

37th Annual NOFA Summer Conference set for August 12-14, UMass Amherst
By Ben Grosscup, Conference Coordinator

Tradition and Innovation Live on Together at NOFA

Having served in different roles on the NOFA Summer Conference Committee since 2006, it is an honor to take on the new role as Conference Coordinator for 2011. I have big shoes to fill, as I take on a key leadership role in a conference that Julie Rawson and Jack Kittredge guided for twenty-four years. I know that I speak for the entire Interstate NOFA community when I say, thank you, Julie and Jack, for the leadership you've provided all this time! Your example and vision have helped us become more effective at what we each do in the many roles we play in what 2009 NOFA keynoter, Will Allen, called "The Good Food Movement."

Coming into a well established position like this involves negotiating between tradition on the one hand and innovation on the other. For so many people, the Summer Conference has become a cherished vacation that they enjoy each year with their families. Traditions like the Saturday Fair, the Local Meal, the dancing, and the many wonderful workshops are part of what supports our commitment to what we do, so we make a commitment to keeping these traditions alive.

At the same time, each and every one of us – NOFA Summer Conference committee members and attendees alike – bring our own visions for healthy ecological food systems to the conference, hoping to see them reflected in the experience we share together in August. Every year, the Summer Conference Committee works to make the conference a fuller (and better organized) experience. As people bring up their own ideas for discussion – through written evaluations, phone calls, and meetings – the conference can incorporate them and maintain the dynamism for which it is known. Innovation, too, is on this committee's agenda.

As our committee met in October 2010 to recap what we had learned from the past year's conference, I felt lucky to be working beside such a committed and experienced group of people. One thing that someone pointed out to me was that the average age of people in the room seemed to have dropped by about 15-20 years compared to some committees in previous years. Nobody actually did a precise analysis, but I think that elders of the organic movement can feel confident that young people are taking on roles to carry on the work that they helped start many years ago.

With youthfulness and wisdom combined in every committee member, regardless of age, we are still making adjustments based on the evaluations we've received, and we're also generating new ideas from within our group.

One change involves the organization of Work Exchange volunteers who put in 20 hours during the weekend of the conference to do all manner of tasks required for the smooth operation of the event – everything from raising and lowering the flaps on the exhibit tent, to staffing the t-shirt sales table, to orienting conference goers as they arrive at UMass. Chuk Kittredge, who has served as entertainment coordinator on the Summer Conference Committee, is now also serving as volunteer coordinator, and he is planning to organize volunteers this year into teams responsible for specific tasks. The idea is to give our volunteers the chance to take fuller ownership of the work they do at the conference and be able to not only do their tasks but also

manage them more independently. If you're interested in work exchange, be sure to sign up early. You can contact Chuk if you're interested at chukkittredge@hotmail.com.

Plans are also in the works to make a variety of subtle changes to the conference based on evaluations. We learned that we can improve the placement of camp sites to avoid possible noise complaints, and we learned that the placement of the entertainment, which took place outside for the first time in 2010, may need to be shifted in order to moderate noise levels and make a welcoming space for everyone to hang out.

We also continue to improve the layout of the program book, and our management of the new Summer Conference Auction. And we continue to seek out new talent and pioneering creativity for our workshop presenters. (See below).

We also have two new members of the committee.

One is Mel Shaw, a long-time conference attendee and a farmer in Dover, MA. She has the responsibility of soliciting food donations, planning the menu, sourcing ingredients for the local meal, and being the primary liaison with UMass staff on all issues food related. If you have a good lead on a source of food donations, contact her at mel.q.shaw@gmail.com.

Another new person on the Committee staff this year is Siedeh Rezaei-Kamalabad, who has been a work exchange volunteer for the past two conferences. She will serve as Registration Co-Coordinator, working closely with Kathleen Geary to process your registrations and tell you what you need to know about each detail pertaining to your registration.

PS – For those who attended the workshop series led by our 2010 keynoter, Sally Fallon, we posted to our website a group of recipes she gave us titled “Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner.” You can find them here:

<http://www.nofasummerconference.org/pdfs/BLDRRecipes.pdf>

Call for Workshops

Every year the NOFA Summer Conference recruits creative and enthusiastic presenters for workshops for adults, teens, and children. In November 2010, the call for workshop proposals for the 2011 Conference – complete with a Workshop Proposal Form – will be sent out to previous workshop presenters and the ever growing list of presenter prospects that I am building. It will also be posted on the website: www.nofasummerconference.org.

The conference features workshops for adults on a full range of topics: Alternative energy and the environment; Animal husbandry; Crop specific workshops; Farm economics and management; Farming and the community; Farm tours; Food and family; Food preservation and cooking; Fruits, nuts, and trees; Garden and greenhouse; Herbs and flowers; International Agriculture; Land care; Marketing; Nutrition and health; Of the spirit; Politics and policy; Practical skills; Soil fertility; Social justice; and Urban agriculture. If you would like to submit a workshop proposal contact: Ben Grosscup <ben.grosscup@nofamass.org> or call at 413-549-1568.

There will also be a Children's Conference (ages 2-12) and a Teen Conference (ages 13-17), which explores many themes in common with the adult workshops in a manner that is appropriate for each age. If you want to submit a proposal for the Children's Conference, contact Valerie Walton <aallspice@aol.com>; (978) 689-0716. If you want to submit a proposal for the Teen Conference, contact Jenn Caron <jenn69@gmail.com>; (978) 544-5646.

The sooner you submit your proposal, the better. We need your workshop proposal submitted by December 31, 2010. The vast majority of decisions on accepting workshops will be made by the end of January 2011.

All workshop presenters receive free conference registration and a \$50 honorarium for presenting a 90 minute workshop.

Interested in Sponsoring?

If you want to sponsor or advertise your business and gain excellent exposure for your products and services, including a logo and website link placement on the NOFA Summer Conference website, see this link to last summer's sponsors:

<http://www.nofasummerconference.org/sponsors.php>.

Larger level sponsors also receive exhibit space and registration. Businesses and farms are also welcomed to simply exhibit and advertise in the Program Book. For more information, contact Bob Minnocci: bob@nofamass.org or 617-236-4893.