



Farm to Cafeteria NETWORKING & PLANNING

BIOGRAPHIES

Peter Abrahamson is currently a General Manager for Bon Appétit Management Company at St. Olaf College in Northfield Minnesota. He has worked at St. Olaf for seven years and started as the Executive Chef. He has worked at a wide variety of kitchens for 30 years.

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Pam Benike is the General Manager of the Southeast MN Food Network, a marketing and distribution collaborative of over 90 farms, providing sustainably grown food products to restaurants, retail groceries, food co-ops, and institutions. Benike is also a sixth generation Minnesota farmer. Her farm, Prairie Hollow, is a grass-based dairy. Benike makes a variety of artisan cheeses from the milk. She and her sons, Isaiah and Jonathan, also raise grass-fed beef, organic produce, and heirloom wheat for flour. See www.prairiehollow.com for more details.

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Sandy and Lonny Dietz own Whitewater Gardens outside of Whitewater State park in Southeast Minnesota. Sandy and Lonny have a small, diversified farm where they grow 8-10 acres of vegetables which they provide to local Farmer's markets, a small CSA, restaurants, food co-ops, and institutions (including Winona Public Schools, Ridgeway Community School, and Winona State University). Their produce is grown using organic, biological methods. This coming season Sandy and Lonny will transition into year round production with their new geothermal greenhouse.

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Gail Griffin is co-owner, with husband David, of Rockie Hill Bison Farm. The farm sells USDA inspected bison meat locally to both commercial and retail accounts including Winona Public School. The farm is also recognized nationally for exceptional breeding stock all while welcoming a significant number of visitors to tour the farm operation. Gail retired in 1995 as the Director of Dietetics of Winona Hospital to blend her nutrition and food service knowledge to assist in advancing the bison industry. Gail is active in her community, is Executive Director of the Minnesota Buffalo Association, and is the Immediate Past President of both MN Dept. of Ag - MN Grown Partners and the National Bison Association.

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Lesli Haines has been working with Winona County Environmental Services as a Registered Sanitarian/Environmental Health Specialist for almost eight years. In her position she works with food, beverage, lodging, campground, mobile home park, and swimming pool operators to help ensure the public is served as safely as possible under the confines of regulating codes. She graduated from Winona State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology. Prior to her current position she was a Veterinary Technician at Pet Medical Center in Winona where she specialized in laboratory, radiology, surgery, and animal behavior. She also served as a Pet Dog Trainer for the animal hospital and continues to offer classes there, thus fulfilling her love of working with animals. Additionally, she enjoys cooking, camping, gardening, and spending time with her husband, Chad, nine year old son, Jacob, six year old daughter, Jeananne, and two cats and a dog. She and her family are in the final stages of completing an old farmhouse renovation in rural Winona County and are looking forward to moving in soon, getting back to country living, and reaping the rewards of planting a large garden plot-that is if they can keep the deer, coons, rabbits, and other creatures from consuming it first.

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STEPHANIE HEIM is the Farm to School coordinator for the University of Minnesota - Extension where she connects community needs with University resources. Her current work involves coordinating Farm to School workshops across Minnesota (like this one), integrating Farm to School within SNAP-Ed in the Nutrition Education Program, and providing technical assistance to schools to expand Farm to School activities. She also developed the promotional materials for Minnesota's Farm to School online toolkit. Stephanie is a registered dietitian and serves as the state policy representative for the Minnesota Dietetic Association and contributes as a member of a Farm to School workgroup for the Statewide Health Improvement Program. She has a Master's degree in Public Health Nutrition from the School of Public Health and bachelors in health and wellness from the University of Minnesota.

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Larry Kruger graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1969 with a degree in Animal Science followed by two years in the United States Marine Corp. Larry started with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in 1972 working as a Food Inspector in St. Paul and later in Rochester. He has conducted inspections of retail food establishments, food processing plants, wholesale food handlers and vegetable canning and freezing plants. Larry currently supervises eleven full time inspectors in an area that encompasses about two-thirds of the state of Minnesota.

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LYNN MADER joined IATP in late 2009 as a Senior Program Associate for Local Foods. She has previously worked for the University of Minnesota implementing and developing resources for Farm to School programs. Her work focuses on improving the health of K-12 children through educational programs, experiences and school food service that connects farming and nutritious and healthy foods. She has been involved with local foods and alternative nutrition initiatives for the last 20 years. She is a registered, licensed dietitian, has taught college level nutrition, cooking for health classes, and has foodservice and clinic management experience. Lynn has served on various boards including the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), Hunger and Environmental Nutrition (HEN) DPG of the American Dietetic Association, Montevideo Nutrition and Fitness Task Force, Montevideo Schools Wellness Committee, and The Cultural Diversity Council of the Upper MN River Valley. She lives in Montevideo, MN with husband Mark and daughter Marissa.

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BETH M. NELSON is the Associate Program Director for the Information Exchange Program of the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture. The Information Exchange Program serves as a clearinghouse for sustainable agriculture information, making materials available to a broad audience in printed and electronic formats. Beth co-authored with Jane Jewett the popular "Marketing Local Food" publication, and coordinated the development of the Minnesota Farm to School Toolkit for Food Service. Beth also serves as Minnesota's North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture and Research Education Program (NCR-SARE) coordinator, providing professional development opportunities for educators. Beth has a Master's Degree from Purdue University and a Ph.D. in plant physiology from the University of Minnesota.

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David Olson of Reinhart Foodservice has been involved with produce for 36 years. He led produce purchasing of both local and non-local produce in merchandising and procurement for 18 years, produce sales management for 5 years, and has held the role of produce warehouse food safety auditor that has included work around HACCP, critical record reports, good agriculture practices, standing operating procedures and sanitation standard operating procedures.

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MICHELLE SCHERMANN, U of MN Agricultural Safety and Health Research Fellow, works at the intersection of human health, agricultural safety, and natural resource management, with a special focus on Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and preparing growers for food safety audits. Schermann is the Minnesota collaborator on the National GAPs Program and in 2008 created FSP4U, food safety plans and templates for growers, which was described as “a quality manual” by the USDA vegetable auditor. Recipient of a prestigious US Forest Service Chief’s Honor Award in 2009 for work related to Hmong Americans’ use of public lands, Michele has also repeatedly received special recognition for her research, teaching and outreach from the University of Minnesota. She is a masters’ graduate of the University’s School of Nursing, with undergraduate degrees in nursing and in horticulture and is currently housed in the U of MN Bioproducts & Biosystems Engineering Department.

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Tom van der Linden is a University of Minnesota Extension Educator in Winona County. He works on all aspects of agriculture, but particularly sustainable agriculture and small farms. His most recent project was “Faces of our Farmers” a travelling photo essay showcasing a dozen Winona County farms. You can see the photos and stories online by Googling Faces of our Farmers and Minnesota. He has built his own greenhouse and is learning the ins and outs of greenhouse culture. He has a keen interest in horticulture, forest management. For 20 years, Tom and his wife Jean co-published Houston County News, a weekly newspaper in La Crescent.

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