January 2014 E-Newsletter

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Policy News

Policy on the Plate: Panel Discussion
What do farmers' markets, genetically engineered food labeling, hunger issues, and promoting Illinois products have in common? They will all be topics discussed as part of the special policy panel discussion on Friday, March 14th at 5:30 p.m., as part of the Good Food Festival Policy Summit. Join Illinois Department of Agriculture Director Bob Flider, State Senator David Koehler, Representative Mike Tyrone, and Representative Robyn Gabel for a special
Policy Summit panel discussion on state local food policy. Panelists will discuss some of the exciting initiatives and priorities they are working on to advance the Good Food Movement.

The panel is being organized by the budding Young Professionals for Good Food Network and the Illinois Environmental Council's Young Professional Network and will be free and open to the public (festival admission is not required to attend). Come and learn about policies that are advancing the Good Food Movement and then stick around for Localicious and celebrate the farmers who grow our food and the chefs who transform it. Featuring over 30 restaurant from the region, Localicious is one of the premier good food events of the year! Just don’t forget to get your ticket now before prices go up.

Join us for Local Food Awareness Day

On Wednesday, March 26th, local food advocates, farmers, and citizens from across the state will come together in Springfield for ISA’s 5th Annual Local Food Awareness Day in order to encourage their legislators to support local food and farms.

Participants in this event will partake in a welcoming address, civic engagement and lobbying training, a legislative update, and lunch. Following lunch we will descend upon the capitol to educate legislators about the importance of local food systems and advocate for positive policy solutions that support those local food systems.

This year, there are several key pieces of legislation for which we will be lobbying. The first is House Bill 5657/Senate Bill 3380, also called the Farmers' Market Regulatory Modernization Bill. This bill is intended to:

- create a simplified, consistent, and statewide process for vendors to offer samples at any and all farmers markets in Illinois
- provide consistent and uniform regulations for farmers markets throughout the state
- amend the IL Cottage Food law to address issues with interpretation and to cap the registration fee at a reasonable rate
- establish the Farmers’ Market Transparency Act which would require produce vendors to provide consumers with more information about the
farm from which their food is being produced

The second piece of legislation is House Bill 5957 which would create a new microloan program for beginning farmers. Attendees will also have the opportunity to support Senate Bill 1666 which mandates the labeling of food products with Genetically Engineered ingredients also known as GMOs.

In a snap shot Local Food Awareness Day will consist of a civic engagement and lobbying training, a legislative update, and lunch. Following lunch we will descend upon the capitol to educate legislators about the importance of local food systems and advocate for positive policy solutions that support local food systems.

The great success of the local food movement is the result of Illinois farmers and citizens speaking up and letting their voices be heard! We hope you'll join us.

To register or to learn more, simply click here.

**Grassroots Policy Committee**
Calling all policy wonks, farmers and advocates interested in legislation and policy that supports local food and sustainable agriculture. Join ISA's Grassroots Policy Committee, learn more here or email Wes King at wes@ilstewards.org for more information.

**Local Food News**

**Featured Farmer:**
**Meet Donna Oshaunnessy and Keith Parrish**
*By: Molly Gleason*

Every now and then you meet someone with the rare and wondrous capability of seeing the world for what it could be, not for what it is. Donna Oshaunnessy and Keith Parrish, owners and operators of South Pork Ranch, are those people.
It was a balmy 36 degrees when I met Donna- a virtual heat wave compared to the sub-zero wind chills that we've been experiencing for the last two months. The cows, who had resorted to huddling in the barns, were now venturing out to the pasture, the ducks and chickens and peacocks were waddling at the edge of the open barn door, the dogs were bounding across the still snowy ground, and in fact the entire farm seemed to be bustling with life.

Donna was no exception. Bundled in a camouflage jumpsuit, wisps of gray hair escaping from underneath the hood, she hustled to and fro from the barn to the adjacent farm store, to her house, helping a customer purchase one of her prized Red Wattle hogs while simultaneously touring me around the farm and telling tales of how she and her husband came to own and manage their little lot of land.

Donna and Keith have managed to build the only pasture-raised certified organic farm in Illinois that sells pork, beef, and milk. But if that isn't unique enough, they are also one of the very few farms in Illinois selling 100% raw (non-homogenized, non-pasteurized) whole milk, and the only certified organic farm in the entire U.S. that raises and sells the critically endangered Red Wattle Hog. Their entire operation consists of 11 dairy cows; 25 steers; 40-70 pigs depending on the time of year; a small apiary; and a flock of chickens, ducks, guineas and even peacocks...because why not? All of their South Pork Ranch products are available at the small on-site farm store, which boasts a freezer paid for entirely with bartered milk. Also available at the store are Donna's homemade soaps and a variety of other local products from nine surrounding area farmers, including chicken, eggs, flour, teas, and cornmeal. Business has been good. So good, in fact, that Donna and Keith stopped selling
their products to retailers and restaurants and now sell exclusively direct to consumer from their farm.

Things weren't always that way though. It was the classic tale of big city girl falls in love with small-town farm boy that brought Donna to the farm in Chatsworth, Illinois 18 years ago. At that time, it was her husband Keith who was in charge of the day to day operations. Keith was a country boy born and raised who had worked as a farm hand on other dairy farms, so transitioning into owning his own small dairy operation was a natural fit. Donna on the other hand, started off as a full-time RN and would help out on the farm on the side. Learn More

**Grow your Garden: What to do in March**

Was that a bird singing outside the window this morning? It was! Spring is on its way and this icy winter is finally starting to thaw. And after all of those sub-zero temperatures, 30-degree weather is enough to make anyone want to throw on their shorts and t-shirts and do a little dance outside. But let's channel that energy into something a little more productive, shall we, and head out to the garden. There's plenty to be done! (And grab a scarf while your at it. It is still only 30 degrees you know!)

- Start cabbage, broccoli and brussel sprout seeds indoors in early March. They should be ready to transplant outside in 6-8 weeks.
- Start tomato and pepper plants indoors in mid-March. Transplant outdoors in mid to late May.
- Other cool season crops can also be started in-doors toward the beginning of the month and warm season crops toward the end.
- Clean up last year's debris in the vegetable garden to reduce the potential for disease.
- Work the soil as it dries. Structure can be damaged if you dig while the soil is too wet to work. Work in compost or other organic matter to enrich the soil.
- Till vegetable beds. Never till the soil when wet. Try the soil squeeze test first. Take a handful of soil and squeeze. If the soil forms a ball, let it dry for 2-3 days. If it crumbles easily through your hand, it is ready to till.
- Plan the layout of your vegetable/fruit garden with special care to rotating crops, especially tomatoes and other crops that are susceptible to leaf diseases.
- Plant potatoes as soon as soil can be worked. Buy certified disease free seed potatoes. Cut into sections. Each section should have 1 or 2 "eyes" (buds). Plant sections 1 foot apart and 4 inches deep.
- Direct sow lettuce, peas, onions and radishes late in the month.
Prune grape vines for shape and to promote new growth.

Tip Source: Chicagoland Gardening Magazine

Recipe of the Month: Wheatberry Pancakes
Article adapted from newsletter "From the Kitchen Window" by Karen Severson

Here at our family grain farm in the heart of the Midwest, we are digging out from the latest winter storm. Like many of you, we are frequently adjusting our schedules due to icy roads, white-out conditions, or bitterly cold temps. Since we are surrounded by fields, our driveway drifts over on a regular basis.

This was the scene that greeted us earlier this week as the frost decorated the trees. The sunshine helped us imagine it was warmer than the thermometer indicated.

These cold wintry days are a good time to stay indoors and cook. We are discovering new ways to enjoy our organic popcorn, oats, and wheat. Looking for a hot breakfast that is nourishing and satisfying? Try a whole grain choice like "wheatberry blender pancakes." The pancake batter is mixed up right in your blender—ready to cook on a hot skillet.

Wheatberry Pancakes

1 cup wheat berries
1 1/2 cups milk
1/2 cup applesauce (or vegetable oil)
1 egg
3 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons sugar

Blend 1 cup milk with wheat berries for 2-3 minutes. Add rest of milk and blend for 2 more minutes. Cook on hot skillet or griddle. Keeping the blender going, add remaining
You can find out more about our farm and products on our webpage and we will also be selling our organic grains and frozen corn-on-the-cob at the Family Farmed Expo in Chicago this March.

We look forward to Spring and the new growing season soon. In the meantime, we’re enjoying the beautiful scenes of winter, especially from the kitchen window.

*Have a farm fresh recipe that you’d like to share? Email Molly at molly@ilstewards.org*

**New Grants Available**

1. Food Hub Grants

The Wallace Center is pleased to announce its newest effort to support the work of food hubs nationwide: Strengthening Small-Scale Sustainable Farming and Local Food Systems by Accelerating Food Hub Development. This grant program will build on the significant work of Wallace's National Good Food Network (NGFN) initiative to support food hub development and build capacity among small and mid-size farms throughout the U.S. to access regional markets, with an additional intention on building capacity among minority and female farmers. The Wallace Center has released a Request for Applications (RFA) for food hubs interested in grant support as part of this new work. This grant program is available to both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. The application deadline is March 30, 2014.

[Learn More](#)
2. Farm-To-School Grants

The USDA is pleased to announce new Farm-To-School grants for the fiscal year of 2015. Three different kinds of grants will be available, as well as a separate funding track to support trainings and events. Planning grants are intended for schools just getting started on farm to school activities. Implementation grants are available for schools seeking to augment or expand existing efforts. Additionally, eligible non-profit entities, Indian tribal organizations, state and local agencies, and agriculture producers or groups of producers may apply for support service grants in order to conduct trainings, create complementary curriculum, or further develop supply chains, among other activities. Proposals are due at 11:59 p.m. EST, April 30, 2014. "Connecting American farmers and ranchers with the National School Lunch Program provides schoolchildren with daily access to locally sourced, healthy foods," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "These Farm to School grants will help schools respond to the growing demand for local foods and increase market opportunities for many types of food producers."

Learn More

Conservation News

Resources from the National Conference on Cover Crops Now Available

The National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health, held Feb. 17-19, 2014 in Omaha, Neb., brought together 300 agricultural leaders and innovators to explore how we can make American agriculture more sustainable through improved soil health. Attendees represented agricultural industry, the farm community, academia, government, commodity and conservation organizations. As part of this landmark event, Cover Crops and Soil Health Forums took place Feb. 18 at over 200 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Extension offices nationwide. These forums gave farmers and other agricultural professionals the opportunity to send their thoughts to the national conference and engage in local conversations on cover crops and soil health. Forums were attended by an estimated 6,000 people, ISA staff members included. You can now find conference discussions, presentations, and resources online by visiting the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) website.
Bring Cover Crops to Your Area!
If you are an Agricultural Service Provider that is starting to work with cover crops and would like to learn more for your staff and your patrons about the uses of cover crops, please contact the Illinois Stewardship Alliance to speak with Woody, our cover crop specialist.

Cover Crop Webinars
Improving soil Health not only cleans up water quality and reduces soil loss but also provides a better environment for cash crops to succeed. Learn about basic soil health principles and how cover crops are key to making those happen on your farm. This American Society of Agronomy webinar series will focus on cover crops and their implications on soil health, maximizing yields, livestock considerations, and crop management. The four different webinars are on March 6, 13, 20, and 27, 2014. The time will be 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. and the cost is free,(due to the gracious sponsorships). You can register or participate in the entire series or individual webinars at your convenience. For more information on the series visit the ASA Education website.

Upcoming Events

March 1 Mardi Gras party at the Pasfield House: Springfield
Tony Leone and Deanna Glosser are planning a menu of New Orleans favorites. Dinner will be at 6:00 p.m.
Learn More.

March 1-2 Illinois Products Expo: Springfield
Over 70 Illinois companies will be providing free food samples and selling their products. A few non-food items, such as soy & herb candles and agricultural-based soaps/lotions will also be available to purchase. The Illinois Wine and Cheese Garden will once again be a featured attraction at the Expo. Illinois wineries will participate; selling wine samples and wine by the glass and the bottle. "Illinois Products" gift baskets will also be given away as door prizes.
Learn More.

"Look Who's Knockin: A Retiring Couple Wrestles with the Future of their Farm"
"What Will Be Your Legacy?" is an important question when it comes to farmland. It is also the subject of a play written by Doug Nopar of The Land Stewardship Project.
Monday, March 3: Galesburg Sustainable Business Center, 6:30pm
Wednesday, March 5: Urbana Free Library, 7pm
Saturday, March 8: Wyoming, Stark County Community Center, 3pm
Monday, March 10: Danville Public Library, 6:30pm
Friday, March 14: Peoria Universalist Unitarian Church, 6:30pm
Learn More

March 5 Northern Illinois Strawberry Symposium
This workshop has benefits for all strawberry producers, as well as those who simply want to learn more about raising and marketing strawberries.
Learn More

March 5 Illinois Farmers' Market Workshop: Mt. Vernon
Come learn about new Farmers Market best practices, marketing, management and more in preparation for a bountiful 2014! There'll be a wide range of speakers, locally sourced lunches, networking opportunities and plenty of idea sharing. There's something for everyone, market managers, farmers, vendors and friends of the market welcome.
Learn More

March 6 Central Illinois Sustainable Farming Network Annual Dinner: Bloomington
The upcoming meeting will feature a meal of seasonal, local food, as well as an inspiring speaker with the experience and knowledge to guide and stimulate the local food movement in Central Illinois. Open CISFN members and other interested persons.
Learn More

March 6 Bon Appetit: Harvesting Healthy Habits: Springfield
Learn about herbal supplements, see a demonstration on edible container gardening by a local gardener and learn how foods and herbs can help heal our bodies. Held at the Dove Conference Center in Prairie Heart Institute at St. John's Hospital of Springfield.
Learn More

March 9 4th Annual CSA Expo: Arlington Heights
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a popular way for consumers to buy local, seasonal produce direct from the farmer. Interested consumers purchase a share (a.k.a. membership or subscription) and receive a box (bag, basket) of seasonal produce each week throughout the farming season. Meet over 20 local farmers, taste samples, and find out more about CSA options in the Northwest Suburbs!.
Learn More

Chef-Farmer Mixer: Peoria
Calling all farmers and chefs! Illinois Stewardship Alliance is happy to host a second round of Chef-Farmer Mixers. Participants will have the opportunity to make new business contacts, learn some tricks of the trade, enjoy local wine, beer and appetizers and enjoy ample networking time. The first Mixer will be held at Illinois Central College in Peoria from 6:00-7:30 p.m.
Learn More

**March 10 Soil in the City Conference Abstract Submission Deadline**
Enhancing urban soils in Chicago for living landscapes and healthy communities.
Learn More

**March 13 Conservation Cropping Seminar: Heartland Community College, Normal**
A seminar to provide a significant opportunity for agricultural producers and others to gain valuable information on the numerous environmental and economic benefits of cover crops
Learn More

**March 13-15 Good Food Festival and Conference: Chicago**
Boasting an exhibit hall of over 150 farms, local food artisans, restaurants and non-profits, as well as DIY workshops, tastings, respected speakers, and the wildly popular Localicious dinner, this is the good food event of the season.
Learn More

**March 17 Chef-Farmer Mixer: Bloomington-Normal**
Calling all farmers and chefs! Illinois Stewardship Alliance is happy to host a second round of Chef-Farmer Mixers. Participants will have the opportunity to make new business contacts, learn some tricks of the trade, enjoy local wine, beer and appetizers and enjoy ample networking time. This Mixer will be held in Bloomington from 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Learn More

**Social Media Workshop for the Farm:**
This spring The Land Connection is presenting three one-day workshops that will show you how emerging social media tools are an inexpensive and accessible way to connect with your customers by telling the story of your farm with quick and easy posts. Workshops will provide attendees with:
- Fundamental marketing skills and techniques
- Specific information about online marketing tools, and when and how to use them.
- Practice setting up and using the tools
- Free monthly content with Social Media Starter Kits

**Tuesday, March 18:** Rockford (East Branch of the Public Library), 12:00pm-8:00pm

**Thursday, March 20:** Springfield (U of I Extension Office), 8:30am - 4:30pm

**Monday, March 24:** Carbondale (SIU Dunn-Richmond Center), 8:15am - 4:15pm
Learn More

**March 20 Illinois Farmers’ Market Workshop: Rockford**
Come learn about new Farmers Market best practices, marketing, management and more in preparation for a bountiful 2014! There’ll be a wide range of speakers, locally sourced lunches, networking opportunities and plenty
of idea sharing. There's something for everyone, market managers, farmers, vendors and friends of the market welcome.

Learn More

March 22 4th Annual CSA Expo: Naperville
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a popular way for consumers to buy local, seasonal produce direct from the farmer. Interested consumers purchase a share (a.k.a. membership or subscription) and receive a box (bag, basket) of seasonal produce each week throughout the farming season. Meet over 20 local farmers, taste samples, and find out more about CSA options in the West Suburbs!.

Learn More

March 24 Chef-Farmer Mixer: Springfield
Calling all farmers and chefs! Illinois Stewardship Alliance is happy to host a second round of Chef-Farmer Mixers. Participants will have the opportunity to make new business contacts, learn some tricks of the trade, enjoy local wine, beer and appetizers and enjoy ample networking time. This Mixer will be held at Lincoln Land Community College from 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Learn More

March 26 Local Food Awareness Day: Springfield
On Wednesday, March 26th, local food advocates, farmers, and citizens from across the state will come together in Springfield for Local Food Awareness Day to encourage their legislators to support local food and farms. Local Food Awareness Day will consist of a welcoming address, a civic engagement and lobbying training, a legislative update, and lunch. Following lunch we will descend upon the capitol to educate legislators about the importance of local food systems and advocate for positive policy solutions that support local food systems.

Learn More

March 27 Illinois Farmers' Market Workshop: Springfield
Come learn about new Farmers Market best practices, marketing, management and more in preparation for a bountiful 2014! There'll be a wide range of speakers, locally sourced lunches, networking opportunities and plenty of idea sharing. There's something for everyone, market managers, farmers, vendors and friends of the market welcome.

Learn More

March 31 Chef-Farmer Mixer: Champaign-Urbana
Calling all farmers and chefs! Illinois Stewardship Alliance is happy to host a second round of Chef-Farmer Mixers. Participants will have the opportunity to make new business contacts, learn some tricks of the trade, enjoy local wine, beer and appetizers and enjoy ample networking time. This Mixer will be held in Cafeteria and Company from 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Learn More

For a complete listing of upcoming events, please checkout our Events
Calendar on the ISA website.

Have an event that should be included on our event lineup? Email Molly at molly@ilstewards.org.

Get Involved

Donate
ISA is a non-profit organization. Your donations help us to continue our work in promoting local foods, fair policies, and conservation agriculture. Donate Now

Become a Member
Be part of an Alliance of consumers, farmers and other local food system stakeholders working to increase production and consumption of local foods in Illinois Learn More

Spread the word!
When you send this email to a friend, like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, or connect with us on LinkedIn, you are helping to increase awareness about local food causes in your community. Be a part of the movement and spread the word!

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