



**Michigan Food &
Farming Systems-MIFFS**
Bringing Farmers & Communities Together

2011 MIFFS Council

Mark Baker Marion, MI

Mark Baker began his farming career while still employed full-time in the U.S. Air Force. He and his family have raised produce and animals to sustain themselves, as well as to sell, for more than 13 years. Since moving to Michigan in 2004, Baker's Green Acres has become a full-time occupation. With a focus on raising animals on pasture, Mark has centered production on pastured poultry and on Mangalitsa pigs.

His passion for small farms began with the 2005 Small Farms Conference. He is a vocal proponent of locally-produced food and the use of sustainable production methods. He has become a Certified Agri-Educator with plans to share that passion on the farm and in the classroom. Mark has mentored many backyard and budding commercial growers.

Moving forward, Baker's Green Acres continues to add new facets to their family farming operation.

Joe Colyn Battle Creek

Joe is an innovative Agri-Food professional with more than 25 years of experience in research and development, purchasing, quality programs and business scenario development. He has a track record as an innovative leader, delivering creative and cost effective programs in support of business development and growth. Originz, LLC is a single-member professional services firm founded by Joe in 2001 focused on the Agri-Food sector. Clients include Fortune 500 companies, start-up firms, producer co-operatives, 501(c)3s, and other consulting firms in need of expertise. Previous to Originz, Joe worked for the Kellogg Company for 18 years. His global experience includes supporting product development programs in Latin America, managing contract food research programs in North America and Europe, and 10 years in Canada leading and delivering food R&D, agronomy and identity-preserved grain programs.

The bounty of Michigan's agriculture and food capacity is one of the best kept secrets in the nation. In the past six years working as an independent consultant to the food industry, Joe has become convinced that Michigan has the capacity in our family farm base to develop a much stronger local and regional food system that leverages our diverse crop base to satisfy the 21st century consumer expectation of food for health. MIFFS is well positioned as a facilitator of the change needed within Michigan to allow our farmers and food markets to thrive, and he would welcome the opportunity to continue contributing to the MIFFS effort as a Council Member to achieving more sustainable food systems for Michigan.

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MIFFS Vision: MIFFS is a recognized leader and resource to establish and develop more sustainable food and farming for Michigan, nurturing successful partnerships that result in healthy people and communities.



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Katherine Fedder Lansing, MI

Katherine Fedder spent more than 30 years with the Michigan Department of Agriculture until her retirement in December 2010. Serving in several roles and in several divisions, for the last 13 years of her career at MDA, she was Director of the Food and Dairy Division, in charge of ensuring the safety of Michigan's food supply. Kathy's career included plant inspector, pesticide specialist, regional supervisor, manager of pesticide programs and Director of the Marketing and Market Development Division.

Kathy has a B.S. in Horticulture from MSU, a Masters in Public Administration from Grand Valley State University, and she is currently a doctoral student at MSU's College of ANR (CARRS) focusing on food safety policy. She will begin a second career at Neogen Corporation in March 2011 as Director of Regulatory Affairs.

Kathy has also done extensive work on addressing food safety regulatory hurdles for small and medium food and agricultural businesses. She initiated a process in 2010 to evaluate the regulatory obstacles in the Michigan Food Law for small businesses, including the passage of Michigan's Cottage Food Law in 2010. She has been instrumental in initiating and participating in the Michigan Fresh Unprocessed Whole Milk workgroup. Kathy hopes that her value on the MIFFS Council will be to continue to advocate for a reasonable balance of food safety, personal choice, food security and economic viability for all of Michigan's critical food and agricultural sector.

Kyle Fiebig Montague, MI

Kyle Fiebig is currently the Agriscience Teacher and FFA Advisor in Montague, Michigan, where he has spent the past 11 years. There, he operates a General Agriscience Program consisting of two greenhouses, an animal lab and an aquaculture program where he and the students raise rainbow trout all year long. In that time, he has supervised more than 1,000 agricultural students' projects led in the White Lake Area which specialize in everything from sustainable agriculture to alternative energy to biofuels.

For his work, he has been awarded the Michigan Farm Bureau Agriscience Teacher of the Year, Michigan Horticulture Teacher of the Year, and is a Michigan Association of School Board Excellence in Education State Winner.

His goal for serving on the MIFFS Council is to help connect youth to the organization and keep them engaged and involved in agriculture.

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Ricardo Herrera Walkerville, MI

Ricardo (Rich) is an asparagus farmer in Walkerville, MI. He has participated in many MIFFS events, including the Michigan Family Farms Conference and annual Friends and Family Farms Field Days. He has also attended the Food and Society Conference, sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Risk Management Conference in Kansas City.

In addition to selling fresh asparagus locally and shipping it to Growing Power in Milwaukee, WI, Rich sells his famous “Little Chico’s Pickled Asparagus”.

Laurajeanne Safford Kehn Frankenmuth, MI

Currently, Laurajeanne is in partnership with her four sisters and mother in the rejuvenation of their 180-acre centennial farm in Tuscola County, moving toward a biodynamic farming system. They are not exacting starting from scratch as they move forward but do feel like pioneers. They collectively hope to inspire others and most especially the youth to consider a career in farming. Her family has been farming, thrashing, building barns and caring for the land since 1802 in the United States and Canada. Her father’s dream was to farm as before WWII without the commercial chemicals developed and widely used in the 60’s-80’s, which ultimately took his life. Their goal is to create a local source for clean fair food and to introduce and participate in new farming practices.

Laurajeanne is a MIFFS member, a MIFMA member where she sits on several committees, and the market mistress for the Frankenmuth Farmers Market. She actively participates in the current Farm Bill and has a degree in forestry and is an electrical engineer. What she brings to the MIFFS table is her diverse background and my lust for healthier farming communities.

In addition, she works for a grassroots organization, SCRAP (Saginaw County Regenerative Action Project) focusing on the economic and food security of Saginaw in the Great Lakes Bay Region. They collaborate with the Saginaw Land Trust to reassign city lots into urban farms in underserved communities. Laurajeanne is the lady farmer who writes grants in the group. All in all, she is interested in the decentralization of our food system and the growth of the small family farm into a sustainable way to make a living.

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Tom Kalchik Grand Ledge

Tom is a native of Leelanau County where he grew up on a fruit, grain and livestock farm. He is a 1969 graduate of Michigan State University with a Bachelors Degree in Horticultural Science. After graduating, Tom returned to the family farming operation in partnership with his brother. He left the partnership in 1973 and has held several positions with agricultural trade associations and food processing ventures since. He has 25 years of experience in managing cooperative businesses. He joined MSU Extension in 2000 and was named Associate Director of the MSU Product Center in 2003.

Jim Nowak East Lansing

Jim is the Vice President of Marketing and Public Relations at GreenStone Farm Credit Services, the largest agricultural lender throughout Michigan and northeast Wisconsin. Among his duties at GreenStone, Jim oversees the association's advertising, communication, promotion, and community involvement efforts. In addition, he is also involved in GreenStone's governmental relations work both in Lansing and Washington, D.C. GreenStone FCS serves some 18,000 farmers and rural residents through a network of 37 offices.

Previous to joining GreenStone in 2004, Jim spent more than nine years in the credit union industry, working in various senior management roles. He is a 1994 graduate of Central Michigan University, with a Bachelors of Science degree in Journalism (Public Relations concentration) and Business Administration. Jim also currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Ronald McDonald House of Mid Michigan.

Jim is honored to be nominated and considered for a position on the MIFFS Council, and is excited for the opportunity to be involved in helping develop more sustainable food and farming opportunities within the great state of Michigan. As the second leading industry within the state, agriculture and the diversity of food that we grow in Michigan can and should be driving forces in helping improve the economic outlook for our communities.

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Phillip A. Rios Grand Rapids

Phil is a multifaceted management professional with success leading large complex projects/programs and organizations in the corporate and non-profit arenas as well as federal government grant administration. Phil brings an enthusiasm for taking ideas through an innovative thinking process to deliver effective outcomes. As a lifelong resident of Michigan Phil's key food systems focus is: eliminating food deserts in our core urban centers, preserving farmland and promoting a farm entrepreneurial mind set.

Phil currently serves on the Kent/Allegan Workforce Development Board and has a long time commitment to diversity, workforce and economic development. In 2000 Phil received the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce - Minority Business Advocate of the Year award.

Phil is honored to have the opportunity to serve on the Michigan Food and Farming Systems Council and to help MIFFS to pursue its mission and have an opportunity to help Michigan agriculture grow, prosper and lead the state's economic recovery.

Ron Steiner Hart

Ron was former executive director of the Oceana County Economic Development Corporation, from 1998 through 2004. Since then, he has been with MSU Extension, working as a regional entrepreneurship educator in the value-added agriculture sector. He has a deep desire to provide technical assistance to new entrepreneurs and innovators at the many points of the food systems, and his current mission to show local and state leaders in Michigan that "consumer-driven" farming is basic not only to the state's economy and culture but also a great business opportunity. Ron has a sincere belief that rural communities can be revitalized and once again become economically viable if the residents of communities are willing to commit their time and energy to the process. Ron came to the position out of early retirement from working as a successful custom computer marketer. He has worked with MIFFS throughout the process of obtaining grant money to develop kitchen incubators on the east and west sides of the state, and is directing the development of the West Michigan Regional Kitchen Incubator, in Hart MI.

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**Nicholas Welty
Northport**

Nicholas and his wife own and operate 9 Bean Rows Farm in Northport on Leelanau Peninsula, a year-round CSA farm and bakery. Nicholas manages most of the farming operation, which consists of about four acres, using two passive solar hoophouses to aid year-round production, and raises chickens for eggs and meat. They sell their fruits, veggies and baked goods at several farmers markets, as well as marketing through the CSA.

Nicholas is dedicated to the pursuit of sustainable agriculture, saving farm land, and is an avid supporter of local farmers. Before focusing on his own farm, Nicholas managed fruit and vegetable crop production and agricultural business plan development at Black Star Farms in Suttons Bay. Prior to that, he completed a Master of Science degree at The Ohio State University, where he focused on plant genetics following his Bachelor of Science degree at Carnegie Mellon University. There he doubled majored in Biology and Economics and minored in Chemistry.

Early on, Nicholas developed a passion for growing plants and saving seeds. He first began growing plants for profit (giant pumpkins) at 13, and today he is the co-founder of Megalos LLC, a seed company based in 6 years of prior hobby pumpkin breeding research. He shares his love of plants with his wife, Jennifer Welty, and their daughter Avery.

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