



JUNE 2011

The shift to a younger farm community is under way, slowly, but very steadily. It seems that we have come over a hump in the curve, as younger yet cautious young farmers and ranchers are preparing to take the wheel. It first dawned on me when I heard Peter Martinelli, Loren Poncia, Dominic Grossi, and David Evans present at a community event in Point Reyes Station. After listening to these young men, I walked away with feeling that the torch had just been passed, quietly, but certainly. Our new intern, Marissa Thornton, is part of this transference of knowledge and practice to the future generation.

At Marin Organic, the youngish staff is becoming fused into a common vision and action, exemplified by the Organic School Lunch Gleaning Program, a brainchild of past executive director Helge Helberg. These young men and women are working their not-for-profit organization, as a real tool for food-to-fork transformation, by selflessly bringing local produce to Marin's kids and schools. Hard to beat that one.

Farmers are logging into social networking, bringing the farmers' day-to-day activities, lifestyles, and products to an increasingly serious audience of consumers. UCCE Marin's recent social networking workshop at the "Fork," the Robert Giacomini Dairy and Cheese plant,
"Editor" continued on page 4



Real Added Value: The Marin Organic School Lunch and Gleaning Program Continues to Bring People and Produce Together

Talk about adding value, the Marin Organic School Lunch and Gleaning Program not only gets nutrition-packed fresh produce into local schools, but also adds a social and cultural value as well. So what does that mean?

It means that a whole lot of love goes into this stream of fresh organic veggies grown in our Marin farm fields, from the gleaners to the first-graders. Start with the farms; all are members of Marin Organic. It is common practice to leave copious quantities of blemished and market-reject veggies in the field to be tilled-in. Instead, farmers are engaging Marin schools by donating unused product to the program, which is entirely voluntary. *"Many of our farmers are well-suited for this activity, since it fits right into their existing farm philosophies,"* says Kerry McGrath, Member Communications Manager. *"Public awareness and education play a big part in our grower-members view."*

What about the gleaners? Hundreds of regular folks wanting to help out have been able to visit these exquisite family farms and spend a day in the field. Their appreciation is amply expressed by a young Dominican University student:

"The first level of change and coming together I see is through 'the rediscovery of the pleasure of eating good food.' Through gleaning I have seen this first hand: during National Gleaning Day it was great to see people (who are not my everyday peers) in the fields becoming connected to the land and their food. In observing the kids from County Community School, I saw at first hesitation, but that hesitation soon subsided and changed into enjoyment. I saw them enjoy picking the tomatoes and taking pride in what they picked, showing off just how much they had picked. They were happy to take their fresh-picked tomatoes back to County Community School to share."

"Gleaning Program" continued on page 3



What do HootSuite, QR, and Constant Contact have in common?

Demonstrations of social media and email marketing tools were in action at the recent social media intensive held at Point Reyes Farmstead's "The Fork." "Excellent" was the sentiment expressed by many of Marin and Sonoma producers who participated in the June 1st Grown in Marin workshop organized by UCCE, Marin Organic, and Marin Agricultural Land Trust.

The workshop covered the use of Twitter, Facebook, Google placement, integration with your website, and other tools that promote and help sell your products. One producer commented, "It was great having producers present what they do with email marketing services like Constant Contact. There was a great mix of speakers and a fine array of tools presented."

Christian Ahlmann from Six Sigma Ranch in Lake County provided his simple "Ten Farmer's Rules for Facebook." You can find them printed below, or online at our growninmarin.org site under the GIM Workshops listing.

While Brenda Dawson from UC's Small Farm Program shared her use of Twitter and provided a great overview of various social media tools, it was the "farmer view" that was most appreciated. Said another producer, "Bellwether Farms is doing a great job with social media and I appreciated Lenny Rice sharing what they do. Many of us were not aware of the Quick Response (QR) coding and how powerful it can be in the hands of the consumer with a smart phone application."

Julie Rossotti, of Rossotti Ranch, liked all the management tools. "It is the first time I've heard of HootSuite. What a great organizer for my Twitter traffic. I really appreciated the one-on-one time and help setting up my Constant Contact service."

Jana McClelland from McClelland's Dairy shared her use of Constant Contact in integrating customer emails with e-newsletters and events. Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese and Bellwether both use Vertical Response and they described the differences between the two services that seemed to come down to simplicity of use, cost, and design sophistication.

Bottom line? Do it again next year! -- Ellie Rilla, UCCE Marin

From Farming to Facebook: Ten Lessons Learned

1. The world wants to farm. Everybody secretly wants to be a farmer (consider the popularity of Farmville), and Facebook lets you bring your farm to them.
2. Pictures tell a great story. Always carry a camera; take photos with bold shapes and contrasts. Tag your friends.
3. The text should be short and clear. If posts are too long, they will be skipped. "This weekend, our wine club members have an opportunity to pick up their shipments at the Six Sigma tasting room . . ." is too long. Better is: "Come pick up your wine club shipment tomorrow."
4. Small talk wins fans. Fan interaction creates visibility, and visibility wins fans. "It's freezing cold in Asbill Valley this morning. How is your weather?"
5. A few posts per week work well. Too many posts can overload your fans (but posting too infrequently is no good either). Overloaded fans quit following you.
6. Superfans need love. When fans interact with your page often, they should be encouraged.
7. Third-party endorsements are much more valuable than what we say about ourselves.
8. Your fans are your friends. Share content with your fans that you would share with your friends.
9. Keep it fun and positive. Facebook is not the place for criticism or grumpiness.
10. Promote your page! (wink, wink)

Christian Ahlmann, Six Sigma Ranch, Lake County
 Facebook.com/SixSigmaRanch
<http://www.sixsigmaranch.com>



Links:

Constant Contact: <http://www.constantcontact.com/>

HootSuite: <http://hootsuite.com/>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/>

Resources from Grown in Marin Workshop:

http://ucanr.org/sites/Grown_in_Marin/GIM_Workshops/Social_Media_Workshop-6_1_11/

"Gleaning Program," continued from page 1

These volunteers get a dose of on-the-farm life, and a real-life experience that helps them to make wiser consumer choices. Their delicious gleanings enable all schools to choose the best ingredients possible while staying within limited school budgets. Each week schools purchase local organic foods for delivery, which are supplemented with the week's donated gleaned foods, offsetting their costs and inviting change.



When the Marin Organic truck arrives at a local school with boxes of donated fresh produce, food service workers get to find creative ways to utilize the often random seasonal assortments of very fresh produce. Chester Densmore, Organic School Lunch and Gleaning Program Associate, says *"They really do get excited about the produce we bring in. They find real creative ways to work with the seasonal nature of our deliveries, which are never the same twice in a row!"*

So a lot of value is added to the produce that makes its way through the Marin Organic program to the school kids' plates. The program brings more than 10,000 kids each week closer to fresh, local, organic food, while educating a few hundred Marin-ites as to the nature of producing food, and nourishing the lucky school kids in many ways. As Chester relates, *"The San Marin High School kids joined the Marin Organic glean team regularly, and were having a great time. One Monday they all went to County Line Harvest and gleaned cherry tomatoes. The next day they spotted their tomatoes in the lunch line. They proceeded to eat as many as they could, the whole time bragging to their friends that they were responsible for bringing the tomatoes in!"*

More than half of Marin schools over the past six years have gradually begun to buy directly through the farmers or through Marin Organic, having been enticed with product from the gleaning program. For more information about Marin Organic's School Lunch and Gleaning Program, contact Program Manager Scott Davidson at scott@marinorganic.org.



UCCE Marin intern: Marissa Thornton

In 1852 one of the Marshalls (as in the Town of Marshall) sailed "around the Horn" to San Francisco and started a Short-horn operation with his brothers on the 1300 acres that is today the Thornton Ranch, in Tomales. Today, Gary Thornton runs cattle and sheep on a coastal prairie pasture that typifies the excellent and rich grasslands of northwest Marin.

Marissa Thornton is joining the operation with her father, and is the new intern at UCCE Marin, helping with the new Grown in Marin website makeover, and adding her energy and knowledge to our team.

Marissa graduated from Chico State with a degree in animal science, and is looking for her own niche on the ranch. *"You learn a lot in college, but nothing compares with the experience you get on a working ranch. Coming home to learn the ranch is the best experience I could get,"* Marissa says. *"My identity is not separate from our ranch. I remember when I was five, I apologized to my Grandpa for having to go to kindergarten instead of helping feed the sheep."*

Marissa spends time at the UCCE office, while working another job, and putting in time working her real passion: the ranch. She is taking time to learn what opportunities exist for her to add to, and diversify the operation.

"I think I'm inspired by what my ancestors did with the land, and I'm always fascinated to learn what it was like for them back then. They were resourceful and did what was naturally successful in the area since that was the only way they could survive. They grew potatoes, milked some cows, and made cheese using energy-efficient equipment and materials sourced from the ranch. And how is that different from what most operations are converting to now? It takes more time but if done on a smaller scale than what we've been used to for the past few decades, it makes for really quality products."

"What do I project the next generation will be like in agriculture? I think the next generation doesn't want to just take over their family's land, they want to make it into something of their own. I don't know one farmer around my age who is ready to take the land as it is. They want to put their own name on it, which inherently creates a niche product."

"Editor" continued from page 1

run by Bob and Dean's four young daughters, was a success and evidence of this trend.

At the hands-on event, everyone logged on to the Internet and learned new ways to put their farms, ranches, and products into cyber-space.

All this is fueled by a tangible and enthusiastic commitment to farming and ranching from the next generation of agriculturalists. -- Steve Quirt, editor



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☞ **Callahan Family of Bellwether Farms named Sonoma County Fair's Rancher of the Year.** The Callahan family will receive the J.W. Jamison Perpetual Trophy during the Farmers Day program on August 7 in the Chris Beck Arena of the Sonoma County Fairgrounds.

☞ **Marin County Beekeepers team up with Penn State for 2012 Pollen Study.** In 2012, the Marin Pollen Project, in conjunction with Maryann Frazier from Penn State, will conduct a study to assess pesticide use and potential impacts on pollinators in urban environments in Marin County. Go to <http://www.marinpollen.org> or email info@marinpollen.org.

☞ **Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company's Point Reyes Original Blue Cheese is Sofi Award Silver finalist for Outstanding Dairy Cheese or Dairy Product.** Winners will be announced on July 11, 2011, at the Summer Fancy Food Show in Washington, D.C., in a red-carpet ceremony hosted by celebrity chef Cat Cora. Read more at <http://foodspring.com/sofiawards/silver/>.

☞ **Cowgirl Creamery's** seasonal artisan cheese tours resumed in April at their Petaluma creamery. Point Reyes tours continue year-round. Check Cowgirl's website to sign up or get more details: <http://www.cowgirlcreamery.com/tours.asp>. For more information, group tours and scheduling, call or email Vivien at 866.433.7834, vstraus@cowgirlcreamery.com.

Publications and Websites:

☞ New UCCE cost studies, including "Sample Costs to Establish a Medium Density Olive Orchard and Produce Bottled Olive Oil, 2011, North and Central Coasts," are available at <http://cost-studies.ucdavis.edu>, at UC Cooperative Extension offices, or by calling 530-752-6887.

☞ A team of University researchers 2010 National Research Council report, "Toward Sustainable Agricultural Systems in the 21st Century," is available online at http://books.nap.edu/open-book.php?record_id=12832&page=R1.

☞ UC has published a guide for dairy manure management: "Manure Treatment Technologies: Anaerobic Digesters: <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8409.pdf>

☞ UC has published a revised Small Farm Handbook. The 2011 edition of the "Small Farm Handbook" costs \$25, plus applicable tax, shipping and handling. It can be ordered online from the UC ANR Catalog at <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu>.

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