



## Sheaves of Gratitude

by Margaret Ryan Boatz  
St. Joseph, Minnesota

I AM LOOKING FOR SAND HILL CRANES, three of them. They're spending the summer in the pasture along the road where I walk. Parents and a yearling crane are feeding and enjoying the bounty of my neighbor's meadow. They have been there for weeks, and usually finding them is easy. This morning I cannot see them anywhere. I am paying attention to that something—anything—that captures my eyes, ears or heart.

On my way down the road, I meet the direct gaze of a large black steer. He has a white face; actually his whole head is white until black blends in and covers his ears. His gently curving horns are cream colored with black tips. He has a black spot right in the center of the top of his head. I notice he also has four cream colored lower legs—quite symmetrical in his markings. His beauty is subtle, but it is his gaze that I notice the most. It appears to be gentle, peaceful, open, and constant. He does not continue to feed but quietly stares at me. I pass him several times to interact with him, and he continues to watch me. I watch him watching me, and so it goes.

My memory goes back to many times in childhood when I was held in peace by the eyes of one of our cattle. What peace can lie in the sense of being seen by another—his ways and mine meeting for a few moments? What do we understand of one another? What meaning do we each bring to the encounter and what can I give to him? What does he receive from me? What will I learn? Clearly, although he stands enclosed in a fence, he blessed me with a sense of calm and a hope that creatures can live together and be at peace.

In my trips back and forth to exchange gazes with the steer, I am surprised again and taken in by that which I don't expect. Across the pasture, a half-grown calf nurses from her

mother. My senses feel open and aware of all that is available for us when we can slowly walk in a meadow on a beautiful early September morning. In relationship to the earth and the natural world all around, I wonder in what ways I am like that calf, a young being, half-formed, swallowing the abundance and sustenance around me in order to live, hoping to grow into more of the fullness of my abilities and responsibilities and thus to offer nourishment back into the world.

I breathe in the beauty of blues and greens, ambers and golds as summer's growth brushes the edge of autumn. In the air, float the scents of hay drying down, seeds ripe and moving, grain ready for harvest at the same time that late season plants remain in flower and growth continues.

On the other side of the road lies my neighbor's hayfield, dotted with round bales. They are full, bursting bundles that strain at the twine and are now at rest, having fallen from the baler, unable to hold any more. For me, they are signs of satiety, being filled, having enough and then a little more. Do I even know when I am too full to take in any more? Do I know when to stop, rest, wait?

As I neared the end of my pondering, I walked past the black steer again. He was still quietly looking at me while I acknowledged

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## Minnesota Project Names New Executive Director



**W**E ARE EAGER to announce the arrival of a new Executive Director who will work out of our St. Paul office. Ms. Rebecca Baumann joined us in late August, moving to the area from her home near Madison, Wisconsin. Welcome, Rebecca!

For six years, Rebecca Baumann was the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association. She is an experienced manager and brings particular skill in coalition building and working across multiple issues or diverse styles. Rebecca grew up on a dairy farm in Ohio, and she can articulate the issues of local foods production. This knowledge is supported by her current connection to a friend's CSA near Belle Plaine, Minnesota.

When asked what drew her to the state, Rebecca speaks of her grown children who recently moved here. When asked what drew her to this position at the Minnesota Project, she pondered the biggest picture. "I believe our culture is at a critical juncture," said Rebecca in an interview. "The Minnesota Project is right there with its three important issues, and we should be ready to jump ahead. If we're not sustainable, as a culture, things just aren't going to continue the way they were. But there are healthier ways to live: within community, with locally grown foods, and with a high quality of life."

Please join the Board and staff in welcoming our new leadership. You can communicate with her at our address or phone (extension 3) or via her e-mail address: rbaumann@mnproject.org. ●

## Dear Readers...

I DROVE ALONG University Avenue past the missing bridge the other day. I saw that my car was traveling an often used path, and I simply didn't stop it. Sure enough, it's missing. The pavement reaches strangely upward and then stops in mid-air. Meanwhile, that day, the morning public radio program was discussing design options, light rail or no light rail, short term or long range solutions.

What a summer of bridges it has been—for our community, for the Minnesota Project, and for me now bridging to a new executive director here. Regarding the 35W bridge, our community learned of loss and gumption, of courage and about something we took for granted—a perception shifted. The Minnesota Project consistently bridges from the ground to policy and from state or federal legislated decisions back to the ground. It will continue this important role. My interim stint here bridged from old leadership to new, and it has had its own curve. It taught me lessons about leadership.

I learned, again, that true leadership is given, not taken. The flow of that leadership shifts—as it always will—when with knowledge and some call comes fresh ownership and a renewed trust of self. At the peak of the curve of this Interim Director position, the

organization's needs awoke me at night. This phase reminded me about the importance of a Board of Directors who volunteer to help carry the stress of any organization. The Board is the bridge to the future, especially when it's the executive position that is in transition. And in our case, several Board members absolutely stood up to the challenge. I thank them.

We want this issue of *Community Connections* to give back to you, our community of readers. Enjoy a bit of poignant poetry set in early autumn. Learn, as I did, about carbon policies, cellulosic ethanol, bridges, floods, and an arctic explorer brave enough to dedicate his life to a global environmental imbalance. And please welcome our new executive director into your midst—see announcement at left.

Meanwhile, I have resumed my autumn role as an instructor at the University of Minnesota. I left the Minnesota Project with new knowledge, a new appreciation, and new friends. I can be reached, as before, at my home office:  
beth@bethwaterhouse.com.

I notice my own sheaves of gratitude these days.

— Beth E. Waterhouse,  
Editor, *Community Connections*,  
since 1992

*The Minnesota Project says hello to two new staff people, two new interns, and a wonderful volunteer: Dan Thiede and Jane Tigan join the energy team working with the Clean Energy Resource Teams and Midwest Ag-Energy Network respectively. We would also like to acknowledge our two Macalester student interns, Asa Diebolt and Sam Adels, as well as Sara Johnson, our intrepid the Heartland Food Network volunteer.*

### PHOTO CREDITS

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# Farm-Based Solutions Address Global Warming

by Amanda Bilek

**I**N MID-AUGUST, the Minnesota Project partnered with the Will Steger Foundation and Environmental Defense to conduct a two-day “renewable energy expedition” with renowned arctic explorer, Will Steger. Will has become a tireless advocate to raise awareness about global warming. He graciously offers his time to speak to audiences and visit with individuals. He keeps a breakneck pace for this cause.

The tour started on August 7th at Farmfest near Redwood Falls. Farmfest is an annual three-day gathering bringing together 30,000 enthusiasts for agriculture exhibits, demonstrations, and current information important to Minnesota farmers.

During the first day of Farmfest, Steger participated in radio interviews, conducted a press briefing, and spoke as keynote for the first Farmfest forum ever to focus on global warming. The afternoon forum, “Global Warming—Agriculture’s Role in Finding Solutions,” began with Steger’s eyewitness account to global warming. Almost 500 people made their way to the afternoon forum to hear this arctic explorer. The audience was abuzz with chatter about the explorer and excitement that he had come to Farmfest to share stories about his journeys across the bottom and the top of the world. What would have been a controversial topic a few years ago was embraced by the audience and Farmfest organizers.

Each audience member received a handout of pictures and descriptions from Steger’s expeditions demonstrating the effects of global warming already taking place in remote regions of the world. Illustrations of the Larsen ice shelf collapse, Greenland sea ice thaws over a period of 15 years, threats

to arctic wildlife populations, and a river of water running through what was once a solid glacier gave the audience real images of global warming effects not commonly seen in the Midwest.

The forum culminated in a response panel, each asked to comment on agricultural solutions to the giant task of reducing global warming pollution. Panel members included:

- Kristin Duncanson, American Soybean Association, National Director
- Gene Sandager, National Corn Growers Association, Board Member
- Mark Willers, Minwind Energy, CEO
- Loni Kemp, Minnesota Project, Senior Policy Analyst

After panel member comments, the audience was given the opportunity to ask questions of the panel and Steger. The opening question challenged the science on global warming.

Steger eloquently pointed out that temperature increases correlate with increased carbon dioxide emissions, demonstrated by measurements taken from the Vostok ice core in Antarctica. He also shared that arctic regions are already feeling the effects of global warming and adapting to survive.

Instead of debating the reality of global warming, audience members then seemed willing to focus their questions on solutions. Wind turbine operation, reduced tillage practices, decreased farm and home energy consumption,

ethanol and biodiesel production, and soil carbon storage were all discussed. It was inspiring to hear the farm-based solutions that exist and to witness farming communities excited by the opportunity to increase the amount of clean, renewable energy produced in Minnesota. Locally-owned renewable energy brings tremendous economic opportunity to rural communities and provides cleaner air and a turn toward energy independence for the nation.

Our community owes Will Steger a huge amount of gratitude for advancing this cause. It has been a pleasure to work with him, and the Minnesota Project looks forward to future opportunities where global warming awareness can be raised to a variety of audiences. ☘



*Other tour stops included a public forum in New Ulm at Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Farmers Union Industries biodiesel plant in Redwood Falls, and the Chippewa Valley Ethanol Company in Benson. To learn more about the Will Steger Renewable Energy Expedition 2007, visit [www.mnproject.org](http://www.mnproject.org)*

# Corn to Cellulose: the Bridge to the Next Generation Biofuel Feedstock

by Jocie Iszler, Director, Midwest Ag-Energy Network

**T**HE 2007 Minnesota Legislative Session was a landmark one for renewable energy. By February, the Governor had signed into law the strongest renewable energy requirement in the nation. On May 25, he also signed the Next Generation Energy Act for more renewable energy, more energy conservation and fewer carbon emissions for Minnesota. Minnesota was on its way to again leading the charge for clean energy.

In the early 1900s, few Americans questioned the wisdom of embracing petroleum as the new transportation energy source. Oil was a new revenue source for the nation. Policy was shaped by the marketplace, and petroleum became one of the most heavily subsidized industries in America. Thoughts that the U.S. would ever need to import 60% of its oil from unstable, foreign governments or that this new black gold would, in 100 short years, be held responsible for adversely impacting the earth's climate, were non-existent.

The 1973 oil shock then served as a wake up call for a small minority of Americans who (among other things) advocated for ethanol production. Hard won state and federal legislation over the next 30 years, championed mainly by corn farmers, energy independence advocates, and environmental groups, culminated in a 7.5 billion

gallon a year renewable fuel standards goal set for 2012. This goal was labeled a victory by some and called woefully inadequate by others.

Fast forward to 2007. The marketplace assurance of the fuel standards, coupled with \$70 per barrel oil, captured the interest of Wall Street, leading to an unprecedented ethanol boom, and a dramatic shift in the ownership status of the ethanol industry. In January 2004, 75% of all ethanol gallons under construction were farmer-owned. By January 2006, this figure had dropped to 11% even while total new construction during those two years exploded by nearly 300%. ([www.ethanolrfa.org](http://www.ethanolrfa.org))



Currently, U.S. ethanol production is 6.5 billion gallons a year (BGY), just one billion gallons shy of the 2012 renewable standards goal, but still far from the 25x25 goal of producing a whopping 65 BGY (25%) of renewable fuel by 2025 ([www.25x25.org](http://www.25x25.org)). Meanwhile, industry experts estimate that 15 BGY is the upper limit of the nation's capacity for corn-ethanol production. Enter:

Cellulosic ethanol to meet the 50 BGY shortfall. Thus the policy debate has shifted from whether there should be more biofuels production to the question of how public policy can optimize the local economic and environmental effects of the biofuels industry.

Given the complexity and the weight of the issue, I am reminded of a famous quote by Stephen Covey: "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." Over the past 100 years since

our blind acceptance of oil as the sole source of transportation energy, we have become wary of the energy market and the consequences of over-dependence on any energy source. Advocacy groups supporting less dependence on foreign oil also represent divergent interests of native forest preservation, sustainable agriculture, conservation, rural economic development, renewable energy, energy efficiency, and global warming.

## CORN ETHANOL PAVED THE WAY FOR CELLULOSIC ETHANOL

primarily by creating market growth through a solid foundation of market drivers and strong political constituencies. The Minnesota Project's strength in bridging the conservation and economic development issues within this arena of policy discussions will serve us as we ask more specifically: How can the history with corn ethanol development best inform economic and environmental policy decisions in this expansion from corn to cellulosic ethanol?

The development of cellulosic ethanol draws on a convergence of the energy marketplace, agriculture, and the environment and requires a diverse mindset for crafting and negotiating policy. During the 2007 Legislative Session, Governor Pawlenty began to position Minnesota as a national leader in the cellulosic biofuels industry. The task of a newly formed board called the "Next Generation Energy Board" is to provide recommendations to the legislature and the governor about how the state can most efficiently achieve energy independence through agriculture and natural resource sustainability. The charge for the NextGen Board and the potential benefit to Minnesota agriculture is substantial. 🍷

# Why This Passion for Locally Grown Foods?

by Kara Ferguson

**B**UYING LOCALLY GROWN FOODS is important for many reasons: it lessens our environmental impact, strengthens local economies and provides fresh and flavorful meals. Yet we do not always eat those meals at home. Heartland Food Network, a collaboration of Minnesota dining establishments and distributors who work closely with regional farmers and producers, asked a few great Minnesota chefs why they are so passionate about using local foods in their dining establishments.

## *Chef Ray Thering, University of Minnesota's Bistro West*

For Chef Ray Thering, the University of Minnesota's Dining Services serve local foods because doing so is an important part of their sustainability efforts and it positively impacts local economies. "Using fresh, locally grown products that have been grown or raised in a sustainable way allows us to return to a closer connection with our food and nature," Rays says.

Chef Ray is busy working with the University's Dining Services and Heartland Food Network to let people know that Bistro West is creating sustainable menus, and he is "excited about having the restaurant on the University campus provide products from local farms."

## *Chef Rick Kimmes, The Oceanaire Seafood Room*

Chef Rick Kimmes believes that local foods are important because he knows that he is serving something that was grown or produced in his community. "Local food allows me to be a part of my community," Kimmes says.

Heartland Food Network helps him connect to local producers and the community by showcasing Kimmes at demonstration events like the Mill City Farmers Market Chef Demonstration series that takes place downtown Minneapolis near the Mill City Museum every Saturday morning.

## *Chef JD Fratzke, Muffuletta Restaurant*

For Chef JD Fratzke, local foods are a family tradition. Having grown up in Winona, Minnesota, an area with lots of local producers, Chef JD knows that "local foods benefit his community and his customers." Many of his guests look for that commitment, which is part of the reason Muffuletta has so much success in using local ingredients and supporting sustainable farmers.

Heartland Food Network has not only "connected him with a group of farmers with these same ethics and ideas," but it has given him a deeper understanding of "what it takes to produce these plants and raise animals in ethical ways." For Chef JD, coming into the restaurant every day and "seeing how many guests respond to the names of the local farms on their menu is incredibly inspiring and is fuel for the fire to make those relationships with local producers." As many have said, this gives people a chance to vote with their forks.

Next time you're in your favorite restaurant, take the time to ask the owners or chef where their food is coming from. Ask them to use more local ingredients and support local family farms. To learn more about dining with local foods in Minnesota, please contact Heartland Food Network, [www.heartlandfoodnetwork.org](http://www.heartlandfoodnetwork.org) or call 651-645-6159, ext 9. ●

## *Debra Lee Bushaw*

1953 TO 2007

Recently, a sad and premature death led to a family's clear statement of values for locally grown and organic foods. In mid July, the family of Debra Bushaw, Glenville, Minnesota, celebrated Debra's years of life as well as her love of cooking, baking, gardening and her commitment to healthy foods. A couple days prior to the memorial, Debra's daughter in law, Natalie Bushaw, called the Minnesota Project office after searching the words "locally grown foods" and finding The Minnesota Project on the Web. The result of this connection was that memorial gifts were directed to the Minnesota Project, specifically designated to our Heartland Food Network. In lieu of flowers, the family preferred memorial gifts to HFN, and we wish to thank them for many small donations now totaling over \$800. We especially note a generous gift from the Simley Basketball Booster Club in Inver Grove Heights.

For many years, Debra and Steve Bushaw owned and operated the Bushaw Bakery in Austin, Minnesota. What a beautiful way to extend their commitment to quality and locally grown foods. Our sincere condolence and our thanks go to the friends and family of Debra Lee Bushaw.

*Heartland Food Network's quarterly recipe will again be featured in the next issue.*



# Carbon on Center Stage:

## The Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group

FEDERAL ACTION on global warming may be inevitable, yet today, states are the laboratories for retooling our country's entire energy system. New England states are working together through the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, and California, Washington and Oregon have formed a West Coast Governors' Global Warming Initiative. Now, Minnesota and the Midwest are stepping up to the plate with task forces in place in four states.

*"Carbon—as our fuel source, and the foundation for all life—has been taken for granted."*

The new *Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group* is charged by Governor Pawlenty and the 2007 Legislature to develop a plan that will reduce the state's global warming emissions by 80% by 2050 with intermediate steps of 15 percent by 2015 and 30 percent by 2025. The recommendations developed by the 50 members and its five technical work groups will keep the focus on clean energy in the next legislative session.

Tim Gieseke, Minnesota Project Agriculture and Environmental Policy Specialist, reflects on his experience as a member of the Ag, Forestry and Waste technical work group. "Carbon," explains Tim, "in its various states of solid, liquid and gas, is definitely getting its time on center stage."

Despite being the true currency of our economy and ecology, carbon—as our fuel source, as an atmospheric regulator and the foundation for all life—has been taken for granted. Recognizing

that, the Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group and its technical subgroups are on a mission to provide policy options to reduce atmospheric carbon via both source reduction and sequestration.

"But we are just at the very tip of the melting iceberg," says Gieseke. "As our policies begin to view gaseous carbon as a pollutant, it will be realized that carbon is the ultimate non-point source pollutant. Its emission and sequestration paths are as ubiquitous as life itself.

Plus, decades-old attempts to reduce other non-point pollutants have fallen far short of success.

"Applying our existing non-point source reduction strategies onto a carbon reduction plan is doomed

to failure, yet recreating a non-point source strategy for carbon may finally shine light on our other non-point source pollution and resource goals.

"If carbon is viewed as our currency, there must be a method to assess its quantity and value and have an exchange rate so a functional 'commerce' can emerge. This commerce can then be merged and formalized within the various levels of our economy."

The value of the carbon molecule, in and of itself, explained Gieseke, must speak to farm, forest, or waste managers and influence their daily

and seasonal activities. As first order producers, farmers and foresters are currently rewarded for the quality and quantity of carbon biomass they create, and incorporating net carbon sequestration outcomes should be a reasonable process.

Waste stream managers, often the last order in the carbon food web, must be motivated to assess and value organic wastes as a carbon commodity of worth, not just a commodity to be sequestered. Few natural or manmade resources have such a high level of order: potential carbon-based energy and greenhouse gas reduction potential in comparison to their current economic value as garbage. Affecting the very substance of life and energy, any carbon management strategy must be far more comprehensive than sequestration measurement.

Minnesota Project staff, Tim Gieseke, is considering this whole wide issue of carbon. Staff members Amanda Bilek and Lola Schoenrich were leaders in *Clean Energy Minnesota*, the legislative campaign that this year won the global warming emission reduction goals and a new renewable electricity standard of 25% by 2025, energy efficiency improvements, and a framework for launching the next generation of biofuels from perennial crops in Minnesota. All are first steps in achieving goals to reduce global warming. ♣

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### GRATITUDE *from p. 1*

to myself and to him the meaning and blessing of our interaction. Then he turned his back and resumed grazing. I slowly walked home. —A lot of questions grow in the drinking meadow alongside sheaves of gratitude.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Margie Boatz is a spiritual director living in rural St. Joseph, Minnesota. She facilitates workshops and retreats on topics of spirituality and justice with a deep concern about our responsibilities and choices involving the environment. In addition, she manages her family's century farm in NW Minnesota. ♣*

## Too Much

by Loni Kemp

**M**Y KITCHEN COUNTERS are piled high with baskets of red, yellow, and green peppers. A crate of tomatoes, stacks of eggplants and zucchini, cucumbers turning yellow on me—they all seem to cry out, “You created us! We are at the peak of perfection! We can’t last! Preserve us now!” Their urgent demands to get to work come at the very moment when I’ve about had my fill of gardening.

Up until now, the garden has been my calling. Every time I’d sit down in the lawn chair, intending to simply revel in the sounds, smells and sights of summer, I found myself hopping up to pull a weed. Oh, and I might as well deadhead that rose, stake up a flopping nepeta, pick up those fallen apples, snatch some green beans for dinner... And off I’d go into that self-sustaining reverie of caring for a living, ever-changing garden.

Now it is nearing summer’s end, and I want some relaxation. At last I am ready to lie in the hammock and read a whole book in one day. But no, this is the very moment when the sheer fecundity of fabulous food calls on the Midwest work ethic buried in my heart.

Fortunately, the weather decided to help me out with a weekend of constant rains and decidedly fallish temperatures. Just the roadblock I needed to turn around and march into the kitchen. I begin a flurry of tomato roasting and salsa chopping. An enormous pot of ratatouille goes on to simmer, as the accompaniment to polenta for dinner. I’m still thinking of pickles and babaganoush when the radio and the telephone both interrupt me.

As I’m listening to the radio, I begin to realize that the generous four inches of rain we are accumulating is doubled and quadrupled in nearby areas by what is turning into the heaviest rainfall in memory. Towns flooded, roads washed out, mudslides shoved houses aside, and hundreds have flooded basements. Our internet goes out as the headquarters for our regional telephone cooperative is caught in the Rushford flood, and many are without basic phone and electricity.

A neighbor on a trip to Montana calls to ask me to check on his wife who isn’t answering her phone. The national news had covered the torrential rains and floods around here, and he worried about their new house which is not far out of the floodplain. Our Weisel Creek valley has been spared this time, but Fillmore County history books tell of the great Weisel Creek flood of 1866 when 16 sleeping settlers were washed away in their cabins to their death in the night. We were luckier this time, and a quick walk across the road reveals that all is well with his wife and home.

The end of summer comes with a gush of “too much”—rampant growth, piles of vegetables, and so much water. My heart goes out to all whose lives are thrown into chaos by the record rainfalls of 2007. While other parts of the region shrivel from drought, Southeast Minnesota is drowning in excess. ♣



### MOTHER’S GARDEN

I remember how the squash  
Climbed the wire fence  
In Mother’s summer garden.

Their sprawling arms moving quickly  
Toward the sun, clutching tiny fruit  
In small green gloves.

At last they reached the top  
And tumbled over with open hands  
Revealing sacred golden orbs.

They scurried to the shelter  
Of a robust tomato nation  
Where they lay nurtured and secure.

Toads spoke to them of forgotten  
Children who read in garden leaves  
Secrets of corn and mysteries of beans.

The plump squash grew rich and ripe  
As I sat alone in Mother’s garden  
Reading leaves of corn and beans.

– Anne M. Dunn  
Ogema, Minnesota

# the MINNESOTA PROJECT

working for strong local economies,  
vibrant communities, and a healthy environment

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## PRESERVES

In late summer, my mother had to be ready to can at a moment's notice. My dad would roll the Dodge into the driveway straight up to the back walk, slam the door, open the trunk with a great creak, and out would come crates of peaches. He'd set them down on the kitchen table. "Eisenberg's!" he smiled. "Two bucks! A few soft spots."

More than a few. My mother dropped everything to preserve the peaches from perishing completely. Out came the big kettle, the mason jars, the lids. For a day or two the downstairs was engulfed in steam from the scalding water.

Later on, there would be pears, apricots, and hundreds of tomatoes. There was a joyful industry about it, the sun pouring in from the back porch, the first morning glories climbing the windows, but something else as well. Small kitchen accidents. My mother's hand with a cut from a sharpened knife, a blister from the funnel teetering as she poured the syrup into the jars. A dark undercurrent: not having a say, a husband full of the pleasures of commerce, standing on her feet too long.

The beautiful halves of the peach, he said, she said, steam, August.

– *Norita Dittberner-Jax*  
*Saint Paul, MN*



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