

Harrisdale Homestead Report
Wallace Foundation for Rural Research and Development
Annual Meeting March 4, 2017

As we begin our third year in Iowa we are jointly engaged in several community and local foods-related activities. We participate in a statewide group called the Iowa Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG), which is now coordinated by Iowa State University Extension. This organization brings together representatives of many groups focused on different aspects of food, including production, education, justice, distribution, and local economic development. We also participate in the Southwest Iowa Food and Farming Initiative (SWIFFI), RFSWG's southwest Iowa regional chapter. In addition, we have been active in the Cass County Local Food Action Coalition, a collaborative effort between Cass County ISU Extension and the ISU Community Design Lab. This effort has involved strategic planning around local interests and has led to formation of four groups organized around particular projects. Beyond southwest Iowa both of us continue on the Leadership Team of the Lyson Center for Civic Agriculture and Food Systems, a not-for-profit organization named in honor of Gil's late Cornell sociologist colleague. The Center pursues goals of promoting community development around local agriculture, food, and social justice. It sponsors a quarterly journal aimed at bridging gaps between academic researchers and practitioners through publishing scholarly work that is both practical and written to be understood by practitioners. The Center also sponsors a network of practitioners and academics seeking to facilitate information sharing and joint projects. One such project in which Gil has been involved is a start-up program designed to give people working in local governments, Extension, non-profit groups, etc. the critical knowledge and skills they need to be effective in fostering good policies, effective programs, and viable local farms and businesses.

Ardy serves on the leadership team of Healthy Cass County, a coalition of representatives of public health, nutrition, food, medicine, education, and local government entities focused on improving peoples' health status in the county. She lead strategic planning with the group.

Early in 2016 Gil was appointed to the Cass County Local Food Policy Council, an advisory body to the County Board of Supervisors. The Council is charged with gathering information, examining policies, and facilitating connections among diverse groups with the goal of promoting local food and health among county residents. He was elected as the group's chairperson last fall and has recently been facilitating its strategic planning process.

Harrisdale Homestead hosted or co-hosted three special events this year:

On Nov. 2-4, 2016, Ardy hosted the annual meeting of the technical committee of the USDA NC-1196 Multi-State Research Project titled "Sustainable Food Systems, Health, and Well-being: Understanding Complex Relationships and Dynamics of Change." As background on Multi-State projects, part of the increasingly meager USDA research funding allocations to Land Grant Universities (LGUs) are ear-marked for supporting collaboration among LGU faculty and staff with similar and complementary interests & expertise. NC-1196 is highly interdisciplinary project group composed of nutritionists, sociologists, economists,

horticulturalists, exercise physiologists and others from 8-10 different states, which is appropriate because opportunities and problems are rarely confined neatly within disciplinary boundaries. One meeting agenda thread included discussions among the researchers about research collaboration opportunities. Another thread focused on what is and has been going on in Cass County, which stands out very favorably among counties regarding health, well-being, and local food-based community development. A highlight of this thread was a panel of Healthy Cass County members—Karla Akers, Denise Coder, LaVon Eblen, Emily Kregel, and Kate Olson-- who informed the researchers about current and past projects, programs, and collaborations as well as giving them insights into the kinds of research and other support that might be beneficial. At least one potentially beneficial relationship between the Cass County Health System and a university researcher emerged from the meeting. A farm-related tour included a visit to Rolling Acres Farm where the focus was the opportunities and challenges of growing local food, an excellent presentation by Emily Paulsen of Brun Ko Farm focused on the challenges to farm startup and small-scale dairy processing, and a quick walk-through of the planting at Harrisdale Farmstead. In addition, Dale & Shirley Hauptert hosted a highly informative tour of Atlantic Locker Service, where they discussed the emergence of their highly successful business and the issues posed by current USDA meat inspection practices. Sweet Joy Shoppe provided a fine dinner meal of mostly local foods as well as meeting refreshments and the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce served as the meeting site.

On the weekend of January 29, 2017, Harrisdale Homestead, LaVon Eblen (KJAN) and Denise O'Brien (Rolling Acres Farm) organized a presentation of the play, *Map of My Kingdom - Who Gets the Farm?*, in Atlantic. The event drew around 50 people. The play portrays the trials and triumphs of families in farm transitions. From the Map materials-- “. . .[it] brings a mix of stories taken from real events. The stories range from humorous to horrific... If you are ever caught up in the process of land transfer, sale or purchase, it is far from routine. It can be the stuff of nightmares. Just ask anybody or any attorney who has been involved in the process.” The presentation was followed by a discussion led by Mary Swander, the playwright and Iowa Poet Laureate. The following sponsors made this event possible: Harrisdale Homestead (Silver), Lindeman Tractor Inc. (Silver), Midwest Ag Services, Inc. (Silver), Rolling Hills Bank (Silver), Smith Land Services (Silver), Cambridge Law Firm (Bronze), Nishna Valley Credit Union (Bronze), Otto, Lawrence, & Wiederstein (Bronze), Rolling Acres Farm (Bronze), Sustainable Iowa Land Trust (Bronze), TS Bank (Bronze), VanGinkel Law Offices (Bronze), Women Food & Agriculture (Bronze). Mary Swander also conducted two workshops at the Atlantic High School the next day. The feedback from the event has been very positive with a number of families inquiring about other opportunities for keeping the discussions going within and among farm families. We are interested in partnering with other interested organizations to offer viewings of a video recording of the play and discussions following; this might be something the Wallace Foundation might consider. We have donated a DVD copy to the Atlantic public library where it will be available for free check out by families or other interested groups. The library is also planning to hold a viewing followed by a discussion in the near future. The play is now available for digital download from Mary Swander's website, <http://www.maryswander.com/>. Her website has a trailer that gives a nice overview and introduction. In addition, Iowa State University Extension also has resources available online topic at the Ag Decision Maker website: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wdbusiness.html> and also at the Beginning Farmer

Center: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/bfc/>. Contact Ardyth for more information about *Map of My Kingdom* in SW Iowa.

In late August, as part of our education goal, we joined with two other nearby small farms to organize a Local Farms and Food Celebration event. At Harrisdale we had both tours of our planting and exhibits by Healthy Cass County and the Cass County Local Food Policy Council. We had an estimated 40-60 visitors at each of the farms and considerable enthusiasm around the event. We are already working on planning a larger event in 2017 (Sunday, September 10) that will include more farms with different types of operations and are working with the Cass County Food Policy Council and others to organize the event. One goal is to have a local foods evening meal as part of the event.