KERR CENTER

Field Notes

40 YEARS of good ideas

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture

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Kerr Center in 2005:

Celebrating 40 Years of Good Ideas

Robert S. Kerr

This year marks a milestone for the Kerr Center: forty years of service to the state's farmers and ranchers.

Oklahoma's visionary senator Robert S. Kerr (born 1896) worked for a prosperous future for rural Oklahoma. After he died suddenly in 1963, his family established a private, non-profit foundation in his name to engage in scientific, educational and charitable activities.

The agricultural division of the Kerr Foundation was established in 1965 to provide farmers and ranchers in southeastern Oklahoma with free technical assistance and information. Wise land stewardship was emphasized.

The "ag division" was headquartered on Senator Kerr's ranch near Poteau and its focus was on beef cattle. Before long, the foundation gained a reputation as a source of honest, reliable, science-based information.

> To use, to understand, to love the soil, is a civilizing process
> —Robert S. Kerr

The organization led a hard-fought local, later national educational campaign against brucellosis, a serious cattle disease. (When Oklahoma was certified free from brucellosis in 2001, the Kerr Center was honored for its part in this achievement.)

In the mid-80s, foundation trustees, led by the senator's daughter, Kay Adair, recognized that Oklahoma agriculture was in crisis. Environmental and financial problems on the farm needed to be addressed with fresh ideas that emphasized long-term solutions.

So in the best Oklahoma pioneering tradition, the organization made a fresh start, reorganizing as the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture in 1985.

The principles of the sustainable agriculture movement— opportunities for small and medium-sized independent family farms, protection of natural resources, fair and open markets, and healthy, socially supportive rural communities— were a natural fit for the Kerr Center.

Under the dynamic leadership of Dr. James E. Horne, president and CEO, the Kerr Center has become an award-winning, innovative institution— a local and national leader in finding creative solutions to the agricultural, environmental, and social challenges facing Oklahoma and the nation.

Today the Kerr Center continues its forty-year history of supporting research and educational activities for Oklahomans and people in the region. Many educational events are planned for this year—see page 13 for details.

The center also supports innovative policy initiatives and provides policy guidance to public servants on the state, regional, and national levels. A new community foods initiative is outlined, beginning on page 3.

With the help of partners and friends, the Kerr Center will be planting seeds of positive change for years to come.

The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture offers progressive leadership and educational programs to all those interested in making farming and ranching environmentally friendly, socially equitable, and economically viable over the long term.

The Kerr Center is a non-profit foundation located on 4,000 acres near the southeastern Oklahoma town of Poteau. It was established in 1985.

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- Oklahoma Producer Grants
- The Stewardship Farm
- Rural Development and Public Policy
- Communications/Education
- Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm

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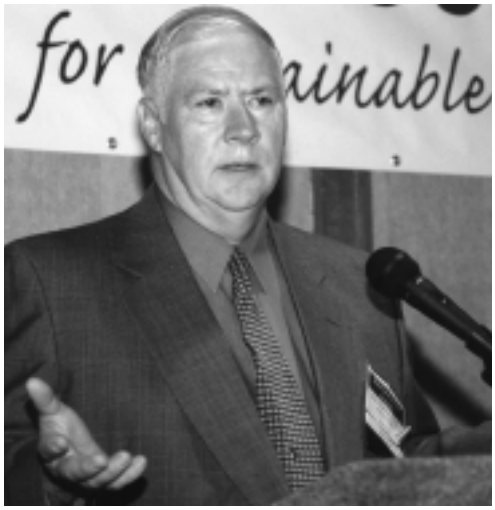

Jim Horne

Horne to Lecture at Auburn

Kerr Center President and CEO Jim Horne will deliver a public lecture at Auburn University, Wednesday, Feb. 23, as part of the Auburn University College of Agriculture's E.T. York Distinguished Lecture Series.

The York Lecture Series brings to Auburn University speakers who "have demonstrated outstanding leadership in advancing knowledge and disseminating information through teaching, research or extension."

Since 1981, the series has brought 28 national and international agricultural leaders to Auburn to deliver forward thinking, thought provoking presentations regarding key issues in agriculture.

Past speakers include Fred Kirschenmann, Joe Lewis and Norman Borlaug.

Horne will discuss "Emerging Food Systems: Creating Opportunities for Farmers and Rural Communities" in the public lecture. The next day he will give a technical presentation focused specifically on achieving sustainability on farms and ranches in the South.

Horne believes sustainable agriculture—a system of farming that is both economically and environmentally sound—is the key to revitalizing rural communities.

Under his leadership, the Kerr Center has become an award-winning, innovative institution—a local and national leader in finding creative solutions to the agricultural, environmental and social challenges facing Oklahoma and the nation.

Horne is the co-author of *The Next Green Revolution: Essential Steps to a Healthy, Sustainable Agriculture*, a readable, practical introduction to sustainable agriculture—what it means and why it is needed.

The book gives practical suggestions for increasing profits and reducing risks while regenerating the soil, protecting the environment and being a good neighbor.

In his public lecture at Auburn, Horne will discuss the widespread, emerging interest in local food systems, outlining the potential such "farm-to-table" local food systems have for supporting small-scale family farm agriculture, reviving rural communities and meeting the needs of consumers.

To order *The Next Green Revolution: Essential Steps to a Healthy, Sustainable Agriculture*, visit **www.kerrcenter.com** or call the Kerr Center office.

From Field to Fork: Food Security in Oklahoma

– Maura McDermott

Secure: Free from danger or risk of loss; safe. Not likely to fail or give way; stable. Assured, guaranteed.

Homeland security. Household security. Personal security. No doubt about it, security is on the minds of Americans these days.

What about *food* security? Do we have it, in America, in Oklahoma, in our communities?

How you define food security determines the answer. People define it in a number of different ways— some definitions are narrow, some broad.

To some people food security simply means protecting our food supply from terrorist attack.

Others see food security as the need to protect our agriculture from diseases such as hoof and mouth or mad cow, or the need to protect our food from contamination by food-borne pathogens such as *E coli*, or by hazardous pesticides.

Many equate food security with food abundance: if America's grocery shelves are full, our food supply must be secure.

Still others say that only adopting a more sustainable agriculture will guarantee we have food security, especially in the future. They say we need more farmers on the land, more local markets for locally-grown foods, more contact between farmers and consumers, more diversified farms, more profitable farms, more environmentally friendly farms— if we want our food system to be truly secure.

Others see food security through completely different glasses. To people who work in the social services, food security means that people have physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs.

In fact, the numbers of people who are food insecure are regularly counted: in Oklahoma, 14.1 of Oklahoma households have "limited or uncertain access to nutritious, safe foods…; households that experience food insecurity have reduced quality or variety of meals and may have irregular food intake."

In about five percent of Oklahoma households, (the most in the nation) people are going hungry on a regular basis.

Food security: same term, varying points of view. In recent years, people working in disparate fields (public health, sustainable agriculture, anti-hunger, community nutrition) have attempted to tie many of these interpretations together, setting forth a new concept: community food security.

Community Food Security (CFS)

According to the USDA there is no universally accepted definition of community food security. One popular definition is:

A situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes self reliance and social justice.[i]

Another: *A sustainable community food system improves the health of the community, environment, and individuals over time, and involves a collaborative effort …to build locally based, self reliant food systems and economies.*[ii]

It means fresher, tastier food for everyone who eats, and a style of economic growth whose benefits stay home, rather than vanishing out-of-state or overseas.

The key words are self reliant, health, and local— the goal for any given community being an increase in food-based economic development that maximizes production and consumption on the local level, close to home.

I like to think of community food security as a jigsaw puzzle—with each piece of the puzzle contributing to community food security.

So, one piece might be a farm-to-school program—where kids of all income levels are eating fresh, nutritious food grown at a nearby farm. Another piece could be a farmers' market, where farmers sell direct to consumers and make retail profits.

Yet another might be a class in a community center where folks learn how to cook a healthy, tasty meal. Still another might be a program providing grants to farmers who want to add value to their crops and bring dollars into their communities.

I could go on— the puzzle has many pieces. It's one of those big jigsaws that will take some time to complete.

Still, it's a puzzle worth working on.

i Hamm, MW, Bellows AC. Community food security and nutrition educators. J Nut Educ Behav. 2003;35:37-43

ii McCullum, C., et al. Evidence-Based Strategies to Build Community Food Security. *J Amer Diet Assoc. 2005:105 #2:278-283.*

Kerr Center to Tackle Community Food Security

– Doug Walton and Maura McDermott

Some issues addressed under the label of Community Food Security:

- Food availability and affordability
- Direct food marketing
- Diet-related health problems
- Participation in and access to federal nutrition assistance programs
- Ecologically sustainable agricultural production
- Farmland preservation
- Economic viability of rural communities
- Economic opportunity and job security
- Community development and social cohesion

Early last fall, the Kerr Center received a grant from the USDA's Community Food Projects Initiative, a national competitive grant program.

In 2004, the USDA awarded 25 grants totaling $4.6 million to organizations in 17 states. Since its inception in 1996, the program has funded 186 projects to increase food security in communities around the country.

The Kerr Center project "Building a Foundation for Food Security in Oklahoma" is the first and only project in Oklahoma to be funded by this program to date.

Photo Courtesy *Tulsa World*

The grant will run through June '07 and enable the Kerr Center and the Oklahoma Food Policy Council (see sidebar) to work with diverse groups to "craft comprehensive responses to pressing food, farm and nutrition issues" in Oklahoma, such as the state's high rates of poverty and food insecurity, the obesity epidemic and poor nutrition of children, and the ongoing economic challenges faced by Oklahoma small farms and rural communities.

Partners in the project include the Oklahoma Food Policy Council; Oklahoma Departments of: Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Human Services, and Environmental Quality; OSU Cooperative Extension Service; Northeastern State University; Oklahoma Sustainability Network; Oklahoma Sierra Club, and Wylie Harris, Food and Society Policy Fellow of the Kellogg Foundation.

Supporters include the Oklahoma Agriculture Statistics Service, Oklahoma Department of Education, Oklahoma Conference of Churches, Action for Healthy Oklahoma Kids, Oklahoma Farmers' Market Alliance, and the Oklahoma Farmers Union

One of the goals of the grant is to **expand the knowledge base of the Oklahoma Food Policy Council**. In order to do this, the grant will fund an assessment of Oklahoma's food system (see sidebar), in which basic information about food, health and agriculture in the state will be compiled in a user-friendly format. This comprehensive report about Oklahoma's food system will be written to identify:

- The greatest threats to health and food security within Oklahoma.
- The extent that Oklahoma can increase its food self-reliance, and the potential economic and social benefits of doing so.
- Policy recommendations to address specific problems and opportunities identified in the assessment.

The report will be presented to the council to be used in stimulating a dialogue in the state about current and future state policies that pertain to food, farming and nutrition.

Another goal of the grant is **to increase public understanding of Oklahoma's food system**. Activities to achieve this goal include:

- A **Seminar** on the food system report for policy makers.
- A **Public Awareness Campaign** to increase understanding of food security and how our food choices affect our own health and the health of our communities and local economies. We will be working with partnering organizations to coordinate coverage of food security topics and to report on project. progress in *Field Notes* and other media.
- **Educational Outreach** to nearly 5000 limited-resource families in the state. Nutritional coaches from OSU's Community Nutrition

Education Program will provide information about fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets in Oklahoma.

- **Farmers' Speakers' Bureau.** Working with Oklahoma's Ag in the Classroom (OAITC) program, we will establish a database of farmers and ranchers interested in visiting schools, or hosting farm tours, to be used by Oklahoma schoolteachers.
- **Teacher Workshops.** Touring CSA farms, visiting farmers' markets, school and community gardens, and eating locally grown meals are a few of the activities planned for public school teachers, again in partnership with the Ag in the Classroom Program. We will provide classroom seminars and hands-on training on school gardening, cooking and eating activities with kids, and farm-to-school initiatives.
- **School Curriculum and Activities**. We'll be working with OAITC's curriculum writers and teacher trainers to include more experiential learning activities that teach children how food is grown (such as school gardens), while encouraging healthy eating habits, by preparing and eating nutritious foods that are produced in Oklahoma.

The third goal of the grant is to **support development of farm-to-school programs**. These programs have the potential to improve the nutrition of all of Oklahoma's schoolchildren, including those from low-income families, by delivering fresh, nutritious tasty produce to lunchrooms (see p. 6 for how these programs can improve eating habits).

The Oklahoma Food Policy Council has already initiated important action to connect Oklahoma farmers with public school lunch programs. This project will build on such efforts through these activities:

- **Expanding Pilot Programs**. Four school systems participated in a pilot farm-to-school program in fall 2004 (see *Field Notes,* fall issue). We will continue to work with pilot partners to include more schools, farmers and food items. We will also explore other possible ways to connect schools with Oklahoma farmers.
- **Farm-to-School Workshops**. These events will bring together school food service staff, producers, distributors, parents, teachers and others interested in learning about and establishing farm-to-school initiatives. The first workshop is being planned for early November of this year.
- **Resource Guides**. These publications will help food service directors and food producers establish successful farm-to-school programs.

Through all of the activities and interactions taking place during this project, Oklahomans from all walks of life (policy makers, educators, the media, schoolchildren, parents, farmers, and others) will be exposed to new ideas and gain new awareness of how food, farming and nutrition affects all of our lives.

Combining this new public understanding with the win-win effects of making farm-to-school connections, we will truly be building a foundation for community food security in Oklahoma.

The goal of the project "Building a Foundation for Community Food Security in Oklahoma," is to "help Oklahomans understand and establish sustainable local food systems, mutually beneficial to both consumers and producers, through which people of all ages and income levels can access and regularly eat nutritious, locally grown food produced profitably and sustainably by small and medium-sized family farms."

The Oklahoma Food Policy Council (OFPC)

The council was established in 2001 and asked to take a fresh look at Oklahoma's food system— from farm to table — and look for ways that the system can better serve both food producers and food consumers.

The Oklahoma council was one of the first of such groups in the nation, and is a joint project of the Kerr Center and the Oklahoma Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, in partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program.

The council is a diverse group of people and includes farmers, ranchers, state officials, hunger-relief advocates, educators, and consumers. Kerr Center president Jim Horne serves as chairperson and Chris Kirby of the Oklahoma Regional Food Bank is vice-chair. Anita Poole of the Kerr Center is liaison with the coalition of state food policy councils.

For more information go to www.kerrcenter.com or www.statefoodpolicy.org

What is a food system?

A food system includes food production, processing, and distribution; food access and use by individuals, communities and populations; and food recycling, composting and disposal. Food systems operate at multiple, interrelated levels—community, state, regional, national and global.

If it has to do with food, it is part of the food system. If you eat, you participate in the food system.

UC Researchers Find Farm-to-School Programs Shift Students' Diets

If given a choice of fresh fruits and vegetables, children will eat them, according to a University of California study.

New dietary guidelines issued recently by the federal government, which now recommend nine servings of fruits and vegetables daily compared to five servings in previous directives, have left parents and school food service directors wondering how to get kids to eat all that produce.

Data compiled in school lunch programs may help them, according to Gail Feenstra, food systems analyst at the UC Davis-based statewide Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (UC SAREP).

Feenstra's study compiled hundreds of images of lunches chosen by elementary students at farm-to-school salad bar programs in the spring of 2004 that show children prefer fresh fruits and vegetables.

"When a variety of fruits and vegetables is offered, kids take them," she said. "This is most true when options are fresh," she said.

In the last five years, farm-to-school salad bar programs have taken root at many school districts across the country, Feenstra said. A related benefit is the increase in purchases from small- and mid-sized farms in the local areas, she added.

"As programs appear, we often hear the claim that children will reject fresh produce," she said. She and UC SAREP program assistant Jeri Ohmart and graduate student Melissa Salazar of the UC Davis School of Education took photos of lunches children choose at school.

"Our initial data suggests that, when presented with fresh fruits and vegetables in a salad bar format, children readily choose them," said Ohmart.

But what exactly do kids choose? Seasonal fruit favorites were strawberries, cherries, melons and grapes, while the preferred seasonal vegetables were carrots, lettuce mix, red bell peppers and cherry tomatoes.

Researchers saw that kids take more fruits and vegetables from the salad bar than the USDA hot lunch minimum.

"We also found that choice and variety are important dimensions of meals, for both health and social development," said Ohmart. "The most common reason kids said they preferred the salad bar was that they could choose their food."

> "The most common reason kids said they preferred the salad bar was that they could choose their food."

The Davis Joint Unified School District began implementing a farm-to-school salad bar program in 2001 that includes gardening, nutrition, education, on-site recycling and farm tours.

The district's cafeterias have salad bars stocked with seasonal produce from local farmers, Feenstra said.

"During this time, we have seen total district produce purchases more than triple, from $13,000 to more than $42,000, with 38 percent coming from local growers," she said. "Children's access to fresh produce has definitely increased."

Feenstra and Ohmart began the study during the fourth year of the Davis program when student nutrition services director Rafaelita Curva was faced with questions about what the children were actually taking from the salad bar.

The researchers took more than 850 digital images of student lunches in Davis and the nearby rural community of Winters.

"The pictures showed us the amounts and kinds of food the kids were choosing," Ohmart said.

Using USDA minimum serving requirements as a baseline, they calculated for each plate the amount of protein, amount of fruit and vegetables, number of choices of fruit and vegetables, and number of bread servings. Servings of croutons and ranch dressing were also evaluated.

"We saw that children are taking more fruits and vegetables with a salad bar model," Feenstra said.

Source: UC Davis Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program.

Future Farms 2004 Judged a Success

– *Maura McDermott*

Conference attendees take a break

"Friendly and well-organized."
"Great speakers."
"A lot of information and networking opportunities."

So commented attendees at the *Future Farms 2004: Digging Deeper* conference, Saturday, November 6, at the Clarion Meridian Conference Center in Oklahoma City.

The conference was sponsored by the Kerr Center in partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA).

Donna Ward

About 200 farmers, ranchers, ag educators, and people who want to get involved in agriculture, were in attendance.

Donna Ward, risk management specialist from the USDA RMA office in Oklahoma City was the luncheon speaker. She spoke of USDA's commitment, and her personal commitment, to helping farmers manage risk and succeed in today's agriculture.

Digging Deeper was the third in the series of *Future Farms* conferences and differed from the preceding events in format. Instead of many short sessions on a large variety of topics, the conference featured seven different in-depth workshops, each lasting three hours. Each workshop was offered both in the morning and in the afternoon.

Thanks to the efforts of expert instructors, the workshops received high marks from conference-goers, with workshops rated excellent 61% of the time and good 34% of the time.

Those who filled out evaluation forms also offered many valuable suggestions for future events.

One comment seemed to sum up the sentiments of many: "Very good conference. I will definitely attend another one."

More Information on the topics covered at *Future Farms 2004*

NCAT/ATTRA: The Sustainable Agriculture Information Service
www.attra.ncat.org or 800.346.9140

OSU Extension
www.osuextra.okstate.edu/ or contact your county Extension office

Kerr Center
www.kerrcenter.com or 918.647.9123

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE)
www.sare.org/htdocs/pubs/

Kansas State Extension
www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/

North Carolina Cooperative Extension
www.ces.ncsu.edu/

Jess Stryker's Drip Irrigation Design Guidelines
www.irrigationtutorials.com/dripguide.htm

High Tunnel Information
www.hightunnels.org/forgrowersfaq.htm

Growing and Selling Fresh-Cut Herbs
www.freshcutherbs.com

Cornell Good Agricultural Practices Program
www.GAPs.cornell.edu
Food Safety Begins on the Farm: A Grower's Guide

Alternative Farming Systems Information Center
www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa/
Community Supported Agriculture

Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry
www.oda.state.ok.us/laws-home.htm or 405.521.3864
Oklahoma Egg & Egg Products Law Rules and Regulations

Washington State University
www.ext.wsu.edu/noas
Organic Livestock: Principles, Practices, and Prospects (video)

Organic Standards Program
www.ams.usda.gov/nop

Labels and Certifying Organizations
www.consumersunion.org/aboutcu/offices/CPI.html

Complementary, Alternative, Holistic Veterinary Medicine
www.ahvma.org, and www.altvetmed.com

A Dare You Can Take… to the Bank: Alternative Farm Enterprises and Agritourism

–Wylie Harris

"What did you just say? People will pay you for that?"

Those are questions that Jim Maetzold is used to hearing from farmers when he talks to them about alternative farm enterprises – particularly things like cow-chip bingo, a "rent-a-cow" operation, or a bed-and-breakfast whose hottest-booking room is a sod house with a dirt floor. But his reply is always the same: an emphatic "You bet!"

Maetzold expanded on that answer in a roomful of producers from Oklahoma and neighboring states at the *Future Farms 2004: Digging Deeper* workshop in Oklahoma City on November 6th. The title of his program was "Dare! to Try New Ideas on Your Farm or Ranch."

When it comes to alternative farm enterprises, Maetzold is a hard resource to beat. Raised on a farm in North Dakota, he worked as a county Extension agent, and took a graduate degree in agricultural economics, before embarking on a career with USDA.

Since 1998, he has headed the agency's National Alternative Enterprises and Agritourism progam, spreading the word about farming options with higher per-acre returns than traditional commodity crops.

For alternative farm enterprises and agritourism, those options are literally limitless. Maetzold distributed a stack of literature, including a thick table of contents to a 2,300 page CD-Rom resource full of ideas, examples, and advice for farmers interested in trying something new.

The first step in such a trial is an inventory of all farm resources, to identify which new enterprises will be the best fit for the land and the family on it.

During the session, participants walked through their own inventories, literally from the ground up, cataloging their farms' soil, water, air, plant, animal, and "people" – family and community – resources.

During this process, as Maetzold puts it, "things start to complement each other." By the end, plans had emerged that were tailor-made for harnessing each farm's unique resources in alternative enterprises.

As important as the farm's resources are the channels it will use to convert them into income – its marketing plan. This plan answers questions about the "Four P's" of product, price, place, and promotion. Does the product match an existing demand? Is its price low enough to attract customers, but high enough to yield a profit? Is the business easily accessible to customers? How will the target audience be reached?

Once the plan is hatched, the key to putting it successfully into practice is to start with one activity – and do it well. "When you cut out the middleman and capture his share of the value," says Maetzold, "you also assume his share of the risk."

So starting big and expensive is not only unnecessary, it's also potentially unwise. Alternative enterprises can grow with the farmer's understanding and skill, and new ones can be added as earlier ones are perfected.

By fostering more direct involvement between farmers and consumers, many alternative farm enterprises incidentally draw more people onto farms. Some make that draw their primary focus, making the transition to agritourism.

Agritourism, put simply, is "inviting the public onto your farm or ranch," or "selling the agricultural experience."

"People want to live on the farm for a day," Maetzold says, and participants who are already running agritourism enterprises agreed.

"They like the quiet," said one. Another quoted a night-time visitor's starry-eyed comment, "I didn't realize it was so dark out here."

Fulfilling those desires through agritourism is a great way of adding value to farm products. It can start as simply as farm tours for school classes, and grow as large as a full-time bed-and-breakfast operation and as diverse as stargazing, birdwatching, hiking, and picknicking opportunities.

As Maetzold pointed out, it has the added advantage that "they can't take it

offshore." Agritourism also reduces dependence on commodity markets, and can provide off-season revenue.

For all these reasons, agritourism, along with other alternative farm enterprises, can help to increase the economic viability of farms and rural communities.

Fundamentally, though, these undertakings are also about education. By reconnecting people with the sources of their food, alternative farm enterprises can turn consumers into customers who understand more of the consequences of what and how they eat.

This direct contact shifts both farmers and customers away from "transactional marketing," with its large volumes and narrow margins, and toward relationship marketing, where profits flow instead from personal interactions and loyalty – alleviating, incidentally, many of the worst effects of the large-scale production and long-range distribution of food.

When farmers and their customers try these new ideas, they are also helping Oklahoma try another new idea: community food security. In the long run, that's an alternative well worth considering.

Wylie Harris is a "Food and Society" Policy Fellow of the Kellogg Foundation and a frequent contributor to Field Notes.

Wylie Harris and wife Ozlem Altiok at *Future Farms 2004*

Some Who Dare! to Be Different

Among the 2,300 pages of Jim Maetzold's CD-ROM resource guide are numerous alternative farm enterprise success stories. Some of those examples include…

■ Spurred by the popularity of a Halloween party they hosted for their church, Steve and Dorothy Enger now take paying visitors to their"Fall Family Fun on the Farm" enterprise. Attractions include a corn maze, face painting, miniature golf, and pumpkin patch, and all have an educational aspect – for instance, in different years the corn maze has been a map of North Dakota, the United States, and the human body. Despite its location in a sparsely-populated part of North Dakota, their venture draws 5,000 customers a year.

■ Tait Farm Foods grows organic fruits and vegetables, processes the produce into value-added food products and gift items, and sells it all via a variety of marketing strategies.

These include a pick-your-own operation and retail stand on the farm, subscription-based sales to individual customers, wholesale to restaurants, historical sites, and retail stores, and via the Internet. The Pennsylvania farm also hosts various educational events throughout the year.

■ After injuring his back in a farm accident, Jeff Weber and his wife Lisa switched their Wisconsin dairy operation to beef cattle – but they didn't stop there. They also installed greenhouses to grow and direct-market bedding plants from the farm and began to sell Jeff's welding art. Their planned expansions include a shift to rotational grazing for direct marketing of grass-fed beef and restoration of wetlands in order to gain revenue from hunting leases.

■ From his Way-Har Farms' 100 cows, William Lesher sells milk – and 40 flavors of ice cream. In addition to wholesale to restaurants, market outlets include direct sales on the Pennsylvania farm, along a small delivery route, and at area farmers' markets – as well as from a mobile sales trailer whose annual sales are three times its initial cost.

■ Becky and Paul Kelley's Sylvanus Farm acreage, formerly used for cattle, hogs, corn, and soybeans, is now enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program and generates income from hunting leases. When hunters asked for lodging, the Kelleys converted an old railroad car, which they used as a guest room, into a lodge. Soon the guest list grew to include hikers, birdwatchers, and anglers, and the farm has added nature trails, wetland restoration, and fee-fishing ponds to expand its recreational capacity.

More on these success stories (and many others), along with a wealth of information and advice for farmers interested in developing alternative enterprises of their own, can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/RESS/altenterprise/

Also, *Taking the First Step: Farm and Ranch Alternative Enterprise and Agritourism Resource Evaluation Guide:* www.nrcs.usda.gove/technical/RESS/altenterprise/FirstSteps.pdf

Where the Grass is Greener:

Natural/Organic/Grassfed Beef Production and Marketing

–Wylie Harris

A lucky group of Oklahoma ranchers got a three-hour tour of the production and marketing aspects of natural, organic, and grassfed beef last November at the *Future Farms 2004: Digging Deeper* workshop in Oklahoma City.

The workshop was led by two experts in the field: Ann Wells, a holistic veterinary practitioner with over 20 years of livestock production experience, and Ron Morrow, now a grazing specialist with NRCS in Arkansas after two decades as a technical specialist with NCAT/ATTRA and the University of Missouri.

Wells and Morrow presented an integrated view of grassfed and/or organic beef operations, from production through processing to marketing. For ranchers considering the switch, they prescribe a process of whole-farm planning. That planning begins with an inventory of soils, forage, animals, and weather. A change in any one of those factors, note Wells and Morrow, necessarily changes all the others as well.

"Start with the maturity pattern or breed you want to market," advised Morrow, "and work backward into the forage production system." The choice of maturity pattern, however, depends on the availability of quality forage – the more days of quality forage, the higher-weight and faster-gain breeds you can use.

Grass-feeding isn't just about cutting off supplemental feed; it requires that animals be rotated, and frequently. By resting more of a ranch's acreage more of the time, rotational grazing itself acts as a tool for pasture improvement, strengthening the grasses.

Morrow recommends that at least three years of rotation precede any pasture renovation. Rather than jump into an expensive program of reseeding, he said, "The best thing to do is plant fence posts."

Both instructors emphasized that forage selection hinges on balancing protein and energy. Cool-season grasses and legumes are so high in digestible protein that much of their nutritive value can be expelled in manure rather than being absorbed. And without the energy from fiber, the animals burn existing body fat to gain weight on the protein they do absorb.

Warm-season grasses, on the other hand, are often looked on with disfavor for their high fiber content. But that fiber remains a digestible source of energy up until the plants produce a seed head – an event that can be postponed by repeated grazing.

The transition to grass doesn't have to be all-or-nothing. Grassfed animals' diets can still be supplemented when forage is scarce. Morrow cited his own practice of feeding soy hulls, whose high digestible fiber content maintains CLAs – a key marketing point of grass-fed meat – as the starch in corn does not.

Moreover, calves that gain slowly on pasture can be shifted out of a grass-feeding operation. The culling can take place at any time during calves' growth – for instance, if they get rangier, or show signs of stress.

How Grassfed Beef Contributes to CFS:

- The meats are healthy and nutritious (low in fat, high in Omega-3 fatty acids), and high in flavor.
- Many farms sell pasture-finished meat direct to local consumers, thereby increasing farm profitability and keeping dollars in the local economy.
- Pasture-based farms tend to be small, family-run operations with ties to the local community.
- Well-managed pastures, the foundation of any sustainable ranch or dairy, are good for the environment. They preserve open space and wildlife habitat, reduce greenhouse gases by storing carbon, and manage waste without pollution.

For more information see *The Great News About Grass*, www.eatingfresh.com/GNAG.pdf or call 609.466.1700

Ozark Pasture (a group that includes Ann Wells and Ron Morrow) contributed delicious pasture-raised sirloin tips to the HIS "locally grown" luncheon in Ft. Smith in January. For more info: www.ozarkpasturebeef.com

Monitoring those stress signs, in addition to helping tell which calves to cull when, is also the key to Wells' brand of holistic herd health management. One way to keep stress levels low is by routine handling – frequent, calm, and consistent. That's a natural fit with an intensive rotation management scheme.

"We need to be looking for the very initial symptom [of stress]," such as a behavioral change, said Wells.

Moving the animals often also creates plenty of chances to spot such symptoms, serving as an early-warning system to identify – and, ideally, remove – the stress before it culminates in disease. In Wells' words, "Controlled grazing teaches calmness."

The same management changes necessary for successful grassfed beef production – holistic management of soil, plant, and animal health as parts of an integrated whole – can, incidentally, bring producers nearly or fully into compliance with the USDA national organic standards.

Unlike the organic standards, labels like "natural," "grassfed," and "pasture-finished," are not legally defined, rather defined by individual producers. For an anonymous consumer is at the other end of a long supply chain, that may not be an adequate quality guarantee.

But according to Wells, the organic label is not for all producers. Personal relationships with customers, she says, can create a trust that serves as well as third-party verification to ensure a quality product.

As a customer, Wells says, "I much prefer to know that my food is locally produced." She's not alone. A 2003 study by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture found that three out of four consumers preferred food "grown locally by family farmers," even ahead of organic alternatives.

That's a market that Oklahoma ranchers would do well to capture.

Integration and Holism in Community Food Security

"Integrated" and "holistic" are buzzwords in community food security circles, but like the proverbial gift horse, they deserve a good look in the teeth – to see what they really mean, and how they make community food security work.

In the next issue of *Field Notes:* A closer look at how rotational grazing balances the needs of soils, plants, animals and people – to increase the health of all.

Local Foods Dinner May 10

The group *Sustainable Tulsa* will hold a dinner featuring locally grown foods on Tuesday May 10, at 6:30 p.m. at the Palace Café at 15th and Peoria in Tulsa.

"Sustainable Tulsa would like to raise awareness among consumers about the availability of local food, encourage chefs to use local foods and encourage sustainable lifestyles," says Rita Scott, spokesperson for the group.

On the menu will be fresh, locally grown organic produce and strawberries, all natural meat and local dairy, organic fair trade coffee and local wine.

Tickets are $50 and reservations are required. A portion is tax deductible as the proceeds go toward creating a Green Directory for Tulsa and the surrounding area. Contact Rita Scott at 918-640-5408, for more info.

Support Your Local CSA Today!

Convinced that buying food from local family farmers is the way to go, but not sure how or where to start? Community Supported Agriculture, or CSA, is one good way.

CSA members contract directly with the farmer for "shares" of that season's produce. They may pay up front or in installments, and in return receive regular packages of farm-fresh food throughout the growing season.

Items can include fruits and vegetables, eggs, milk, meat, herbs, flowers, and value-added products. This approach, sometimes called "subscription farming," helps consumers to share the risks of agriculture with the farmers they support.

The time to sign up with your local CSA is upon us. To find a CSA near you, visit www.csacenter.org/statesfr.htm.

To learn more about CSAs in Oklahoma, look for an upcoming article on the Kerr Center web site at www.kerrcenter.com

Online Farming

— Jennifer Quidas

Have you ever thought of creating a web site or using the World Wide Web as a marketing tool for your farm/ranch?

Sound crazy? Then consider this: people of all ages are constantly perusing the Internet for information. Companies advertise their products and services non-stop to potential customers through this tool. The Internet is a wealth of resources that can be quickly accessed at the click of your mouse.

At *Future Farms 2004,* presenters Jean Mills and Eric Wagoner offered a practical approach to marketing a farm on the Internet.

Mills is co-owner/operator of Tuscaloosa CSA, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, which produces vegetables for more than 100 families in the Tuscaloosa area. She also is coordinating a project to help farmers utilize the Internet to market their farm products. Wagoner and his wife own and operate a farm near Athens, Georgia, and manage the Locally Grown Cooperative. He has created his own web sites and developed his own farm management software.

"The Internet is a relatively inexpensive way for farmers to reach consumers. It validates you in their mind if they find you on the web," Mills said.

She explained that today's consumers are very computer-savvy, and buy many things online, so it's not a stretch that they might be looking for fresh produce online.

It's important that they be able to find your farm web site once you create it, she said. "No matter what, you should use free directories. There's no reason not to use them," Mills said.

She provided a couple of Web sites that will list your farm for free: www.localharvest.org; and www.newfarm.org/farmlocator/index.php. These sites offer online forms you simply plug your farm's information into, and it creates a web page that is added to their database. You do not have to have a farm web site to be listed on these two sites. The LocalHarvest site even makes it possible to sell your products online.

"LocalHarvest gets 6,000 hits a day. And it's free," she said. Mills also said to use search engines, such as Google, to list your farm's site.

Even if you don't have a computer, you can get help listing with these sites from your Extension agent, your public library or through the Kerr Center, Mills said.

Mills said creating and maintaining a web site is more efficient than printing brochures to distribute for advertising. "I can keep a web site up for about $100 per year. Some places even will do that for free. I had 200 brochures printed to advertise my CSA and it cost me $50."

"Having a good product isn't enough anymore. It's about building a relationship with the customers," she said.

Today's customers like learning information about you and your growing practices without having to deal with you face-to-face, she said.

If you decide to create a farm or ranch web site, Mills offered elements to consider. First you need a domain name and a host for your web site. Both Mills and Wagoner cited www.godaddy.com as the best site for registering a domain name (the actual web address you would use.)

GoDaddy also can host your site, or Mills recommended www.homestead.com, which hosts her CSA site. A Google search (or other search engine) can also provide a list of free or low-cost hosts.

When building your web site, first impressions are critical. "A poorly designed site is no use at all," Mills said. She suggests making things two or three 'clicks' away, have contact information on each page of the site and use pictures.

"Use the web site to build trust—have testimonials, quotes, etc. If you're comfortable, give them a description of your growing practices."

Before you begin creating the site, Mills said you should think about what you want the site to do for you. What message do you want to give people? What audience are you selling to? What message do you want them to receive about you and your farm? Answering these questions first will help you with the design of your farm web site.

Wagoner spoke to the group about how he decided to create his own farm software. Writing html code, which is a computer 'language,' wasn't much of a stretch for Wagoner, who has a degree in astrophysics.

He and his wife decided to start farming three years ago, and now produce a wide variety of heirloom vegetables and organic eggs, which he sells in local grocery stores and through the Athens, Georgia Locally Grown Cooperative.

Wagoner created a web site for his farms, www.boannsbanks.com, and also for the cooperative. When other management software didn't fit in with his farm operation, he took matters into his own hands. He has designed both a farm management software program and an online shopping system for the co-op.

Wagoner said he used free software programs as models for his own program, and then customized it for farm use.

He will make his programs available to the public within the next six to eight months. You can request information about the software by e-mailing Wagoner (his e-mail is available from his web site.)

Jennifer Quidas is a communications specialist at the Oklahoma Farmers Union. This article is reprinted from the December News and Views. *The Farmers Union is celebrating its centennial in 2005. To learn more go to www.okfarmersunion.com*

Attend a Kerr-Sponsored Field Day in 2005!

In partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency, the Kerr Center will hold several field days for farmers and ranchers around the state in 2005. We hope to see you at one of these events!

Farmers' Market Field Days

The first two field days are for prospective and current Farmers' Market growers. Attendees will learn about the production and marketing of fruits and vegetables at two successful, but quite different, Oklahoma farms that sell at farmers' markets and through other outlets.

The field days will be on held on two consecutive weekends; participants are encouraged to attend both field days in order to learn the full scope of farming and marketing practices used by mid-sized farms in the state.

Oklahoma farmers' markets are growing and need more producers to fill the demand for fresh, locally grown produce. No advance registration required; learn how to tap into this market at these free field days!

SUNDAY, MAY 22, 2005, 2- 6
Doyle's Country Gardens,
Burl and Margie Doyle, Stillwell

Burl Doyle is a retired schoolteacher and a third generation farmer of horticulture crops in Adair County. He currently raises 20 acres of vegetables, eleven acres of strawberries and 6 acres of blackberries and blueberries using conventional growing methods. The Doyles market their crops through wholesaling to local produce stands, from their own farm stand, and through their booth at the Muskogee Farmers' Market.

SUNDAY, MAY 29, 2005, 2– 6
James and Jennifer Cooper, Nuyaka Natural Farm, Bristow

The Coopers grows approximately nine acres of vegetables, cut-flowers and herbs, using organic production methods. They utilize tractor-mounted implements to reduce labor and maximize production in their small-scale operation. James and Jenny sell their produce at the Cherry St. Farmers' Market, through a 25-member CSA, and to Tulsa area fine restaurants.

KERR CENTER HORTICULTURE FIELD DAY
June 11th, 9:30 – 3:00, Kerr Center Horticulture Farm, Lavon Williams Farm, Poteau

This year, the Kerr Center horticulture farm field day will take place in two locations— in the morning at Lavon William's 50-acre farm and in the afternoon at the Kerr Center.

Williams is a first year blueberry and blackberry grower. He will share his experiences with starting a new farm— planning, layout, plant and site selection, planting and first year weed control. Williams has increased his knowledge of blueberry production in a short time through educational opportunities just like the one he is hosting.

Participants will see several highbush, rabbiteye, and southern highbush blueberry varieties in his first planting. The highbush varieties include *Blueray* and *Chandler*. His only rabbiteye is *Tifblue*. The southern highbush varieties include *O'Neil, Duke, Legacy*, and *Ozark Blue*.

Blackberries are also grown on the farm and will available for tasting and for purchase. Lavon grows *Brinson, Womack, Rosabrough, Choctaw,* and *Chickasaw*.

The second part of the day will take place at the Kerr Center Horticulture Farm. Yield data, weed control, irrigation, and fertility management for a mature orchard will be covered.

Picnic tables will be available for participants to bring lunch. The Kerr Center will serve blueberry cobbler and ice cream for dessert. Blueberries will be available for purchase after the field day.

No pre-registration is required. So, bring your lunch and come join us for a blueberry-filled day!

Summer Workshops

Tomato Field Day, June 23, 6-- 8:30 p.m., McAlester

This field day will take place at three different locations and the focus will be on growing market tomatoes, and pest and weed management. No advance registration is required.

Turkey Field Day, August 18, 6 – 9 p.m., Mike Walters Farm, Stilwell

Walters is nationally known for his Heritage turkeys for many years. He will share his experiences with all aspects of raising turkeys. Pre-registration is required; participants are limited to 30.

Kerr Center Grazing Workshop, Kerr Center, Poteau, August 11th,12th and 13th

Learn how to better utilize your pasture forage and protect your land. Three experienced teachers, Kim Barker, Walt Davis, and Charles Griffith, will teach the workshop.

For more information on these and other events, check upcoming *Field Notes*, www.kerrcenter.com or call 918.647.9123.

RMA
USDA Risk Management Agency
This institution is an equal-opportunity provider.

Should There Be Healthy Choices in School Vending Machines?

–Anita Poole

The fourth annual Kerr Center essay contest for high school juniors and seniors in Oklahoma is underway. The subject of this year's contest is "Healthy Choices in School Vending Machines".

Oklahoma has one of the highest rates of obesity in the nation. The health of our citizens and especially our students is being put in danger by our dietary decisions and sedentary lifestyles.

Students learn their eating habits early, and those habit often carry on into adulthood where health concerns become even more prevalent with high incidence of stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease being linked with obesity.

Currently many schools receive a considerable amount of income from lucrative contracts with soda and snack vendors. That income is used in many schools to supplement extra-curricular activities as well as to fill in funding gaps that have occurred in these economically-stressed times.

However, everyone must balance the interest in producing a revenue stream with the importance of providing healthy and nutritious choices for students in school vending machines.

Contestants should weigh the benefits involved in providing students with healthy alternatives in vending machines against the issues involved in providing selections that may be attractive to students, but which may cause future health problems.

Contestants should also consider potential barriers to providing healthy alternatives and offer solutions to overcome those barriers.

All essays must be addressed to the Kerr Center Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and received in the Kerr Center's office by 5:00 p.m., March 30, 2005. Winners will be announced in May.

Grand prize is a cash award of $750; First runner up receives a cash award of $500.00; and three awards of $250 will be given for honorable mentions.

For further information on the 2005 Essay Contest, contact Anita Poole at apoole@kerrcenter.com or by calling 918-647-9123. Complete contest information is online at www.kerrcenter.com.

OSN April Conference: Building Bridges to a Sustainable Oklahoma

The Oklahoma Sustainability Network (OSN) will host its 2005 conference, "Building Bridges to a Sustainable Oklahoma," Friday, April 8, from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. at the Wes Watkins Conference Center on the OSU campus in Stillwater.

This year's event, the fourth annual conference for OSN, will feature L. Hunter Lovins, an international leader in sustainability efforts, as the keynote speaker.

Lovins is a founder of Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) and co-creator of the "natural capitalism" concept. In 1982 she co-founded RMI with Amory Lovins, and proceeded to lead that organization as its CEO for Strategy until 2002.

Currently Ms. Lovins is president of Natural Capitalism Inc, a sustainable business consulting company.

Lovins has co-authored nine books and dozens of papers, and was featured in the award-winning film, *Lovins On the Soft Path*. Her latest book, *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution*, co-authored with Amory Lovins and Paul Hawken, was released in September 1999.

Her areas of interest and expertise include natural capitalism, globalization, governance, land management, energy, water, green real-estate development, and community economic development. More information on her may be found at www.natcapinc.com.

Cost of the conference is $25 if registered by March 30 and $40 after that. Students may pay $15 if registered before March 30 and $20 afterward. Lunch is included with all advance registrations.

Concurrent sessions will cover such topics as rainwater harvesting and native plants for your garden, tips for off-the-grid living, calculations for passive heat use, small-scale use of photovoltaics and geo-thermal heat pumps, watershed and wetlands enhancement, Oklahoma's sustainable food choices, progress with bio-diesel fuel, Oklahoma business success stories, faith-based ecology and influencing public policy.

Kerr Center president Jim Horne will speak about sustainable food systems.

Exhibitors from World Neighbors, Oklahoma Food Cooperative, Bergey Windpower, Sierra Club, OGE Energy Corp, Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, the Homestead School, Smart House Consultants, and many more will be on hand. Also, Ms. Lovins will be available for book signings throughout her visit.

Visit the web site www.oksustainability.org for registration, agenda and location details. Contact Jay Yowell, OSN president, at 405.317.8424 or ecojy@yahoo.com for general questions. For registration or exhibitor questions, contact Susie Shields at susie.shields@deq.state.ok.us or 405.702.5166.

Learn Something New at Overstreet-Kerr

Learn a fun craft or get a head start on making your yard into a "wildscape" this spring at the Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm. A variety of half-day Saturday workshops for adults are being offered during April and May. Advance registration is required: contact Jeremy Henson at 918.966.3396 or email okhfarm@crosstel.net The farm is located ten miles south of Sallisaw on highway 59. (The historical farm also offers free workshops on farm life for school classes. Contact the farm for details).

APRIL 2

VINTAGE SCRAPBOOKING - Do you have photos stashed in drawers, files full of newspaper clippings, and boxes of memorabilia? Then this is the workshop for you. Learn to turn those piles of photos and memorabilia into treasured scrapbook albums to pass on your family's story to generations to come.

Instructor will be Jennifer Harris of Ft. Smith, AR. She teaches scrapbooking at Michael's Dept. Store in Ft. Smith and has won several online scrapbooking contests.

Jennifer will discuss scrapbooking basics, preservation techniques and archival safety, special concerns and challenges in heritage scrapbooking, and how journaling helps. Participants will leave with at least 6 completed scrapbook pages showcasing various techniques and styles.

Participants should bring 3 sets of pictures (3-5 pics per set) of the same topic & 3 additional single photos. Vintage or modern pictures are welcome. Scissors, acid-free adhesive, acid-free marker/pen, and handouts will be provided.

Class limited to 15. Fee: $25 per person. Time: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Registration deadline: March 26.

APRIL 16

RUG HOOKING - Rug hooking is a fiber art akin to quilting. Made from scraps of wool, hooked rugs are pieces of folk art that warmed the floors of our early settlers. Homemakers, using homemade hooks of wood, nails, or the bent tine of a fork, pulled loops of fiber through a base of burlap feed sack.

Instructor Gina Crowder Levesque of

Gina Levesque and daughter at Farm-Fest

MultiArts Studio in Stillwater, OK, will cover historical aspects of this art and guide students in learning the basics of cutting wool into usable strips, "Primitive" style hooking and how to finish a rug. Participants will be given high quality materials of 100% hand-dyed wool fabric and yarn, Scottish burlap backing, and a rug hook.

Gina is a fourth generation rug hooker and regularly teaches classes in rug making, natural dyeing and penny rug construction.

The design chosen for this class is a sheep, which can be finished as a hanging ornament or small mat (approximately 10" X 10"). Individuals should bring a small pair of scissors and a 14" no-slip embroidery hoop.

Class size is limited to 12. Fee: $30 per person. Time: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Registration deadline: April 9.

APRIL 30 - ORNAMENTAL LANDSCAPING FOR WILDLIFE will be taught by Certified Master Naturalist Deborah Robertson of Oklahoma City. She owns Robertson Wildscapes and helps clients to certify their properties with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and with the National Wildlife Federation.

She will assist participants in developing plans for landscaping for wildlife and will discuss what types of trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, etc. should be used to attract various birds and wildlife (mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, etc.). She will offer advice on soil testing and provide lists of plants suited to Oklahoma soils.

Participants will be treated to a tour of the Overstreet Kerr Historical Farm landscape while discussing soil, light, xeriscaping / low water plants and the value of using native plants. Participants will receive a potted tree to start their own landscaping project.

Class limited to 20. Fee: $20 per person. Time: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Registration deadline: April 23.

MAY 14 - "IN MINIATURE" POTTERY is the perfect workshop for the individual who has always wanted to try thrown pottery but never felt they had the time or physical strength needed for throwing.

Instructor Valerie Goetz of NativeWorks has designed this class so experienced potters as well as those who have never thrown pottery will find this technique challenging and fun.

Valerie is an internationally-recognized Native American artist who works in a variety of media and is dedicated to heightening public awareness of the works of art created by the Mound Builder civilization and Southeastern Native Americans. (Spiro Mounds, located about ten miles from the historical farm, was once a major city of this civilization.)

The goal of this workshop is to teach the basic skills and processes in making wheel-thrown miniature pottery from 2" to 2 1/2" in size. Students will be introduced to the terminology, tools, and equipment needed to complete a piece. Participants will learn how to center the clay, open the form, raise walls and shape a basic form whether it is a bowl, jar, plate, vase, or pot.

A miniature potter's wheel will be used. Students will learn to use polymer clay and will complete 4 to 10 acceptable pieces.

Class limited to 12. Fee: $35 per person. Time: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Registration deadline: May 7.

Workshops presented with the assistance of the OK Arts Council and National Endowment for the Arts.

Overstreet-Kerr Farm Wins Top Honors at Governor's Tourism Conference

The Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm was a big winner at the 2004 Governor's Conference on Tourism on Oct. 18 in Midwest City.

The farm won two "Redbud" Awards (in its budget category) – one for Outstanding Attraction and the other for Best Website (see next page).

The Redbud is the highest honor given for tourism in Oklahoma. In addition, the Overstreet farm's annual Fall Farm-Fest won a Merit Award (runner-up) for Best Event.

"The Overstreet-Kerr Farm is the kind of attraction that people come to Oklahoma to see," judges said.

The Oklahoma Department of Tourism and the Oklahoma Travel Industry Association give the Redbuds to reward tourist attractions, events and promotional efforts for excellence.

The farm's education coordinator Jeremy Henson and Kerr Center communications director Maura McDermott attended the awards gala and dinner.

The farm captured the most awards at the dinner, recognized in every category it entered.

"A visit to the Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm is a fun way to learn about life on an eastern Oklahoma farm 100 years ago," says Henson.

Jeremy Henson accepted the Redbud Award for outstanding attraction from the Lt. Governor and tourism officials.

Elements of that experience are the elegant, fully-restored 1895 home, the original barns and outbuildings, historically accurate gardens and orchards, heritage breeds of livestock, and a farm equipment display highlighting changes in hay and grain equipment from the late 1800s to 1950.

The farm equipment display is comprised of many pieces donated by people in eastern Oklahoma.

It was the wish of the last Overstreet to live in the house,

Russell, that his family's farm be preserved as a living history museum. After his death, the Overstreet Foundation was established to administer the property.

In the late '80s, the Kerr Center began working with the Overstreet Foundation to fulfill Russell's wishes. The Kerr Center restored the grand old house, which had fallen into disrepair, and established the farm as a place where people could learn about farm life and Oklahoma history.

"The farm has exceeded the expectations we all held for the property, " says Kerr Center president Jim Horne. "It does an effective job of showing visitors the workings of an early twentieth century farm, and has become a cultural center."

The farm is located ten miles south of Sallisaw on highway 59 and is open to the public for tours on Fridays and Saturdays, and other days by appointment. A small admission fee helps support free programs for schoolchildren. The farm also has a gift shop.

For more information on the farm call 918.966.3396 or visit www.kerrcenter.com/overstreet/index.html

Web Site a Winner

Winning a Redbud Award for Best Website from the Oklahoma Tourism Department was a thrill for web designer Tracy Clark of Argus DesignWorks.

Clark shared the award with the Kerr Center communications director Maura McDermott. Clark designed and built the huge Kerr Center website (www.kerr-center.com), including the Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm pages, which won the honor.

She works closely with McDermott, who determines content, takes many of the photos, and writes the text.

"It is a collaborative effort," says McDermott. "Tracy's creativity and technical expertise make our web pages beautiful and easy to navigate."

Tracy Clark

Clark also regularly designs brochures, posters and this newsletter for the Kerr Center. She also designed the Kerr Center logo. Her logo work has been featured in *Print* magazine's Design Annual, a national magazine for the graphic arts community.

The web site is comprehensive (100 plus html pages and dozens of pdfs), but user-friendly thanks to McDermott and Clark.

"The Kerr Center web site is the largest I have created from the ground up and the largest one I manage," says Clark.

The Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm portion of the web site consists of eight main pages and many sub pages that feature beautiful photographs of the farm, exhibits, visitors and events.

The web site also serves to educate people about the history of the farm and the rare breeds of livestock being preserved there, says McDermott. The heirloom varieties of fruit in the Wallace Zieschang Memorial orchard are also listed online.

For the Redbud Award, the web site was judged tops for ease of use, creativity, visual appeal, appropriateness for target audience, and effectiveness. Judges praised the site for its educational value.

Clark is a native Oklahoman who grew up in Norman and attended the University of Oklahoma. Since 1989 she has lived in Albuquerque, graduating from the University of New Mexico with a degree in fine arts. She is married and has two daughters.

In recent years she has designed a wide variety of web sites, from medical web sites that offer online training for doctors, to an international web site that brings together sustainable development groups in Brazil and other developing regions. She also redesigned the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) web site.

She communicates with the Kerr Center via email, fax and phone. Says Clark: "I love the fact that I can work all over the world from my tiny home office in Albuquerque."

Other examples of her work can be seen at her web site www.argusdesign-works.com

Kim Barker Honored by SARE

Congratulations are due Kim Barker who recently won an Honorable Mention in the competition for the 2004 Patrick Madden Award for Sustainable Agriculture.

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program of USDA gives the award biannually to producers who are not only profitable, but also value the environment and their communities.

Jean-Paul Courtens, Peter Kenagy and Ron Macher were the 2004 winners. Thirty others from across the country received honorable mentions. Barker was the only winner from Oklahoma.

To read more about Barker and other award winners go to www.sare.org/coreinfo/ madden2004_winners.htm

Barker received an Oklahoma Producer Grant in 1998 to help him implement his ranch water system.
To receive the fact sheet describing his project call the Kerr Center or go online to www.kerrcenter.com/OPG_grants/fact_sheets/ barker/barker.html

Terra Madre, the Overture

— Kim Barker

Terra Madre (Mother Earth) is the name chosen for the international gathering of farmers planned by Slow Food Italy, which was held in October in Turin, Italy.

Slow Food is an organization and a belief that we must slow down and think about what we are doing. Our American culture is in such a hurry that we demand fast food. For food to be fast it must be consistent, there is no time for cooking one item longer than the next. To cook every hamburger the same length of time, they must all be exactly alike. The same holds true for every other item on the menu. They must be alike.

Think what this means: with fast food there can be no genetic diversity, there can be no seasonality, and the quality must be average or below, because large amounts of exactly identical high quality product is much harder to come by than exactly identical low quality product.

Carlo Petrini started the Slow Food movement in Italy in the mid-eighties in opposition to American fast food coming to Europe. But Slow Food is about much more than eating. Slow Food is about protecting old breeds of livestock, old species of plants, genetic diversity, soils, cultures, sustainability, and people.

Slow Food is about stopping the destruction caused by fast food— the destruction of genetic diversity, of health, of cultures, of livelihoods, of soils, and of people.

The program at Terra Madre consisted of eight concurrent sessions three times a day for about two and a half hours, plus a few one-hour sessions during the early afternoon. Each session had about 10 or 12 speakers.

The neat thing was that the speakers were mostly farmers. People from 128 countries were telling their own amazing stories of how they farm, the crops and animals they grow, how they market them, and how they live.

One session I attended was about AOC (Appalachia D'origin Controlle) labeling, or in simple English, regional or local labeling. The AOC is the group charged with making sure products meet the specs they are supposed to meet. There are local labels for wines, cheese, poultry, lamb, and pork. Some beef is labeled, though not much.

Each label is granted only when a distinct difference can be proven. There are several ways products can be proven to deserve a label. The label may designate a region, or a specific breed of livestock produced in a certain way, or a specific method of making wine or cheese, for example.

One speaker noted that it was possible for a label to become almost meaningless if two groups were seeking the label for a region, with different specs in mind, and then compromised so there were no meaningful differences. Usually in such cases the label was denied altogether.

Another speaker gave the example of cheddar cheese, which originated near the village of Cheddar in Somerset, England. Today, cheddar cheese is a common name that is produced all over the world, so it would be impossible to get a PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) label for it now.

However, there are some local cheeses that are named after the caves they are aged in that have a PDO due to the historical significance of their local production. Obviously, these are produced in limited quantity, so the labels are of local significance only.

The World Trade Organization is trying to destroy the whole idea of PDO's, claiming that it is just a form of protectionism. The real reason, as one of the opening speakers said, is that "Identities hinder globalization, both of the identity of the food and of the farmer." He urged the 5,000 farmers there to be true to their identity and the identity of their food.

One speaker from Italy began his presentation with a simple slide showing a donkey leading the way through a rocky mountain pass followed by a man leading a horse. Both the horse and the donkey were loaded with huge packs.

He then told about this mountain

> "We must make a conscious, cultural choice to support a good quality of food that meets the needs of customers who appreciate the producers of their foods. Producers and consumers share a common fate. Protection of our food heritage is a common task. Customers must become co-producers and understand that when production is threatened, they are threatened."
>
> —Carlo Petrini

valley where a specific breed of cattle were raised, and had been raised for centuries. These cattle were milked there and cheese was made using old, old, traditional methods. Then horses and donkeys hauled the cheese out to be sold.

He ended his talk by pointing out that the donkey was not being led, saying, "Even the donkey knows where this cheese comes from, it comes only from here."

PDO's are not protectionism. They are a communication from producer to buyer, so the buyer knows where his food comes from, how it was produced, who produced it, and that it is food, not poison.

On my way to Terra Madre I spent a day in France talking with a sheep producer who markets about half of her lamb under a PDO label. She talked about the opportunity and the obligation of the label. She saw it not as just as an opportunity for a premium price, but as an obligation to produce exactly what that label required.

She was crossing some of her 800 sheep to breed in more fertility and twinning ability, and as a result, some of her lamb did not fit the label. The premium for making the label was about 30%. But she felt that she could get twins that would be more profitable than a single lamb at a higher price.

If she were fully committed to making every lamb fit the label, she could not experiment with crossbreeding. She pointed to two lambs that genetically were the same three-way cross, but one had a white face, the other a gray face. One would make the label and one would not.

This irritated her, but again she referred to the obligation of the label. She understood it perfectly, but it still aggravated her.

Some farmers at the conference said the price premiums offered by making the label were enough to keep them in business, and they intended to make sure they produced what the label demanded. They liked the idea of producing a product with a definite identity, and they like being a part of that identity.

Again, the idea of Slow Food is to promote local food systems using old species and breeds, traditional ways of cooking and eating, and protecting old cultures and methods.

Carlo Petrini, in his closing remarks, said, "Italy is known for music, for opera. Every opera begins with an overture, Terra Madre is the overture. We have begun. You have the seeds, you must go and sow the seeds."

(For more information on AOC labeling search on the Internet for "AOC-France", or AOC- Italy" or "AOC Europe.")

To find a Slow Food group near you, go to www.slowfoodusa.org

CALENDAR

MAY 22, MAY 29
Farmers' Market Field Days, see p. 13

JUNE 11
Kerr Center Horticulture Farm Field Day, see p. 13

JUNE 23
Tomato Field Day, see p. 13

August 18
Heritage Turkey Field Day, see p. 13

August 11, 12, 13
Kerr Center Grazing Workshop, see p.13

We'd Love to Hear From You!

40 YEARS *of good ideas*

On the occasion of the Kerr Center's 40th Anniversary, we'd like to hear from long-time (and new) friends and colleagues. Write us at PO Box 588, Poteau, OK or email us at mailbox@kerrcenter.com

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