Miriam Brown, OP Churches' Center for Land and People, PO Box 40, Sinsinawa WI 53824-0040; 608-748-4411 ext. 805; [cclp@mwci.net](mailto:cclp@mwci.net)

**November 3: Fall Harvest Celebration.** Iowa Network for Community Agriculture, Cedar Falls, IA. Place to be announced.

**November 9-11, 2001: 2001 Fall Harvest Women's Gathering with Wisconsin and Minnesota.** Good Earth Village, Spring Valley, MN. Sponsored by WFAN in Iowa, Women in Sustainable Agriculture Minnesota, and Wisconsin Women's Sustainable Farming Network.

**December 6-7, 2001: Second National Conference on Science, Policy & the Environment: Sustainable Communities: Science and Solutions.** Washington, DC. Join leading scientists and policy makers from around the world to discuss how science can contribute to solutions for achieving sustainable communities, locally and globally. Help produce a set of recommendations for the upcoming World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002 on how to apply science for sustainable development. For information, go to the NCSE Website: [www.NCSEonline.org](http://www.NCSEonline.org); e-mail: [conference@NCSEonline.org](mailto:conference@NCSEonline.org); tel: 202-530-5810.

**December 7-9, 2001: Third Northeast Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Conference.** Claryville, New York. Designed to help strengthen existing CSAs and help new ones get off to the right start. To receive a registration packet (late summer), send an email to [bholtzma@together.net](mailto:bholtzma@together.net). Be sure to include your name and mailing address.

### *Women, Food and Agriculture Network*

This newsletter is published by the *Women, Food and Agriculture Network*, a Tides Center Project with the help of Iowa State University Extension, Ames, Iowa. We welcome suggestions, stories, and news from your part of the world. Our emphasis is on women's lives, their relationships, communities and families. We welcome first person articles, analyses, book or video reviews, original poetry and art, and letters to editor. Deadlines for upcoming issues:

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## News Briefs

### Status of Iowa Women Report Released

The 2001 Edition of the Status of Iowa Women Report reveals many positive changes toward women's full participation in all aspects of society. Still, old and new challenges to women's equity are also revealed in the sixth edition of the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women (ICSW) report. As an advocacy agency, the ICSW studies changing needs and problems facing women of Iowa and recommends or develops programs and constructive action. The status report is an effort in that direction, identifying needs in education, health, economics, justice, and politics.

The 2001 report shows that more women than ever are getting post-secondary education, more women than men, in fact. Women have made significant inroads into some traditionally male-dominated work domains, e.g., lawyers and doctors, and more women than ever before are participating in the political process, e.g., serving in an elective office. Still, much remains to be done.

The report also reveals that girls, by and large, are not enrolling in upper-level high-school computer courses; gender-wage disparity is a reality; and women continue to be raped, beaten, and battered at staggering rates. Much work needs to be done at the community and state levels to address those and other challenges addressed in this publication.

To obtain the entire report or individual chapters of the report, visit website at [www.state.ia.us/dhr/sw](http://www.state.ia.us/dhr/sw). Chapters include: 1. Population Characteristics, 2. Women and Education, 3. Women and Economics, 4. Women and Health, 5. Women and Justice, and 6. Women and Politics. A limited number of printed copies are available from the office. For more information, contact the ICSW at 515/281-4461, 800/558-4427, or [dhr.icsw@dhr.state.ia.us](mailto:dhr.icsw@dhr.state.ia.us).

### Cesspools of Shame

The Natural Resources Defense Council has released its report on factory farm pollution, "Cesspools of Shame." The report documents the threats to

human health and the environment and describes alternatives for sustainable agricultural practices that prevent pollution. "Cesspools of Shame" is available at: <http://www.nrdc.org/water/pollution/cesspools/cessinx.asp>.

## Resources

(from the Iowa Environmental Council's News Bulletin. See <http://www.earthweshare.org>.)

### Handbook on Watershed Cleanup

The Clean Water Network has released a new Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) handbook for activists: *The Ripple Effect: How to make waves in the turbulent world of watershed cleanup plans*. The handbook is designed to help citizens get involved in developing and implementing TMDLs. The handbook is available at <http://www.cwn.org> in the impaired waters section. Hard copies of the handbook cost \$10; contact Merritt Frey at [mkfrey@micron.net](mailto:mkfrey@micron.net) or 208/345-7776 to obtain a copy.

### How Does Food Travel Impact the Environment?

A new report from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture compares the miles that food travels to determine possible savings and environmental benefits of local and regional-based food systems in Iowa. The paper, "Food, Fuel and Freeways: An Iowa perspective on how farm food travels, fuel usage and greenhouse gas emissions," is available by calling the Leopold Center at 515/294-3711. The report also will be posted at the Center's web site at <http://www.leopold.iastate.edu>.

### Learn to Interpret Consumer Confidence Reports

Consumer Confidence or Water Quality Reports must be prepared each year by water systems to explain what substances have been found in drinking water and whether the water is safe to drink. A new website, sponsored by the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation, provides consumers and professionals with supplementary information. Visit the site at <http://www.waterqualityreports.org>.

## Explore EarthTrends

World Resources Institute has launched a new interactive website called EarthTrends. Lack of access to information continues to impede the creation and implementation of good public and corporate policy. EarthTrends was developed to make relevant, high-quality information easily accessible and free to all. One can explore the site in five ways: a searchable database, maps, country profiles, feature articles, and pre-formatted data tables. Visit EarthTrends at <http://earthtrends.wri.org>.

## From the Humane Society

### Local Food Project, A How-to Manual

— a booklet on the vision for local food and a plan to institute a local food project.

**Halt Hog Factories** a pamphlet on alternatives and action.

Obtain the above from The Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037; tel:202-452-1100; email: [www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org).

## Action

### Arsenic Regulations

As part of its evaluation of the standard for arsenic in drinking water, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is requesting public comments on the proposed drinking water standard maximum contaminant level (MCL). EPA will consider public comments along with the results of independent panels on arsenic risks, costs and benefits, allowing the agency to develop a strong and affordable arsenic standard that is considerably more protective than the current 50 ppb standard. The public comment period will extend until October 31, 2001. See <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/arsenic.html> for more information on the request for comment and the arsenic rule review process. For information about arsenic levels in Iowa drinking water, see the Iowa Environmental Council website at [http://www.earthweshare.org/i\\_water.htm](http://www.earthweshare.org/i_water.htm)

# Interns Work and Learn from WFAN Farmer Mentors

*(Interns, continued from page 1)*

WFAN members listening to the stories. The women developed good working relationships and friendships, thus making the intern program successful in ways beyond learning the fundamentals of raising produce and taking care of the soil.

WFAN has worked to promote the intergenerational passing of knowledge and wisdom. This intern program pilot project has lived up to the expectations

## Solveig Hanson

Solveig here - It's a misty, muggy, sunny morning on the farm, and I'm enjoying a rare moment of quiet. Things stay pretty busy around here, so the first two months of my internship have flown by. As I look back, though, I realize I've gathered quite a few experiences and bits of knowledge. Here are some of my impressions.

Every morning at 6:30, I stumble down the stairs, grunt to Michael, and strap on my boots. I slather my pale Norwegian-American skin with sunscreen, and then Michael, Francesco and I start picking veggies. Picking time, I've learned, is a great opportunity to watch crops grow. I'm fascinated by the way the taste, texture, and appearance of the plants change as they mature. And I felt kind of a thrill last Wednesday when the very last picking of peas sat right next to the very first picking of beans. For me, this is a new way to trace the change of seasons.

After we finish picking, we wash the veggies and pack them for delivery. Delivering is fun for me. I like meeting people, finding my way around these towns, and driving through the countryside. When I came to the farm, though, I was pretty unsure of my driving capabilities. I didn't have a lot of experience with manual transmission vehicles, and I wasn't used to maneuvering anything much bigger than my Chevy Corsica. However, thanks to Michael's patience and my own persistence, I'm figuring out both the pickup and the refrigerated truck. There have been a few bangs, scratches, and tow trucks on the way, but I'm learning from my mistakes. Most of

all, I'm grateful to be given second chances.

In addition to the day-to-day operation of the CSA, we're always preparing soil, planting, transplanting, and cultivating. I enjoy my periodic fights with the rototiller. It won the first few times, by burning my hand and breaking down in the middle of a plot, but last time I got it to do exactly what I wanted. In the process of all of this tilling and planting, I'm starting to learn about some of the puzzles that go into farming. When should we plant lettuce for a fall crop? What do we do when that lettuce doesn't come up? If we're going to use this new field for veggies next season, when should we till it, and what should we plant there for the winter? Will it ever rain? Will it ever stop raining? I'm learning that I like this kind of problem solving. So, in short, I'm really enjoying my time here. I like working with both my head and my hands, and I'm learning tons every day (or at least lifting tons—ha!). Most of all, I'm proud to be a part of growing high-quality food and distributing it in a way that aims to sustain both farmers and eaters.

## Kate Hogg

A few years ago my husband and I stumbled across the place of our dreams: an old orchard and decent house on 15 acres near a town (in this case, right in Cedar Rapids). We snatched it up, and have been slowly learning to farm and care for the productive land we call Red Cedar Farm.

We are perfectly suited for a CSA, being close to town and wanting to spend more time at home than at farmer's markets. So that is the centerpiece of our goal of a diversified farm.

Since nothing can compare with learning first hand, I wanted to find a way to work at a CSA — with three kids in tow!

I knew Susan Zacharakis-Jutz from Practical Farmers of Iowa and thought we might be able to work something out with ALL the kids. And sure enough, she welcomed us all this spring as we worked in the greenhouse and eventually the fields. As the work exploded with spring, Susan asked if I would be a WFAN intern for Local Harvest, Susan's farm and CSA. I couldn't take that on without finding some help with my younger kids. I found a great sitter and used the internship money to pay for their care!

I have learned about many aspects of running a CSA, and a farm generally. And I have gained a vision and a partner — I'll start growing a few vegetables and be the drop site for Local Harvest's Cedar Rapids customers next year. WFAN made this an easier and more

## Ann Schoonover

My experience as intern at Wildwood Organic gardens began with the planting of onions and potatoes. Working alongside Virginia Moser, and under her guidance, I planted onion bulbs approximately 1" deep and at four finger-spreads. That task completed, we moved on to planting potatoes at 1' intervals. I don't recall the exact numbers of each that we planted, but it seemed like an enormous amount.

The next day of work involved the planting of carrot seeds in raised rows, which was easily accomplished with the use of an Earthway planter. Afterwards, I planted zucchini squash — two seeds per plot — using my index and middle finger to poke the holes for the seeds and the handle of the hoe to measure the 4'x4' spaces between each plot. I'm sorry to say I got off my measure quite a bit, so my plots aren't nearly as perfect in appearance as those Virginia did.

The setting of tomato plants was the next order of business. Plants were spaced 4' apart in rows measuring 5' in distance. I removed the cotyledon leaves from each of the plants before firming and mounding the ground around them. We placed large cans over each plant and



gave them a good measure of water. After the plants were firmly established, Virginia removed the cans, Marion, her husband, mounded the dirt higher around their base and placed cages around them, and I sprinkled Epsom salt – 2 table-spoons per plant – at the root base. The salt provides extra calcium and helps prevent darkening of the blossom end of the tomato.

I planted an interesting variety of pepper plants 2' apart in rows that measured 4' in distance. Again I don't recall the number, but as with everything else, it was a lot. The following morning, I planted acorn squash using the same planting method as the zucchini squash.

My most recent job has been the picking of different varieties of lettuce and learning how to wash and prepare it for market.

I have also had the pleasure of attending two very interesting conferences with Virginia—one in Des Moines; one in Fayette. Both dealt with the health and economic benefits of direct garden-to-market sales, and the growing trend toward organic/all natural production.

## Iowa Harvest, Mercantile & Eatery

Opening soon at Exit 86 on Interstate 80, Iowa Harvest will showcase and promote the best that Iowa has to offer. It will feature Iowa grown foods including organic and gourmet foods, honey, baked goods, fruits, apple cider, jam, salsa, fresh garden produce, fresh and frozen meats, nuts, eggs, herbs, and Iowa hand-made arts and crafts including quilts, rugs, baskets, artwork, and woodworking.

How long has it been since you enjoyed a malt or sundae at an authentic soda fountain? Iowa Mercantile and Eatery will soon be the place to go for your favorite ice cream treat. An oak back bar dating from the 1940's, combined with a classic stainless steel freezer and serving counter will be the centerpiece of the dining room, featuring Iowa ice cream and specialty ingredients.

For more information call Mary McColloch at 515-789-4270 or Karen Varley at 641-524-2454.

# Locate What You Buy Locally

by Linda Nash

Have you ever been shopping and looked at the vast wealth of items available in stores and wondered, "Where did all this stuff come from?" And furthermore, "Who actually owns and operates this store?"

We've all heard the slogan "Buy American," but have we really stopped to think about what that means? Purchasing products that are made domestically "keeps the money at home," but there is more than that to consider.

How about going a step farther: buy **LOCALLY** when you can. While you might not think you have everything you need available in your area, you will be surprised at the number of products and services that are offered locally. Here are some ideas about how to support your local economy with your shopping dollars.

First, try to spend your money in your own county. By doing so, your dollars will have a ripple effect. You will help the store to pay salaries to local people and support both the local store and local families.

Second, go a step further and look for and support locally owned businesses. A locally owned business has an extra stake in the area and will probably not only support local families, but will make other investments in the area with its profits.

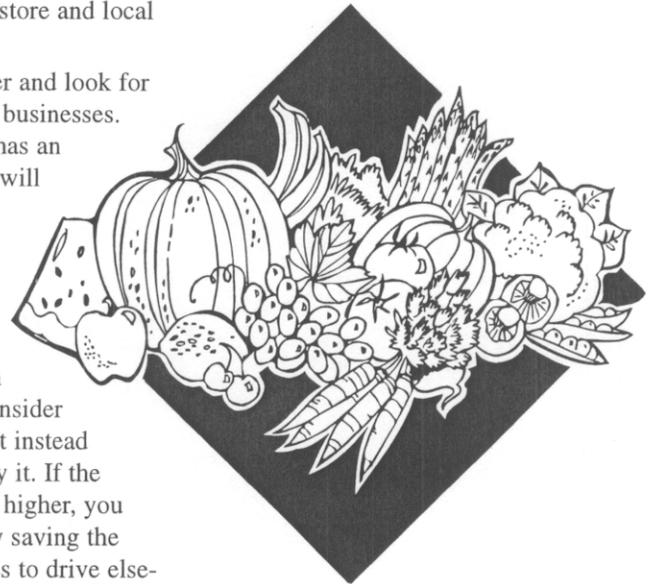
Third, if you can't seem to locate a needed item, consider having a local store order it instead of going out of town to buy it. If the price ends up being a little higher, you will have made up for it by saving the time and gas money it takes to drive elsewhere.

Fourth, if there isn't a locally owned business in your town which carries the item you need, rate the available alternatives on the "Local" scale. If it's not local, is it an area chain or is it nationally operated? By picking the area chain, the money you spend will stay closer to home. In general, think beyond price, and

make the decision to keep your money in your own county whenever possible.

Right here at home, farms constitute locally owned businesses. Many of these produce items are for sale locally. By finding local sources for your needs, you will benefit us all. Farms and other local businesses will benefit by developing more local markets, and consumers will benefit by spending money at home on local products and services. This will translate into a healthier local economy, more product and service choices in our communities and an atmosphere where downtowns grow and prosper. Become "Locally Linked!"

*(This article was the first in a series of bi-weekly columns published in five northeast Iowa newspapers this year. The series, called LocalLinks, is coordinated by GROWN Locally, a grower's cooperative marketing fresh produce to area hospitals, nursing homes, and restaurants. To see the other articles (ten in all, so far), please see the GROWN Locally web-site at [www.grownlocally.com](http://www.grownlocally.com))*





**A Language Older than Words** by Derrick Jensen, Context Books, New York, 2000.

review by Danielle Wirth

**Warning:** This is a difficult book to read, but I trust most WFAN members are grounded, centered people who have their feet planted firmly in the good earth with their heads reaching for clean air, sunshine and truth.

Most of us are fully aware of MOST of the challenges facing the planet and its creatures: global climate change, loss of habitat and the extinction of wild species, and toxic pollution inflicted by unbridled industries and industrial agriculture. Some of us may also know about immune system failures as populations of humans and wildlife are exposed to environmental endocrine disrupters. Then, of course there is overpopulation, social strife, environmental injustice — and the list goes on and on.

What I find striking and just slightly annoying is that Derrick Jensen has distilled many of the complex facts about planetary meltdown into a book that is just under 400 pages. It has taken many people many years of in-depth research of scientific reports, books, interviews with experts and life's experiences to accrue that much information. In reading this book, one can barely surface for air.

But the book is powerful! Jensen is representative of my son's generation. He is impatient with the slowness of positive change. He is mistrustful of those in "power." Jensen has created this book to give younger people a crash course (no pun intended) regarding the high stakes game of human survival in an age of disruption.

Jensen's dialogue with the reader throughout the book is one-to-one, as he reveals the darker side of his childhood shattered by a father who physically and sexually abuses his mother, his sister and finally, Jensen himself. He takes the denial of the violent home situations and relates it to the ingrained cultural denial of the violence hurled at children, abused women and nature itself.

## Language Older than Words by Derrick Jensen

He takes the reader through the abuses of the agricultural system as it relates to factory farming and mining the soil. This "happens" and yet the violence against animals and nature is denied.

Jensen describes the battering and how the family members were told if they "just behaved" he (the father) would not have to do these things to them. The acts of violence were portrayed as father's way to extract behavior.

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*If you are getting tired  
with weeding and wind.  
If you need a little bur  
under your saddle,  
if you need  
to get your juices flowing  
after a hard day  
of growing food for others,  
check out this book.  
Just don't blame me  
when you get  
good and pissed off.*

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The author was even more amazed that after each episode, the situation was denied—by the whole family.

As the family goes, so goes the planet.

Natural science provides us with enough information to "know" that natural systems are suffering **because of our human behavior**.

What's the "answer," according to Jensen? Reject denial and celebrate connections. Celebrate and practice being in relationship with other humans and non-humans.

He speculates on how much violence it will take before we are unable to deny it exists. Jensen believes that people are beginning to emerge from the denial phase and beginning to form relationships with other people, places and creatures.

An interesting side theme in the book relates to interspecies communication. Most people have experienced nonverbal

communication with companion animals. Some can relate to communications with wild creatures, places and "energies". This is a very uplifting and interesting thread in the book, and well worth reading for that reason alone.

Please, do NOT read this book if you are prone to depression. I don't recommend giving it to very young children, although Jensen would likely disagree with me. He believes that even the very young know the score, but soon put on those cultural blinders so they can act as thoughtlessly vis à vis nature and "others" as the adults they observe. I, on the other hand, believe that children deserve hope. It is up to responsible adults to act in ways NOW that will give these children hope for a future.

Women in WFAN practice responsible and hopeful behaviors such as growing food in partnership with the earth and engaging their human and nonhuman community in restorative actions that clean the water and restore biological diversity. WFAN members wage resistance against the dominant paradigm—some through in-your-face actions, others by their shining example. WFAN members refuse to be bound by the economic model of "might makes right" by weaving alternative/sustainable models that keep the wealth in the local community and in the soil.

If anything, WFAN is one of the beacons of how a focused group can reject denial and challenge the dominant paradigm.

If you are getting tired with weeding and wind. If you need a little bur under your saddle, if you need to get your juices flowing after a hard day of growing food for others, check out this book. Just don't blame me when you get good and pissed off.

*(Danielle Wirth is a former federal park ranger who currently teaches environmental science and natural history at Des Moines Area Community College.)*

# Water Quality - What is Happening in Iowa

by Danielle Wirth

Several years ago, the Iowa Environmental Council (IEC) conducted a survey to learn which environmental issues were of greatest concern to Iowans. Water Quality was at the top of the list.

The IEC is an umbrella organization working with very diverse stakeholders to produce a clear picture of Iowa's environmental challenges. Individuals and groups that would be unlikely partners, adversaries in many cases, sit at the same table—listening, discussing and trying to reach common ground. This respectful engagement is what distinguishes the IEC from many advocacy organizations. (I credit Linda Appelgate, its first executive director, with her incredible skill with people, limitless energy and savvy use of symbolic language to involve many Iowans in this issue of concern.)

After water quality was identified as the key issue, the IEC wasted no time in producing reports that highlighted the main areas of concern. Hydrologist and research director Susan Heathcote was able to explain to IEC members and the general public the complex nature of Iowa's water quality challenges through well-documented reports, newspaper arti-

cles and radio interviews.

The IEC also sought and received funding for some demonstration projects around the state. These projects utilized volunteer water quality monitors—CITIZENS—to conduct the field sampling and data management techniques. Sounds “dry”? Nope, this is where the fun begins.

As a result of the IEC's leadership role, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources initiated the IOWATER project. Today, IOWATER coordinators Linette Signley of the Geological Survey Bureau and Rich Leopold train volunteers around the state. They also manage a statewide database where volunteers can post their test results, check on water quality in other areas, and be part of a huge picture that tells the story about Iowa's water quality challenges.

One can best sum up what's happening by acknowledging that we all live downstream. What happens in our watershed, what happens underground in the intricately connected aquifers, matters.

In future issues, I'll focus on specific tests and what they reveal about local water quality issues. The IOWATER program features three areas of testing - biological, chemical and physical.

Biological—stream organisms, a.k.a. “macroinvertebrates”, tell a great deal about stream quality due to their presence, variety, or absence.

Chemical—simple, in-field tests can reveal the presence of chemicals like nitrates, phosphate compounds and other substances.

Physical—According to Lakeside Laboratory chemist, Steve Fisher, if you're only going to do one test, this is the one to do. The premier physical test is “turbidity”—a measure of the amount of light that can pass through a water sample and how much sediment or algae is in the water. From those measures, science can extrapolate a great deal of information about water quality.

For more information about this excellent DNR-sponsored program, training in your area (that includes EQUIPMENT if you become a registered volunteer) contact: Richard Leopold, IOWATER Coordinator, Wallace Office Building, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, IA 50319; tel: 515-281-3252; email: richard.leopold@dnr.state.ia.us

Check out the IOWATER website at [www.iowater.net](http://www.iowater.net).

## Coordinator's Corner

by Denise O'Brien, Wfan Coordinator

This newsletter reports on the intern program that WFAN initiated last year with the help of a grant from Ben and Jerry's Foundation. We have been writing grants this summer to expand this program to reach additional interns and mentors for next year's growing season.

Summer has been a time for grant writing and talking with potential grantors. Work continues on the women landowners project. Betty Wells and graduate assistants Diane Phillips and Tonya Meyers are currently designing a survey for implementation in Cass County, Iowa, this fall.

The more I work on the landowners project, the more I am convinced of the potential for changes in agriculture. Be-

cause women, and the land they tend, are overlooked as assets by agencies working with conservation and land issues. Let's hope we can expand this project. We need more women on the land!

Everyone mark your calendar for the 2nd Annual Fall Harvest Gathering, November 9-11, 2001. Last year's event was powerful and wonderful. I personally can't wait to see the women from Minnesota and Wisconsin again and to chat long into the night. The conversation and companionship are always excellent!

LaVon Griffen and I have been selected for the inaugural class of the W.K. Kellogg-funded Food and Society Policy Fellows Program. The Fellowship is for two years and we will work on enhancing media outreach about food and agriculture issues. On October 1st we will be going on a European Study

Tour for an in-depth look at food and farming policy in Europe through the lens of the current situation in the Netherlands. We will meet with policy makers for Europe in Brussels.

For the summer meeting, WFAN members met at Susan Zacarackis-Jutz farm to experience the bounty of her farm, Local Harvest. After touring the fields and dairy goat barn and purchasing the goat cheese processed on her farm, WFAN members headed for Prairie-Retreat Center. The evening was spent discussing WFAN business, and listening to the stories of the interns' experiences. On Sunday morning Laura Krouse led women through the process of isolating DNA while Stacey Brown and Virginia Moser talked of the Biotech Conference they attended last winter. Attendees spanned four generations and included a guest from Germany.

**Women, Food  
& Agriculture  
Network**

A Tides Center Project  
59624 Chicago Road  
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*Women, Food, & Agriculture Network* links  
and amplifies women's voices on issues of food systems,  
sustainable communities and environmental integrity.

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**Let's keep connected:**

***Women, Food and Agriculture Network***

Membership is either \$30 or \$10 (your choice). Fill out this form to join. This newsletter is a benefit of membership. We are a network of women with food, agricultural, environmental and economic concerns. Please share your thoughts, ideas, successes, interests, and solutions with us.

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(if you are joining as a representative of a group)

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Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email (print clearly): \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this form to:

***Women, Food & Agriculture***

59624 Chicago Road  
Atlantic, IA 50022

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