

# Women, Food, and Agriculture Network

*Linking and empowering women to build food systems and communities that are healthy, just, sustainable and that promote environmental integrity.*

A Quarterly Newsletter

Spring 2006

## **Voices of Iowa Farm Women Now Available on DVD**

*Learn how you can get your copy.*

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## **World Social Forum: Words and Pictures**

*Laura Karlen represented WFAN at the World Social Forum.*



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## **Women, Food, and Agriculture Network 2005 Annual Report**

*Read about our activities and accomplishments in 2005 in this special insert.*

**Special Insert**

## **Environmental Educator Wirth Wins Double Affirmation**

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## **Coordinator's Corner**

*WFAN Coordinator Denise O'Brien is ready for spring.*

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## Women of the Land: Two Interviews

*For our feature article this issue we have interviews with two women who have found creative ways to make a living from tending the land. Pam is the Garden Manager at Twin Oaks, an intentional community in Virginia. Danielle Andrews is the Urban Grower at The Food Project.*

**Pam**

*Pam is interviewed by Valerie, a resident of Twin Oaks Community.*

Twin Oaks is one of the oldest, largest intentional communities in the US. We

are 100 people sharing our lives together on 450 acres in rural Virginia. Our values include non-violence, egalitarianism, feminism and participatory government. We live collectively, we work in our community-owned businesses, and we grow much of our own food.

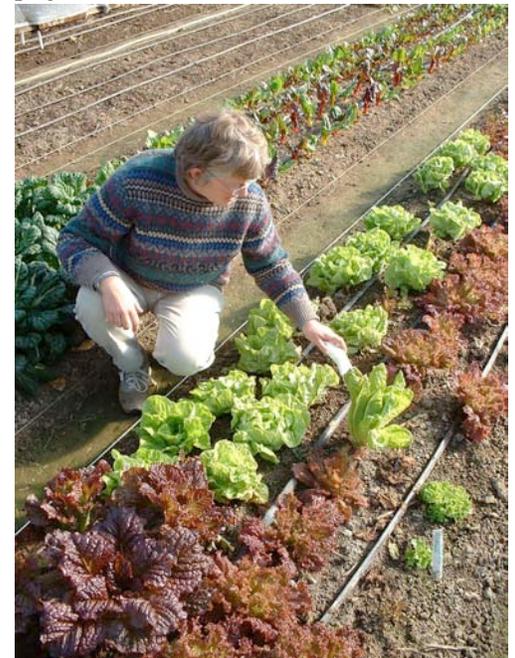
### *What is your main work at Twin Oaks?*

I manage our 2-acre organic vegetable garden. Our goal is to provide as much of the vegetables and fruit for the community as we can, for as much of the year as possible. We aim to provide a wide range of fresh produce and also some to be processed for off-season use. My job includes training lots of people in organic gardening.

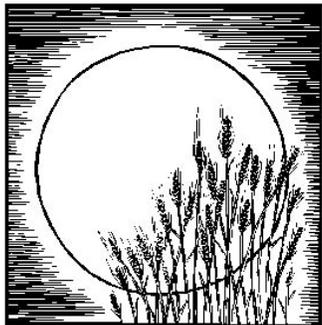
### *How did you acquire your gardening/farming skills?*

I've learned by a "hands-on" process. I do a lot of reading, and I talk with other

growers. I have grown food for 32 years, in England and America. (Continued on page 6)



**Pam tending organic lettuce at Twin Oaks**



## WFAN 2005 Annual Report Special Insert

You may have noticed that this newsletter is a bit bulkier than usual. If you flip forward to the center section, you'll see why. Included as a special insert to this newsletter is WFAN's 2005 Annual Report. We're proud of our work over the past year—accomplished with your support—and we want to make sure that every WFAN supporter shares in those accomplishments. Inside the report you'll find a letter from Coordinating Council Chair Stacey Brown, a list of the year's accomplishments from Executive Director Denise O'Brien, a financial report, and a list of those who supported WFAN financially in 2005. The report is also available on our website [www.wfan.org](http://www.wfan.org).

## “Voices of Iowa Farm Women” available on DVD

Now available on DVD: “Voices of Iowa Farm Women,” a highly acclaimed documentary that explores the role of women in agriculture.

The 18 minute production, co-produced by Women, Food, and Agriculture Network and Cinzia Productions, features several contemporary Iowa farm women who support small farms and value-added and direct marketing. Their stories explore the pressures of finding off-farm work to support their family, as well as successful alternatives to conventional farming practices that have allowed them to stay on the farm.

The video features Cindy Madsen of Audubon, Laura Krouse of Mt. Vernon, Janette Ryan-Busch of Iowa City, Jan Libbey of Kanawha, Amy Miller of Cresco, Virginia Moser of Garrison and Susan Jutz of Solon.

Copies of the DVD are \$10 plus \$2 shipping and handling. Contact Cassi Johnson at 319-354-3760 or [cassi@wfan.org](mailto:cassi@wfan.org) to reserve your copy today.

## Women, Food, and Agriculture Network

This newsletter is published by the **Women, Food, and Agriculture Network**, a Tides Center Project. 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 the editor. Deadlines for upcoming issues:

July 2006 issue: June 15th, 2006

October 2006 issue: September 15th, 2006

Address: 59624 Chicago Rd  
Atlantic, IA 50022  
712-243-3264

### Newsletter Production:

Denise O'Brien

[Denise@wfan.org](mailto:Denise@wfan.org)

Cassi Johnson

[Cassi@wfan.org](mailto:Cassi@wfan.org)

Stacey Brown

[staceyleighbrown@yahoo.com](mailto:staceyleighbrown@yahoo.com)

Sue Futrell

[sfutrell@mchsi.com](mailto:sfutrell@mchsi.com)

WFAN website: [www.wfan.org](http://www.wfan.org)

### Coordinating Council:

Leigh Adcock

Stacey Brown, Chair

Traci Bruckner

LaVon Eblen

Sue Futrell

Cheri Grauer

Penny Brown Huber

Joyce Lock

Darcy Mauhsby

Amy Miller, Vice Chair

Sue Roberts

Linda Warren, Treasurer

Danielle Wirth

## Calendar

### May 6-7th, 2006

Living Green Expo

St. Paul, Minnesota

See [www.livinggreen.org](http://www.livinggreen.org) for more details.

### May 6-9th, 2006

2006 “All Things Organic” Conference and Tradeshow

Chicago, Illinois

See [www.organicexpo.com](http://www.organicexpo.com) for more details.

### June 5-10th, 2006

Practical Farmers of Iowa Summer Fun for Youth

Des Moines Area YMCA Camp, near Boone, IA

See [www.practicalfarmers.org](http://www.practicalfarmers.org) for more details.

### June 8-10th, 2006

4th Annual BALLE Conference: Creating Sustainable Communities

Burlington, Vermont

See [www.livingeconomies.org](http://www.livingeconomies.org) for more details.

### June 12-13th, 2006

National Value Added Conference

Nashville, Tennessee

See <http://cpa.utk.edu/Value-AddConf/> for more details.

### August 13-19th, 2006

Women's Sustainable Agriculture Retreat: Mallard Island

Rainy Lake, Minnesota

Call Mary Swalla Holmes at 515-795-3136 for more details.

### August 15-17th, 2006

2006 SARE National Conference

Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

See [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org) for more details.

### October 8-11th, 2006

Community Food Security Coalition's 2006 Annual Conference

Vancouver, British Columbia

See [www.foodsecurity.org](http://www.foodsecurity.org) for more details.

# World Social Forum: Words and Pictures

Laura Karlen represented WFAN at the World Social Forum in Caracas, Venezuela



Two young Venezuelan girls sit on a makeshift structure observing the Ag Missions delegation as we toured their new home lands. Whether they are aware or not a new future is emerging in their country, creating new opportunities for their lives.



An Uruguayan delegation member carries a banner which reads "Out! Monsanto, Bayer and Syngenta. Another Latin America is Possible."



Agroecology professors, Alexis and Isabel pictured left, were excited to share their new program and students with me at the concert at the end of the march. They have collaborated with Brazilian universities to establish the first Agroecology program at the Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela ([ubvagroecologia@gmail.com](mailto:ubvagroecologia@gmail.com)).



Maria Gonzales shares the impact of the large scale expansion of soybean production on small producers and landowners in Northern Argentina in a workshop organized by a French Catholic organization. The title of the workshop was "As soy advances life is extinguished." Several representatives from Brazilian, Paraguayan, Argentinian, French, and Venezuelan organizations shared similar stories and assessments of negative impacts the model of monoculture, high chemical input commodity agriculture has had on the environment, economy, and culture of traditional communities.

## Why Am I, as a Man, Involved with WFAN?

*Merlin Pffankuch is an active supporter of WFAN. We asked him to reflect on his role as a man in an organization dedicated to empowering women's voices in food and agriculture.*

The answer to that question, posed to me to elaborate on for this newsletter, is both fairly simple and so complex that I probably cannot explain it adequately.

The simple answer is that several years ago I became quite frustrated with some of the organizations involved with sustainable agriculture. I felt that -- for what I was seeking -- their focus was too narrow and centered too much on production and marketing. WFAN seemed to offer a broader focus, one based primarily on relationship building.

Relationship building is one of the main reasons I'm involved in the local foods movement. I tend to look at the movement holistically, seeing it as part of an effort to make our lives more meaningful and less consumptive.

The fortunate among us in the United States (developed world) have more than we'll ever need, and in my view reached this stage roughly by the 1960s. But in our desire to have even more for no apparent reason, we continue to impoverish the less fortunate among us and throughout the world . . . and continue to wreak irreversible havoc on our environment.

In a democratic society, people do need to be given choices how to live. But I fail to see how this drive for "stuff" is making us better people. To me, it seems to diminish our collective spirit.

Now admittedly, I have somewhat of an ivory tower perspective. Nancy (Blyler) and I have enough money to live the way we want, from frugality along with good jobs and inheritances. We don't have children. We don't depend on food pro-

duction for our livelihood (but we do garden very extensively for our own use and to pass extra to friends).

A second reason I'm involved in local foods comes from my heritage. I grew up on a small (120 acre) diversified farm in extreme northeast Crawford County, IA (Denison, county seat). I went to school in Wall Lake, Sac County. And our family did quite a bit of shopping in Carroll County, as Carroll was actually closer than Denison.

As I look back on my youth (I was born in 1948) I can't help but feel that life in that part of the state is harsher today. I don't think I would want to live there permanently any longer. Sac County has lost about a third of its population since the 1970s, and opportunities are limited. Meat packing jobs are no longer acceptable to many "native" residents, so Denison has had an influx of Hispanics, which now account for almost 20 percent of its population. I worked in Denison for the newspaper three different times for a total of almost two years in the late 60s and early 70s, so I became fairly familiar with the community. I hadn't visited there much in the last 30 years, so I was shocked when I went to the courthouse about five years ago in settling Dad's estate to see one or two bail bond offices nearby.

What I see is that the more rural areas of Iowa will continue to be even less desirable places to live unless we can reverse the depopulation.

The context for my involvement in local foods is important to understand why I am part of WFAN.

I look with some envy at the relationship building gatherings of WFAN. Such is not emphasized enough for my tastes in the other local foods organizations I'm involved in. When I first joined WFAN I asked Denise with at least some seriousness whether I could come to the gatherings. I would have been unlikely to do so even if the answer had been yes. I would

have been too self conscious to attend and fearful that a man's presence would unfavorably influence the dynamics. (Plus, "finding" time to do so would be an obstacle.)

Nonetheless, I was surprised (and somewhat disappointed) a couple of years ago when the organizers of a workshop session on women and land at the Practical Farmers of Iowa conference seemed truly surprised that a few men attended. I guess my reaction was, why wouldn't they understand that at least some men were interested.

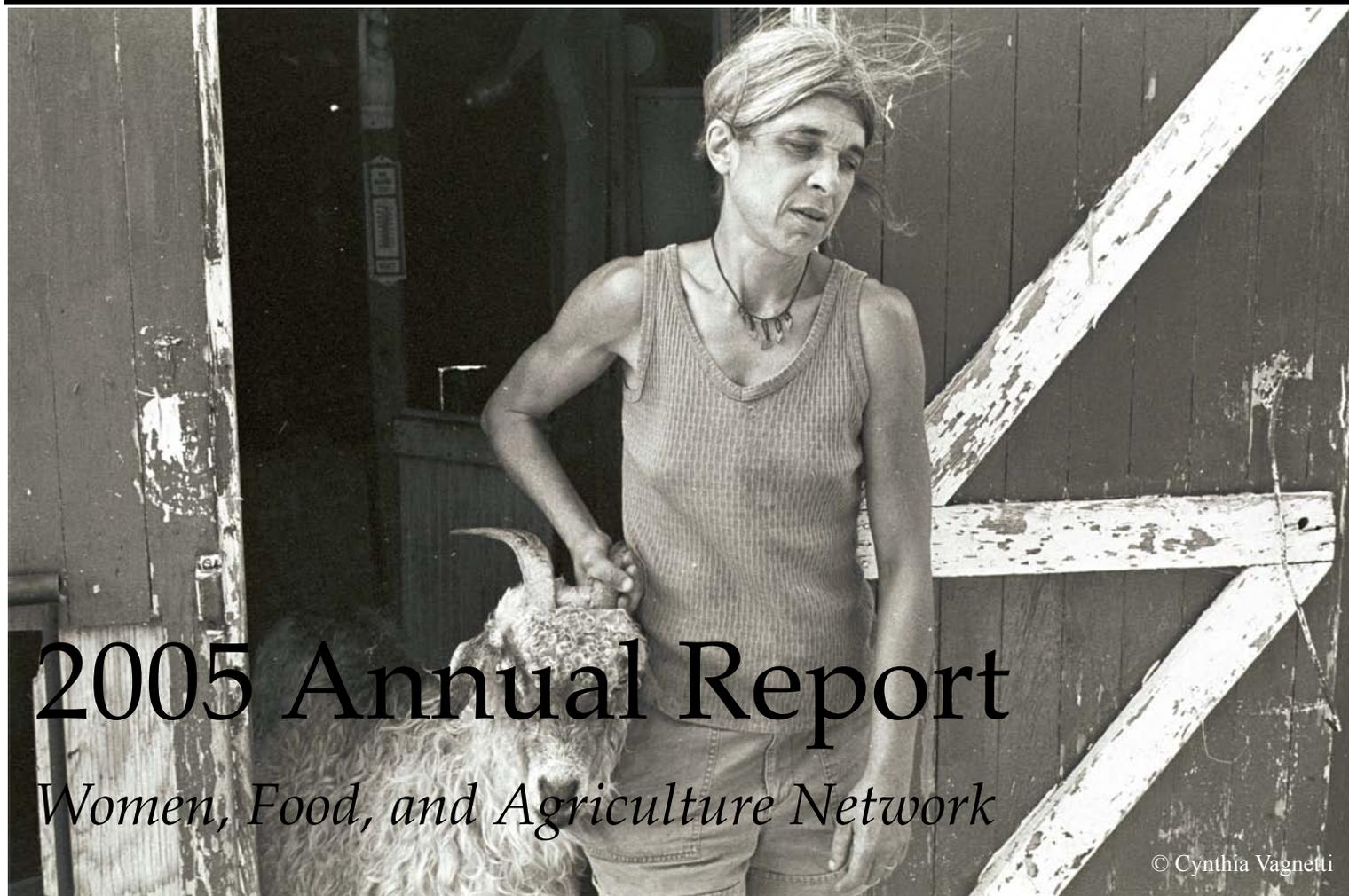
So I've remained mostly on the sidelines in WFAN, paying dues each year to support you.

**“Relationship building is one of the main reasons I'm involved in the local foods movement.”**

I'm not at all sure what I see as the role of men in WFAN in the future . . . I may just have to live with this uneasy comfortableness.

Maybe WFAN should form a men's auxiliary, which could have its own gatherings? I'm mostly joshing here. But I also think I would be self conscious at such an event, and think other men also would be. Men in general are not as good at relationship building as women . . . or maybe it's that they relate at a different level. Such a gathering would probably be just too "out there." Besides, I'm not sure WFAN men would want to go to an all men gathering . . . that's why we are in WFAN. Maybe there could be an occasional hybrid event . . . but again there is only so much time to attend such.

So I really don't have any answers for men and WFAN. Surely, being asked to write this indicates it is time for thought and dialogue. I am truly impressed with some of the efforts of WFAN -- you have brought some key, previously mostly overlooked, issues forward and have carried them to the forefront.



# 2005 Annual Report

## *Women, Food, and Agriculture Network*

© Cynthia Vagnetti

Dear WFAN Supporters and Friends,

2005 was an exciting and busy year for Women, Food & Agriculture Network. WFAN has been active now for over nine years and has established a strong presence in Iowa and across the globe. In 2005 we turned our focus inward and took some significant steps toward developing our roots and a structure that will serve you, the supporters of WFAN, into the future.

With support from an Anonymous Donor, WFAN was able to set aside time to spend on Coordinating Council development and to undertake a comprehensive planning process. This new and active council—which includes new members as well as long-time members who continue to provide leadership—started working right away with the staff to develop and implement short and long term strategic planning. At a retreat last summer, we reviewed and strengthened our

mission statement and wrote our first strategic plan.

Fundraising and developing programs that effectively meet the mission of WFAN are the first areas of concentration in our plan. Programs that strengthen our commitment to beginning and transitioning farmers, local food systems and meeting the needs of women landowners will be the focus for the upcoming year.

One major shift that we made at the end of 2005 was to our structure as a membership based organization. To more effectively serve you and be a viable organization, we decided to change from being a “dues paying membership” organization to a “donor based” organization. This allows anyone who gives a gift of time or money to be a supporter of WFAN and opens up our definition of membership.

WFAN is unique in our work with women in agriculture in that we are fo-

cused on changing the paradigm of the current agricultural and food system. Sustainable agriculture embraces a holistic approach, taking into consideration economics, environment and the people of rural society. In 2005 we spent a lot of time reflecting on the branches and leaves that we have helped grow and worked on strengthening our roots. We hope that our work this past year will allow us to more effectively serve you as we move into the coming years.

Thank you for your support during another year of important work to make WFAN a stronger and more successful organization. We are proud to serve your needs by supporting women in their quests to build healthy, just, and sustainable communities in Iowa and around the world.

Sincerely,

Stacey Brown, Chair  
Denise O'Brien, Executive Director

# Accomplishments for 2005

It has been another busy year for Women, Food and Agriculture Network. Our work continues to focus on formalizing and strengthening the organization. In 2005, WFAN embarked on a yearlong process to expand our board and staff and develop a strategic plan to help the organization reach its full potential. Time was spent recruiting board members, developing a fundraising plan, strengthening WFAN's programming and creating new partnerships.

We took a big step forward in August, and doubled the size of our staff, hiring Cassi Johnson as Program Assistant to work closely with Denise, who continues in her 9th year as Executive Director. Cassi, who recently completed her Masters in Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State, has brought new energy, vision and capacity to WFAN and has had a significant impact on programs, fundraising and communication. At the same time, Denise began to pursue an exciting personal goal: her campaign to be the next Secretary of Agriculture for Iowa. Although this work has remained entirely separate from WFAN, we are proud that Denise is bringing the voice and vision of women to the larger ag policy arena.

## Women, Land and Legacy

WFAN's partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency and National Catholic Rural Life Conference continues to expand the Women, Land and Legacy project across the state of Iowa. We have held over a dozen meetings, with nearly eight hundred women. Project partners created and published a Development Guide for counties interested in implementing the program.

Near the end of 2005, WFAN created a web-based survey aimed at revealing

women's knowledge of and interest in federal farm policy. Almost 500 women from across the country participated. The data will be released in spring 2006 and will be used to guide WFAN's continuing policy focus.

## Harvesting Our Potential

Our intern program took a hiatus this year while we reviewed the goals and scope of the program. We are excited about giving it new attention in the coming year, as an entry point for young women into sustainable agriculture and food system work, both on the farm and in other aspects such as education and advocacy.

## Building Local Food Systems

WFAN continues to work with the Iowa Network for Community Agriculture on issues of local food systems. WFAN co-sponsored the INCA annual meeting that was held in Atlantic and Anita, Iowa.

## Networking and Building a Socially Just Food System

Although we've labeled these as program areas in the past, during our planning process we recognized that rather than being separate initiatives, they are deeply integrated into all of our work.

WFAN's quarterly newsletter received a new look this winter, and we created a monthly electronic newsletter, "WFAN e-links" to keep our listserv members in touch between newsletters.

In October after two years of conference calls and planning, the first ever Women in Sustainable Agriculture Conference was held in Burlington, Vermont. WFAN participated from the very beginning in this wonderful

event and raised funds for eight Iowa women to attend the conference.

WFAN's annual Fall Harvest Gathering was held in November this year at Good Earth Village and once again provided a time for rejuvenation, reconnection and learning.

## Recognition and Change

In November Women, Food and Agriculture was featured in a two part series on the Iowa Public Television program Market to Market. WFAN member Cynthia Vagnetti was the star of part two.

2005 brought change and an opportunity to say thank you as several longtime Coordinating Council members stepped down. Katy Hansen, our newsletter editor extraordinaire, developed the first newsletter in 1997. Katy has been a longtime, faithful supporter and founding member of WFAN.

Virginia Moser has also stepped down. Virginia has a strong commitment to WFAN. She has participated in all of the Fall Harvest Gatherings, always bringing her popcorn for those cozy nights around the fire.

Pernell Plath, a longtime WFAN member and integral part of the women landowners' program, stepped down from the board at the end of the 2005. She and her partner Erin adopted three sibling children at the beginning of 2006 and are busy in their new role as mothers.

WFAN owes a great deal to these women for their dedication and commitment. Our organization is stronger because of their involvement.

MISSION STATEMENT

*“Linking and empowering women to build food systems and communities that are healthy, just, sustainable, and that promote environmental integrity.”*



*In July of 2005, WFAN Coordinating Council members set out to revise the organization’s mission statement. The Coordinating Council felt it was important that the mission statement reflect both the history of the organization and its future. The new mission statement, featured above, reflects WFAN’s increased commitment to helping women build sustainable food systems and communities through innovative programming.*

**Women, Food, and Agriculture Network  
2005 Operating Statement**

<b>Revenues</b>		
Individual Contributions (including memberships)		\$ 5446
Foundations		\$37500
Nonprofit Income		\$ 5170
Iowa Shares		\$ 3514
Conference Registrations		\$ 1635
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$53,265</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Personnel		\$30087
Occupancy		\$ 1411
Printing and Postage		\$ 2948
Supplies		\$ 334
Memberships and Dues		\$ 275
Travel		\$ 1541
Conferences		\$ 1351
Insurance		\$ 909
Accounting		\$ 4944
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$43,800</b>
<b>Revenues less Expenses</b>		<b>\$ 9465</b>

# In Appreciation

*WFAN is honored to recognize those who made gifts in 2005. With our change in organizational structure in 2005, membership dollars now fall under individual contributions. In 2005, Coordinating Council members took a leading role in making personal gifts and helped challenge others to make gifts to WFAN. These gifts are essential to WFAN for general operating purposes and to help ensure that WFAN will continue to serve you and women working in sustainable agriculture into the future.*

## Foundation & Corporate

Agricultural Missions, Inc.  
Anonymous  
Ben & Jerry's Foundation  
Frontier Natural Products  
Jessi Smith Noyes Foundation  
Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group  
New Pioneer Cooperative  
North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)

## Sister Fund \$500-\$999

Penny Brown  
Cornelia Flora  
Fred Kirschenmman  
Carolyn Raffensperger

## \$100-\$499

Nancy Adams  
Marlene Alberigo  
Stacey Brown  
LaVon Eblen  
Sue Futrell  
Liz Garst  
Helen Gunderson  
Ruthanne Harstad  
Bonnie Haugen  
Patricia Headley

Anne Jumonville  
Sue Roberts  
Deb Ryun  
Angela Tedesco  
Wendy Wintersteen  
Danielle Wirth

## Under \$100

Erika Allen  
Barbara Andersen  
Ann Baier  
Linda Barnes  
Carol Barton  
Donna Bauer  
Angela Beaman  
Harriet Behar  
Elizabeth Blair  
Betty Blomberg  
Pat Boddy  
Fr. Marvin J. Boes  
Jane Bush  
Sarah Carlson  
Alison Cohen  
Leslie Cooperband  
Kristen Corey  
John Crabtree  
Anna Dawson  
Patti Edwardson  
Beth Einsele  
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Beth Neff  
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Elmyra Nzombe  
Shellie Orngard  
Katherine Parker  
Dorene Pasekoff  
Cookie Perl  
Melissa Peteler  
Merlin Pfannkuch  
Pernell Plath  
Angela Pridie  
Leigh Rigby-Adcock  
Whitney Sanford  
Cathy Scherr  
Jennifer Seydel  
Jac Smit  
Lori Sokolowski  
Mary Steinmaus  
Angie Tagtow  
Erin Tegtmeier  
Noreen Thomas  
Sara Thomsen  
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Severine von Tscharnar  
Fleming

Linda Warren  
Roger Waugh  
Stephanie Weisenbach  
Molly Wilbarger  
Bill Wilcke  
Angela Winburn  
Aimee Witteman  
Vanessa Zajfen  
**Iowa Shares**  
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Nancy Guthrie  
Ruthanne Harstad  
Marilyn Howe  
Patrick Jeffers  
Dennis Kellogg  
Ardith Maney  
Anna Mueller  
Susan Murty  
Kimela Nelson  
Nancy Noyer  
Jill Pruetz  
Sue Ravenscroft  
Darrell Schleif  
Steven Sorden  
August Stangl  
Jill Vibhakar  
Roger Waugh  
Kristin White



## Coordinating Council

**Stacey Brown — Chair**  
**Amy Miller — Vice Chair**  
**Linda Warren — Treasurer**

LaVon Eblen, Sue Futrell, Katy Hansen, Penny Brown  
Huber, Pernell Plath, Sue Roberts, Danielle Wirth

## Staff

**Denise O'Brien — Executive Director**  
**59624 Chicago Rd**  
**Atlantic, IA 50022**  
**712-243-3264**  
[Denise@wfan.org](mailto:Denise@wfan.org)

**Cassi Johnson — Development and Outreach Director**  
**2105 Miami Dr**  
**Iowa City, IA 52240**  
**319-354-3760**  
[Cassi@wfan.org](mailto:Cassi@wfan.org)



## Environmental Educator Wirth Wins Double Affirmation

--by Betty Wells

September 2005 was a good month for Iowa's environment, as WFAN founding member and Coordinating Council member Danielle Wirth was honored – nationally (with the Take Pride in America Award) and in Iowa (as the Sierra Club's Environmental Educator of the Year) – for her tireless commitment to ecological restoration.

In September, Wirth and the students from her Summer and Fall 04 and Spring 05 Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) biology classes on Restoring Native Plant Communities, received the Take Pride in America Award. In this course, students work six hours a day restoring various sites at Saylorville Lake and in Dallas and Boone counties. They dig, saw and sweat clearing invasive plants, overgrown trees and shrubs and so allow native wildflowers and grasses to reclaim the landscape, and harvest seeds to renew the native oak savanna. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees at Saylorville Lake supervised the students and Park Ranger Leah Deeds nominated the class for the Take Pride in America award because what that the class accomplished for the site's endangered savanna is something rangers could not have done on their own.

Danielle and student Lisa Quirk journeyed to Washington, DC to accept the award, presented by Gale Norton, Secretary of the Interior. For Quirk, the class was "life-changing." As quoted in the Des

Moines Register by staff writer Laura Pieper (Oct. 11, 2005): "The minute you set foot on the soil, something just changes in you. It doesn't really feel like a class, it feels like something bigger." The course reinforced April Hick's goal to study geology and environmental science. "I want to get paid to play outside," she said.

Take Pride in America is a U.S. Department of Interior program that encourages volunteers to improve public parks, forests, grasslands, wildlife refuges and other recreation areas. The class won in the category of post-secondary school participation in land stewardship, an honor received by only 25 out of hundreds of nominations annually.

Last fall Danielle Wirth was also named the Environmental Educator of the Year by the Iowa chapter of the Sierra Club. The award is for a teacher at any level of education who has contributed to an increased understanding of the environment. Wirth was nominated by Sierra Club member Jo Hudson, who audited Wirth's restoration class.

Danielle is pleased that her environmental work for the past 25 years has received this attention. "I've been slogging at this for decades and it's really nice to get this recognition," she said. She hopes it might earn some financial support to purchase our own tools. She views the award as an "affirmation for being feisty and edgy." When I queried her about the springs of her motivation, she answered that in prairie she finds the hope and personal power that inspires her to keep going. She does it for her own offspring and for her "offspring of the heart" – her students. In them she sees hope for the future. She is proud of their dedication and determination: "They're the heart, engine and wheels that get the work done."

Wirth, a rural resident of Boone County, teaches at DMACC and ISU, is a member of the Iowa Environmental Council, the Iowa Organic Standards Board, the Society for Ecological Restoration, the National Association of Interpretation, and Natural Resources Defense Council.



## Coordinator's Corner

Spring has definitely arrived in Iowa! In fact, it doesn't seem to me as if we really had a winter. I feel cheated that Mother Nature did not show her strength this winter to shut down human activity. In the past I have looked forward to those days when the radio would list the cancellations because of the weather. I always felt somewhat smug in thinking "See there everyone, Mother Nature is telling us it is time to slow down and take a break from this busy life we lead." That did not happen to me once this winter and now that it is spring, I physically feel like I do on a morning after a restless night's sleep – tired. Tired but happy to see the first pussy willows, hear the peepers, feel the gentle breeze and smell the fresh rain!

Women, Food and Agriculture Network is moving forward solidifying our base and continuing to define who we are. We have a great group of new board members who have accepted an invitation to serve on the Coordinating Council. These women include Leigh Rigby-Adcock, Traci Bruckner, Cheri Grauer, Joyce Lock and Darcy Maulsby. I would like to personally welcome them to the WFAN family and look forward to working with these fine women! We will be featuring these women in upcoming newsletters.

Cassi and I have completed the Farm Bill Listening Sessions and would like to thank all of you who participated to make this gathering of information a success. We will be working to analyze what we have learned and will be keeping you informed about the results.

*(Continued from page 1) What makes you continue to choose to do this work?*

I enjoy planting seeds and watching them grow, cultivating plants, and harvesting food. I also value local, fresh food for myself and for my community. I think it's important to be part of a movement that reduces the number of miles that food travels, and reduces the amount of chemical pollution used.

*How does your work as a gardener/farmer interact with your life in an intentional community?*

It is because we share all the work at Twin Oaks that I'm able to do this as my full-time work. I can rely on other people to take care of other tasks (earning money, making meals, etc.), so that I can focus on producing the food. I don't need to market it, which is one aspect of being a grower I don't enjoy, so I get to do the parts I do enjoy.

*You've organized several seed-saving workshops. How was that experience?*

I enjoyed meeting other people who were growing seeds. I found the movement to have more small-scale seed production that was focussed on crops that grow well specifically under organic cultivation, which is very important to me. For several years, I've also been the coordinator for the Central Virginia chapter of the Virginia Association for Biological Farming. I like that both of those jobs help bring together people who work in sustainable agriculture.

*What are your hopes for women and food?*

I would like enough of both! (laughs) I have noticed and appreciated a tendency to take women more seriously as farmers, and I hope to see that continue and flourish. I hope to see women fully represented at conferences and panels and in books about farming. I'd like to see more women in jobs at the USDA and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and in government bodies related to agriculture that make grants and give funds. I think that when it's mostly men in those

jobs, most of the funds end up going to men.

*Is there anything else you'd like to add?*

I would like to encourage women who are interested in agriculture to get involved and not be intimidated. I'd like women to know that tractors and implements can be used as much by women as by men, and that information about agriculture is easier to access thanks to the internet than it used to be, so you can make up for a lack of formal agricultural training, if you're determined.

Pam can be contacted c/o Twin Oaks Community, 138 Twin Oaks Rd, Louisa, VA 23093, or through [www.twinoaks.org](http://www.twinoaks.org)

#### *Danielle Andrews*

*Danielle is interviewed by Pat Hynes, Professor of Environmental Health at Boston University.*

Each spring and summer we take Boston University public health students on an environmental justice field trip to The Food Project in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston. The Food Project, a 14 year-old organization, is a prototype of urban environmental health, bringing urban and suburban youth together to do sustainable agriculture on vacant urban land, sell their produce at their nearby farmers' market, and deliver it to local food pantries. Their raised growing beds and intensively planted, lush organic crops have erased the blight of failed "urban renewal" and slum clearance programs; and they are restoring healthy food systems to low-income inner city neighborhoods that supermarkets abandoned to fast food chains and liquor stores. In their educational programs, The Food Project youth discuss the loss of small farms and growth of agribusiness, farm policy, poor nutrition among youth and trends in obesity, as well as social and personal change to eliminate racism and sexism. Learn more about the Food Project at [www.thefoodproject.org](http://www.thefoodproject.org).

*Describe briefly the urban farm sites at The Food Project and your job responsibilities as "urban grower."*

My primary responsibility is to manage our 4 farming sites in the city of Boston, which range from 1.4 acres to a house lot size garden and a 100x40 ft. rooftop garden at the Boston Medical Center. They total about 2.5 acres of land. I am responsible for the crop planning, planting schedules, equipment and seed ordering. Additionally, I am responsible for implementing a crop plan which incorporates survey results from our farmers' market customers, includes the produce needs of our commercial kitchen as well as vegetables for a weekly community lunch event we hold throughout the summer. I respond to inquiries about our urban agriculture program and lead people on tours when possible. I maintain strong relationships with our neighbors both through informal conversations and "over the fence chats" and by attending community meetings and responding to concerns and questions as necessary. During our program season I am responsible for planning and training other staff as necessary for leading work teams with our youth and maintaining a rigorous and safe work environment.

*What are the key motivations and satisfactions for you as the urban grower at the Food Project Boston site?*

As an undergraduate, I studied community development; and I have always been interested in urban community development issues. Being in a neighborhood surrounded by people who continue to work hard to transform their community inspires me to work hard and dream big.

Last year I had the opportunity to travel to Cuba and meet with organic farmers and farming activists there. I had read much about the expansiveness of urban agriculture there, and yet was surprised at how moved I felt seeing urban agriculture practiced on such a large scale.

Everywhere I looked up in Havana, I saw vegetables (Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6) growing on porches. This past season I reflected a lot on that trip as I worked away in our own fields, and was reminded of this larger global movement that I am a part of.

My favorite time of day is working after school with youth, the 3 to 6pm slot, in the spring and fall. By 3 pm I have usually been at work for 8 hours and am feeling tired and often a little grumpy; and there is nothing I love to hear more than a collection of loud, energized voices approaching the fields. In my opinion, this is when the magic happens--teenagers arrive after having spent their days sitting in classes, raising their hands to ask questions, being told to be quiet. They have energy to burn, stories to tell, arguments to work through. Pulling on their t-shirts they ask me what we're going to be doing today and remark on the differences in the garden in comparison to the week before. We get incredible amounts of work accomplished during these after school hours. Younger kids from the neighborhood also show up on the land, to play around us, occasionally pitching in to help, eager to hang out with these older youth and participate in the preparation of beds and planting and care of crops that grow at the neighborhood farm. Last year one of the neighborhood kids, whom I've known over the past 4 years and is now 9, told me that she was thinking about being an urban farmer when she grows up. It's moments like those that I reflect on how lucky I am to be doing what I do.

***What is your background in farming and also community development that prepared you for your current job?***

In college I worked every summer at a packaging plant. I think it was there that I developed a love and respect for hard work and efficient work, 2 key character-

istics for anyone interested in a career in farming. Meanwhile, at school I was working on a community development degree through which I had become interested in food security issues, and in my final year of school I was part of an organic food co-op that led me to meet a woman who had started a small organic vegetable and medicinal herb farm in rural Nova Scotia, 2 hours from the city of Halifax where I was studying. I arranged to spend a summer working for her on her farm as an unpaid intern; and it was there that I developed a deep love for



Danielle and Raheem with trophies from a tomato contest

agriculture and a determination to make it part of my life. From Nova Scotia I traveled to New Zealand for a winter of WWOOFING (Willing Workers on Organic Farms), and then to University of California at Santa Cruz in 1998 where I was accepted into an apprenticeship program run by the university to train organic farmers. While I was at Santa Cruz I learned about programs like The Food Project, and was excited at the prospect of finding work at an organization that combined sustainable agriculture and community development elements. In the fall of 2001, I applied for the position of the urban grower at The Food Project and I've been in this position since February of 2002.

***What advice would you give to girls and women interested in working in urban agriculture?***

- Find a really well-structured internship on a working farm with a farmer who is committed to your learning. Internships vary greatly; so look around at different farms, ask a lot of questions, and speak to former interns, if at all possible.
- If possible, and depending on the neighborhood you work in, learn a second language. This neighborhood is predominantly CapeVerdean and most residents speak Portuguese Creole. I have taken a couple of basic language courses and knowing a small amount of Portuguese Creole helps. Knowing more would be more helpful!
  - Understand the less glamorous sides of urban agriculture! I really do pick up a lot of garbage. I occasionally have to deal with vandalism. It is a very public role and means that many of my days are filled with interesting conversations and meetings. However, I am very careful about how I present myself, and how I interact with people who stop by the land. I am not shy about letting people know they've crossed a line, I do not put myself in risky positions, and I am always aware of my surroundings.
- Don't be shy about asking other farmers for advice! I have happily given out my farm planning information to several other small-scale farmers (urban and rural) who have started farms or taken over operations. My experience is that farmers- urban and rural-- are eager to encourage and support young farmers as they get started. While I feel a sense of responsibility to support these farmers, I also find encouragement and motivation to keep working at this whenever I hear from others getting started in the field.

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