

April Events

4/2, 16 & 30 The Ravelry at Java Dock Café 4-6 p.m. Bring your knitting project and enjoy a warm drink and the company of others! Knitting instruction available for a small fee. Contact Nichole at (262) 284-1600 for more info.

4/5 Rescheduled Youth Conservation Event at Mequon Nature Preserves 10 a.m.– 1 p.m. MNP is partnering with Waste Management, Pheasants Forever, WI Waterfowl Assoc. and Eco-Resource Consulting to offer youth between the ages of 8 through 18 the opportunity to learn more about invasive species management (removing buckthorn). The event will be held at Hidden Springs Wetland Complex, Germantown. RSVP to Kay Amland, 262-242-8055 x101 or center@mequonnaturepreserve.org. The event is free and open to the public.

4/5 Seed Saving Workshop & Seed Swap at Wellspring 10am-12:30pm Learn the importance of preserving seed and our food crop heritage! Experts from Seed Savers Exchange will lead a lecture and hands-on demonstration, covering seed saving techniques. Educators from Slow Food will share ways to access and grow heirloom varieties in your garden. Group seed swap following the workshop! Bring any untreated seeds to share and expect to go home with new varieties! Cost: \$30 until 4/2, \$35 after. www.wellspringinc.org or (847) 946-5565

4/6 Riveredge Maple Sugarin' Pancake Breakfast 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Fee: Non-member fee: Adult \$12, 12 & under \$8; Members: Adult \$10, 12 & under \$6 Day of registration only. Payment will be taken down at the Sugar Inn. **Membership Special @ the Pancake Breakfast:** Join Riveredge at the breakfast and receive \$10 off any of the [membership levels!](http://www.riveredge.us) Go to www.riveredge.us or call (262) 375-2715

4/9 Beneficial Beverages at Slow Pokes Local Foods 6-7:15pm \$25 Bulletproof Coffee, Kombucha, Bragg's Apple Cider

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Ozaukee Living Local

Celebrating our Local Food, Economy and Community since 2011

Public Land Use Rethought

By Mary Boyle

On Wednesday, March 19th, the Ozaukee Treasures Network hosted Brad Leibov of the [Liberty Prairie Foundation](#), who spoke about what his organization is doing to help protect and create more farmland in the Lake County area of Illinois.

Coming from Ozaukee County, the first thing you might think is, "We don't have that problem here—we're surrounded by farmland." However, it is exactly that type of thinking that continues to create a shortage of local food.

Much of the farmland you see around you, even here in Ozaukee, is used for conventionally farmed monocrops (primarily corn and soybeans) that are shipped out of state. The majority of the produce in our grocery stores, on the other hand, is shipped in from California or Mexico, even when we have them here in season, because that is the way our food system is designed. But this is a broken system, that relies on cheap oil and subsidies to work, and is a wasteful use resources throughout the cycle. It is a system that Liberty Prairie Foundation is working to correct, by proving that a local system can not only work, but work better than the conventional one. How they accomplish their goal, though, isn't really farming at all; it's simple economics.



Liberty Prairie Foundation

Local food is big business; the demand is never ending, but the supply is short. While a field of conventionally farmed corn is worth very little to the local economy, and is terrible to the ecosystem to boot, a sustainable farm with good biodiversity (a range of produce) means big money to the local economy, as well as being restorative to the soil and water, which offers even more economic benefit. In fact, their studies show that a farm of conventionally raised grain has a value of about \$224/acre, while a farm of sustainably raised food crops is valued at \$7,000-\$10,000/acre!

Now you will ask, "If that's true, why aren't all these conventional farms switching to sustainable agriculture?" The answer is not simple, but conventional, large-scale farms represent a large investment in that system. In order to make a profit, they need far more acres, so the land investment alone is enormous. Then, to farm that much land, there is a significant investment in equipment and seeds. It is likely that their farm represents generations of investment, in the only way to farm that they know. Furthermore, it is a system in which they are easily trapped in a cycle of debt; dependent on the very system that keeps them there.

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April Events

Vinegar Beverage, Kevita, Gerolsteiner, etc. Come learn why we carry the beverages we do and what they can do for you. Includes samples. Call (262) 375-5522 or email sloppokes-food@gmail.com

4/12 Spring Garden Planting at Wellspring 9-11 In this hands-on class, we will cover: - how to create different types of raised beds - ways to add nutrients to your soil and prepare for spring planting - protecting plants from late frosts - which plants are cold hardy and can be started in your garden! Cost: \$25 until 4/9, \$30 after. To register – www.wellspringinc.org or (847) 946-5565

4/22 The Earth is a Solar Powered Juke Box at Mequon Nature Preserve 7 p.m Riveredge Nature Center, Schlitz Audubon Nature Center, Urban Ecology Center, and Mequon Nature Preserve will celebrate Earth Day with well-known Acoustic Ecologist Gordon Hempton who will lead hikes at each of the nature centers as well as speak at an Earth Day event. The presentation will be hosted by the collaborating nature centers and held at Mequon Nature Preserve's Pieper-Power Education Center. RSVP to Kay Amland, [262-242-8055](tel:262-242-8055) [x101](mailto:x101@center@mequonnaturepreserve.org) or center@mequonnaturepreserve.org. The event is free and open to the public. Donations welcome.

4/26 Winter Farmers' Market 9-1 at the First Congregational Church. *See page 4 for more info.

4/27 Meet the Farmer at St Simon the Fisherman Episcopal Church 10 a.m. Alissa Moore of Wild Ridge Farm will be guest speaker at the Food and Farm Connection. Alissa, passionate and savvy, is loved and famed for her fabulous farming. Find out why she left the corporate world to grow nutrient dense food. Saint Simon the Fisherman Episcopal Church 3448 N. Green Bay Road • Port Washington, WI 53074 262-284-0510

4/26 Composting 101 at Wellspring 9 – 11am Improve the fertility of your garden soil! Learn home composting basics including: what can be composted, pile maintenance, how to harvest finished compost and garden bed application. Different styles of piles will be introduced, decide which is best for your home! Cost: \$25 till 4/23, \$30 after To register – www.wellspringinc.org or (847) 946-5565

Public Land Use Rethought

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So, if we can't convince conventional farms to switch, the obvious answer is to develop new farms. While there are certainly people who are interested in trying their hand at sustainable farming, land prices and availability are the largest barriers to new farmers. This is where Liberty Prairie Foundation comes in.

They noticed that while lots of land was being set aside for restoration, none of it was being reserved for agriculture. They knew that sustainable agriculture was a better economic and environmental use for some of the land marked for preservation, so they used the economic benefits of local farming to convince landowners and land trusts to dedicate their unused space to agriculture—leasing the land at lower rates for longer periods, which allow time for the sustainable farms to get established. Not everyone believes in the importance of farming, but show people the dollar signs, and that was convincing.



There has been a long tradition, especially in Wisconsin, to preserve and restore open space. We have an abundance of parks and preserves, as well as public land that is marked for such endeavors, which, of course, is wonderful; however, not all of this land is best used for trails, camping and preservation. In fact, sustainable agriculture can, in some cases, be a much better use of the land, and have a better environmental impact on the land, than just leaving it to sit.

Public land and land trusts can be tricky, because of the various laws governing them. Also, the preservation only mind-set has been so long developed, it will take time to change it, but change it must, if we are to develop a healthier food system. Luckily, food is the great common denominator; after all, we all have to eat, and we all want access to healthy food. By beginning to have these conversations with community leaders, land preservationists and government leaders, we will start to bring change to our broken food system.

Some landowners have already gone ahead and solved this sustainable agricultural land-shortage themselves. Paul and Linda Thomas have a large farm in Fredonia, and they have leased it to young farmers who want to test their skills. By allowing their land to be sustainably farmed, they are restoring their land, as well as acting as a sustainable farm incubator and a grower of the local food economy. This was how Wild Ridge Farm, Ozaukee's newest CSA, was born.

In urban areas across the country, blighted homes are being torn down to make community gardens, and a "grow food, not grass" movement is building momentum, even in the suburbs. As the prices of fuel climb, food that has to travel great distances will become more and more costly, giving more people the determination to grow their own food. These are all important developments but, particularly for urban areas, it is not enough.

How we use our public land needs to be rethought in order to establish a dependable local food system, and it's a conversation that is long overdue.

For more information, visit: www.prairiecrossing.com

Aquaponics - Right for You?

By Jon Bales of the Urban Aquaculture Center

Growing food locally is an appealing prospect, and producers and consumers who recognize the economic and nutritional value of doing so are increasing in number. Farmers who offer locally grown food are garnering favor in the marketplace, but are also discovering that the rewards are not without challenges. Urban agriculture, previously unheard of, is taking off these days, with best practices being ferreted out to make farming in the city sustainable and even profitable. One of the more elegant farming methods in the city is aquaponics. In a nutshell, aquaponics involves converting fish waste into plant food by using bacteria. Growing fish with edible plants is truly a terrific idea, as fish are practically the only animal protein allowed to be raised in city limits. (One could eat worms, although this hasn't caught on as a popular protein source.)

Copying nature's way of growing plants and fish together can be rewarding, but is subject to over-expectations. This relatively new farming idea seems so simple, yet, like a siren's song, the uninitiated may quickly fall victim to unintended consequences. The system breaks down when forced. We can't successfully mimic conditions in nature when we change the conditions. In nature, the concentration of fish in a pond is relatively sparse, but many fish farmers want to raise lots of fish. Crowding of fish is a condition change, a move away from mimicking nature. Moving the operation indoors is another condition change. Light and temperature cycles are less consistent indoors. These changes add up, oftentimes to the point of crop failure and, unfortunately, going out of business.

In Milwaukee, Sweet Water Organics recently went out of business because it could not deliver on the condition that it provide jobs as repayment for a City loan. The three founders were inspired by Will Allen of Growing Power and his comment that one could get \$5 per fish and raise 7,000 fish in 7,000 gallons of water. This sounded too good to be true. One of the founders owned a factory building, so the three of them decided to start a business. The intent was to replicate what Growing Power had on a large scale. The impressive Growing Power numbers were the foundation of their failed business plan. Founder James Godsil believes the City pulled the plug on Sweet Water Organics at an unfortunate time, just when the nonprofit branches began sprouting.

Fortunately, what remains is still alive and functioning, with Godsil very much at the helm. Prior to its demise, the company had morphed into an educational community centered around its nonprofit foundation, which now provides schooling. The Aquapons Program (<http://sweetwaterfoundation.com/aquapons/>) is a series of badges that can be earned by achieving skills in aquaponics. Aquapons say they are optimistic about the future of aquaponics for growing local food.

Godsil talks about associations he has incubated in foreign countries: "Milwaukee is going to be the spark for the emergence of a global open source community of aquaponics experimenters who will win the Stockholm Water prize." The Sweet Water Community has been growing since 2009, he says. The list of countries he has formed ties to is impressive. From Africa through Europe and Latin America, this global web of partners shares information and encourages start-ups for teaching aquaponics, particularly to younger people.

More basic research will eventually make aquaponics a viable enterprise. Much of the science is known, but apparently not pulled together into a successful protocol. Not all start-ups end with a silver lining. It seems imperative that a thoughtfully worked out business plan is the only way to even suggest a successful operation. Sure, aquaponics sounds like a neat idea for a business, but the hard work of coming up with realistic numbers is absolutely required. Lack of a worthy business and operating plan results in the need to change too many of nature's conditions. Before engaging in aquaponics, those interested in starting a business would do well to talk to someone who has been there, and has learned something about best practices in the industry. Chances are this person has helped create the evolving skill set of best practices in aquaponics. Mimicking nature is fine, as long as one stays true to her plan and respects her elegance.

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Ozaukee Living Local

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portfishltd@gmail.com



2014 Winter Farmers' Market

March 29
April 26
May 31

Saturdays, 9am-1pm
at the

First Congregational Church
131 N. Webster St.
Port Washington

*Fresh Produce, Meat, Sweet
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Winter Farmers' Market: Vendor Spotlight

By: Amy Whitlow

Cheese counters, like wine racks, can be incredibly intimidating. All of these strange, moldy, often-smelly bricks staring up at your uncomprehending eyes can make you want to run straight back to the Velveeta. Okay, not really, but you get the drift.

Paul and Paula Walsh opened Say Cheese in 2011. Paul comes from a dairy farm background, and was raised on a family owned farm. When Paul's father retired, he dreamed of opening a cheese and meat store in Arizona. 30 years later, Paul fulfilled his Father's dream and opened Say Cheese!

Say Cheese is built around products that excite them, produced by people who are proud of what they make. They present foods at their best, when flavors jump off your plate and can make the simplest of meals something special.

They carry a large selection of carefully selected varieties of traditional and artisanal cheeses produced by Gibbsville Cheese. In addition, Say Cheese also offers a wide range of meat including beef, pork and chicken, as well as a selection of sausages, brats and bologna. To complete their product offerings, they have a wide selection of jams, jellies, spreads, candies, nuts and more.

Visit Paul at the Port Washington Spring Farmers' Market in April and May, or at their retail location at 117 S. Royal Ave. in Belgium.

We all look forward to seeing you and remember to smile and SAY CHEESE!

Another option - simply check out their website –
www.saycheesewi.net

