



Illinois Small Farm News

Landwise—Featuring Innovative Illinois Farmers

Life Lessons for Cowboys and Cowgirls *Jason Peterson*

A camper shuffles into the Runaway Buckers Cowboy/Cowgirl camp with his jeans sagging below his hips. But before the camp's owner, Reginald Stewart, even has to say anything, the camper is on his way to the barn to get a hay string to use as a belt. The kids at Stewart's camp learn the rules quickly. "If you don't wear a belt, that means your pants sag. And if your pants sag, that means you're not interested in riding horses today," says Stewart, who runs the camp with his wife Brenda on their 8-acre farm about 17 miles from Kankakee.

In addition to the horses, the summer camp is a working farm; and thanks to a SARE grant, the Stewarts were able to expand the farm, plant new crops, travel to different farmer's markets, and purchase equipment necessary for the markets, such as baskets, tables, and canopies. The grant also allowed them to implement a "time CSA." Rather than paying a fee, members of the CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) invest their time by helping with the planting, picking, and distribution. In return,

they share in the harvest.

Stewart grew up in a rough area on the west side of Chicago. But his dad owned farmland in Pembroke, Illinois, and would take Stewart and his siblings there on the weekends to divert them from the rampant gang activity in his neighborhood. Stewart says



Reginald and Brenda Stewart

he was not crazy about the farming, but he enjoyed the horses and even participated in rodeos with his brother and cousins. His father's strategy worked. Stewart had no arrest record and did not get drawn into any of the gangs.

Stewart now has a family of his own, and about 10 years ago they left Chicago for Pembroke Township to find some peace and quiet. However, he and his wife

noticed that the Kankakee area had limited opportunities for youth. So they decided to start the camp in 2002. "Kids always look to television and music, which makes the bling-bling and city living look attractive. They overlook the great potential they have right here in their own backyard," says Stewart.

The horses were a natural draw, and the camp started out by offering only horseback riding. Irene Seals, owner of nearby Boots and Saddles Ranch and a longtime friend of Stewart, allowed the Stewarts to use her horses to teach equestrian skills. Once they got the equestrian program on its feet, the camp expanded into farming in 2006. "The farming allows kids to see that tomatoes don't just come off of store shelves," Stewart says. "Greens aren't just something that momma throws in a pot."

The camp typically runs from late June to the middle of August, with two sessions offered: a weekday and a weekend session with

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Resource Spotlight: Midwest Cover Crops Council (MCCC)

The goal of the Midwest Cover Crops Council (MCCC) is to facilitate widespread adoption of cover crops throughout the Midwest, to improve ecological, economic, and social sustainability. MCCC is a diverse group from academia, production agriculture, non-governmental organizations, commodity interests, private sector, and representatives from federal and state agencies collaborating to address soil, water, air, and agricultural quality concerns in the Great Lakes and Mississippi river basins.

www.mccc.msui.edu



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Resource Spotlight: Illinois Forestry

The Illinois Forestry web site is designed to raise awareness, inform, and most importantly educate citizens, students, teachers, landowners, environmental groups, natural resource managers, foresters, and loggers about forestry and Illinois' most valuable, renewable natural resource - trees.

web.extension.uiuc.edu/forestry/home.html



Photo by ATVG
(iStockphoto)

SARE Corner

Information and Resources about the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program

NCR-SARE Announces
2009 Call for Professional
Development Program
Preproposals

The 2009 North Central
Region Sustainable
Agriculture Research and
Education Program's (NCR-
SARE) Professional
Development Call for
Preproposals is now
available online at [sare.org/
nrcsare/PDP/pdp.htm](http://sare.org/nrcsare/PDP/pdp.htm).

The PDP provides funds for professional development projects that provide sustainable agriculture training to agricultural professionals and educators in the Cooperative Extension Service (CES), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), other governmental agencies, and educators in the profit and non-profit sector serving the food and fiber system.

Projects can be two to three years in duration, and funding level is capped at \$75,000 for each project, but projects requesting less than full amount are encouraged. Approximately \$400,000 will be available for funding. The deadline is 4:30 pm CST on Monday, May 22, 2009.

Any questions regarding the program should be addressed to Paula Ford (pford@ksu.edu, 785-532-5328), Linda Kleinschmit (LindaKL@ksu.edu,

402-254-3310) or Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant (cvnghgrn@illinois.edu, 217-968-5512)

North Central Region
SARE Brief Sheets

SARE Outreach
[www.sare.org/about/
outreach.shtml](http://www.sare.org/about/outreach.shtml)
has new database querying abilities, and can now generate overviews of SARE's portfolio per topic and per region. They have begun producing these Brief Sheets at the national level, and are working to produce them at the regional level to inform people about SARE's ongoing efforts in areas that have received attention through the farm bill. The North Central Region SARE Program has developed six Brief Sheets: Agroforestry; Alternative Marketing; Beginning Farmers; Bioenergy; Organic Farming and Speciality Crops. For more information - [http://
web.extension.uiuc.edu/
smallfarm/sare/](http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/sare/)

Reaping the Rewards of
Our SARE Investment

On December 8, 2008, Illinois farmers who had received a NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher grant, Extension educators and agricultural researchers met to discuss how they currently partner and how they might partner more in

the future. The workshop included a "fishbowl" facilitation process and small group discussion. It was a unique opportunity for farmers, educators, and researchers to meet face-to-face and share their experiences and ideas for the future.

Since 1992, 43 NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher grants have been awarded in Illinois. This represents a wealth of knowledge and expertise that can benefit all those involved in agriculture. The objectives of the meeting included: learning directly from farmers' experiences; identifying future research and education needs; and setting priorities and identifying ways to share information.

The publication, *Reaping the Rewards of Our SARE Investment* is available at [web.extension.uiuc.edu/
smallfarm/pdf/
reaping_rewards.pdf](http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/pdf/reaping_rewards.pdf). The individual profiles, as well as the publication, *Fishbowls in the Field: Using Listening to Join Farmers, Ranchers and Educators in Advancing Sustainable Agriculture*, are available at [web.extension.uiuc.edu/
smallfarm/oursare.cfm](http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/oursare.cfm)

The workshop and publication were supported by a grant from the NCR-SARE Professional Development Program.

Organizations and Programs Supporting Small Farms

5th National Small Farm Conference

The 5th National Small Farm Conference, "Roadmap to Success for Small Farmers and Ranchers," hosted by University of Illinois Extension, will

be held September 15 to 17, 2009 at the Hilton Hotel and the Prairie Capital Convention Center in Springfield, Illinois.

The conference, held every three to four years, brings together land grant universities,

community-based organizations and other stakeholders who work with small farmers and ranchers. The conference aims to strengthen collaboration and partnership among groups and provide an opportunity to share new ideas in research, extension and outreach.

The conference will include pre-conference short courses, concurrent sessions, posters, exhibits, plenary sessions, and educational tours.

For more information, visit: www.conferences.uiuc.edu/conferences/conferenceviewer2/view.cfm?conf=20033



The 5th National Small Farm Conference will be September 15-17 in Springfield.



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Life Lessons for Cowboys and Cowgirls...

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breakfast and lunch provided. The emphasis is on attracting African-American youth, although the camp does have Caucasian and Hispanic participants as well. The only requirement is that you have a love for horses or farming, he says.

Stewart farms about 5 acres of crops, and all of the kids have a hand in something. However, Stewart can take only the older youth to the farmer's market—mostly eighth-graders and high school students. These kids have to prepare an inventory before they leave for the

market and need to know the expected revenue. In other words, they get a crash course in consumer economics.

But most of all, the campers learn respect and discipline, Stewart says. The first thing campers learn is to respect the animals, which is especially important when dealing with larger animals. The camp also has a segment called "life lessons," which teaches the kids teamwork, sharing, communication, and responsibility. And it works. Stewart says he has had parents come to him and say their kids have been asking them what chores they can

do around the house. They say, "Momma, what do you want us to do? Mr. Stewart always makes us work."

There have been tragic stories, such as one boy who was killed in a drive-by shooting in Chicago. But Stewart has seen a lot of growth in his campers, some of whom have gone on to study engineering and agriculture. One girl, who started attending camp as a freshman in high school, is now studying veterinarian medicine at Elmhurst College. "Some of these kids have problems, and we learn to deal with it," Stewart says. "But they're not problem kids."

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Photo by Amber Antozak (iStockphoto)
www.indezyn.com

Calendar

April 25, 2009
Heartland College
Sustainability Tour
of Stelle
Location: Stelle, IL
Visit:
www.centerforsustainablecommunity.org/Events/HeartlandCollegeTour.htm

May 14, 2009
Local Flavor: A Taste
of the Seasons
Location: Quincy, IL
Visit:
web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/workshops.cfm

May 16, 2009
Evaluating Soil Quality
and Soil Maps
Location: Champaign, IL
Visit:
web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/events.cfm

May 23, 2009
Equipment for Small
Farmers
Location: Fairbury, IL
Visit:
web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/events.cfm

June 4-7, 2009
Four-Day Suburban-Urban
Permaculture Intensive at
Purdue
Location: W. Lafayette, IN
Visit:
www.midwestpermaculture.com/suburban-urban%20intensive.php

Additional events may be found on University of Illinois Extension's small farm website at: <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/events.cfm>.



University of Illinois
Extension
Small Farm Program

www.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm



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If you have any questions or comments, please contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant at (217)968-5512, cvnghgrn@illinois.edu.

University of Illinois - U.S. Department of Agriculture - Local Extension Councils Cooperating

University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

If you need a disability accommodation to participate in any University of Illinois Extension program listed in this newsletter, please contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant at (217)968-5512, cvnghgrn@illinois.edu.

Is Entrepreneurial Farming for You?

Come to this 4-hour workshop and find out what it takes to start and manage your own farm-based business.

June 1
Virginia, IL

June 16
Lincoln, IL

June 22
Pembroke, IL

June 29
Arthur, IL

For more information visit:
www.thelandconnection.org

2009 Sustainable Agriculture Tours

May 14, Organic Meats and Poultry
Open Range Products in Pecatonica, IL and Eickman's Processing
Location: Seward, IL

June 19, Growing Strawberries Naturally
Jed's Farm
Location: Thompsonville, IL

July 7, Grass-fed Beef, Pastured Chickens and Eggs
Meadow Haven Farm and Graze N' Grow Farm
Location: Sheffield, IL

August 13, Creative Community Co-op Farming
Basu Natural Farms
Location: Pembroke, IL

August 15, Raising Elk and Innovative Farming
Mackinaw Valley Elk Farm and Blue Schoolhouse Farm
Location: Congerville, IL

September 22, Fresh Fruits and Vegetables
River Front Berry Farm
Location: Martinton, IL
www.riverfrontberryfarm.com/

For more information visit:
web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/ag_tours.cfm

Illinois Small Farm News is published by University of Illinois Extension's Small Farm Program. This newsletter is designed to inform its readers (both the commercial small farmer as well as the small acreage landowner) about the latest small farm programs and about people and activities in the state of Illinois, as well as in the Midwest region and our nation. Edited and produced by Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant; layout by Stacey Thomas and designed by Kyla Kruse.

University of Illinois Extension is the flagship outreach effort of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, offering educational programs to residents of all of Illinois' 102 counties—and far beyond.

Through learning partnerships that put knowledge to work, U of I Extension's programs are aimed at making life better, healthier, safer and more profitable for individuals and their communities.