

# Cultivate

Newsletter of the National Farm Medicine Center

Summer 2009

## Our Mission

"To conduct high quality research addressing human health and safety associated with rural and agricultural work, life and environments."

## Save the Date:

"Paradise Awaits" is the theme of the annual Auction of Champions, scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 24, 2009, at Clearwaters Hotel and Convention Center, Marshfield.

Bid packages will feature golf trips, sports memorabilia, jewelry, art, weekend getaways, Packers tickets, home decor and much more, including the traditional prime meat packages.

Since the first Auction in 1982, more than \$1.9 million has been raised to support research and outreach on issues that affect farmers and rural residents, including children's safety, food safety and groundwater quality.

For more information, contact Jill Kurszewski at 715-389-5146 or [kurszewski.jill@mcrf.mfldclin.edu](mailto:kurszewski.jill@mcrf.mfldclin.edu).

 National Farm Medicine Center.



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Research Foundation

## NFMC medical director gives keynote at state cancer summit

National Farm Medicine Center Medical Director Steve Kirkhorn, M.D., M.P.H., delivered the keynote presentation at the sixth annual Wisconsin Comprehensive Cancer Control Summit.

Dr. Kirkhorn noted that although the rural environment does contain unique cancer risks, studies show that, in general, farmers are healthier than the overall population.

It was interest in the risk factors, however, that brought cancer control professionals, advocates, and survivors to the summit, April 2, 2009, at the Holiday Inn Hotel and Convention Center, Stevens Point, to learn more about preventing cancer in rural communities.

Dr. Kirkhorn addressed what is known about the interaction of agricultural production and cancer causation, new research into gene-environmental interaction, community health and cancer control, and how citizens can obtain information about reducing their risk of developing cancer.

Farmers have lower death rates than the general population for cancers of the lung, esophagus, bladder and colon, according to the National Cancer Institute. The lower rates are thought to be due to lower smoking rates in farmers, as well as physically active lifestyles and dietary factors.

However, there is still concern that farming communities have higher comparative rates of leukemia, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, multiple myeloma, soft tissue sarcomas, and cancers of the skin, lip, stomach, brain, and prostate. Farmers, farm workers and their families may be



Steve Kirkhorn, M.D., M.P.H.

exposed to pesticides, engine exhausts, solvents, dusts, animal viruses, fertilizers, fuels, and specific microbes that may account for elevated rates of certain cancers.

Dr. Kirkhorn was invited to speak by the host organization, the Wisconsin Cancer Council ([www.wicancer.org](http://www.wicancer.org)), which held a reception in his honor the night before the summit. In addition to his duties with the National Farm Medicine Center, Dr. Kirkhorn is Chair of the Occupation Health Department at Marshfield Clinic and a clinical faculty member of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Medical Schools.

## AGROMEDICINE

Marshfield Clinic has further strengthened its position as an agricultural health center with the addition of a new AgriSafe service line in Occupational Health. Two Occupational Health nurse practitioners, Janice Soczka, R.N., F.N.P.-C., at Wausau Center, and Laurel Hackett, R.N., F.N.P.-C., COHN-S, at Marshfield Center, are trained and certified through the AgriSafe Network, which is one of the few organizations focusing exclusively on providing health and safety services to farmers and their families. "It's a natural fit," said Steve Kirkhorn, M.D., M.P.H., Chair of the Occupational Health Department and Medical Director of the NFM. "The good news for farmers is that we can help them prevent disabling injuries or illnesses and do everything possible for them to continue their livelihoods." For more information or to make an appointment, contact the Occupational Health Department, 1-877-962-2633 or [occhealth@marshfieldclinic.org](mailto:occhealth@marshfieldclinic.org).

Dr. Kirkhorn gave lectures this past spring on airborne hazardous exposures and agrochemical hazards as part of the Wisconsin Academy of Rural Medicine, Rural Health Medical School Elective in Madison.

## CHILDHOOD AGRICULTURAL INJURY PREVENTION

An NFM study into the usefulness of the Internet in farm family life, and its role as a resource for health and safety information, kicked off in May with three focus groups of central Wisconsin farm parents. Although formal analysis is not complete, common themes have emerged. Besides insight into what health or safety issues are on people's minds (ringworm was very popular), this exploratory work revealed interesting glimpses into the "social networking" and information exchange that happens with farm families, said principal investigator Marcy Fitz Randolph, D.O., M.P.H. The Marshfield Clinic Biomedical Informatics Research Center is assisting and providing one of its computer usability labs for the focus groups.

The campaign to "Keep Kids Away from Tractors" is now on YouTube. A 30-second public service ad featuring country recording artist Michael Peterson is at <http://www.youtube.com/nationalfarmmedicine>. This is the NFM's first foray into social media. Help spread the message by viewing the video and becoming "friends" with nationalfarmmedicine on YouTube.

## STUELAND SCHOLAR



*Cheryl Tevis*

Cheryl Tevis, senior farm issues editor for Successful Farming magazine (readership 1.2 million), has accepted the honor of being named the 2009 Dean T. Stueland Scholar. Tevis will accept the award and give a lecture at noon, September 16, 2009, in the Froehle auditorium at Marshfield Clinic. Tevis has reported extensively on agricultural health and safety, and worked with the late Dr. Stueland on some of her early stories. Tevis and her husband Stan

Lingren farm near Pilot Mound, Iowa.

## PUBLIC HEALTH MICROBIOLOGY



*Sherif Nagi Abdou*

Sherif Nagi Abdou, visiting from the National Research Center of Egypt, used a technique developed in the Public Health Microbiology lab and showed that it also works for concentrating cattle viruses in run-off from manure-applied fields. Taking a method developed by Mark Borchardt, Ph.D., and Sue Spencer for concentrating human viruses from the environment using glass wool filters manufactured in the lab, Abdou tested samples that included bovine rotavirus,

bovine coronavirus, bovine diarrheal virus Types 1 and 2, and bovine enterovirus. "With this tool in hand, we now have the capability for understanding the fate and transport of bovine viruses in the environment," Dr. Borchardt said. "Not only is this important for improving livestock health, but also human public health because there is some evidence there are bovine viruses that may infect humans."

## VISITORS



*Kathy Schmitt*

Kathy Schmitt of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture visited the NFM in May to brief staff on the department's Wisconsin Farm Center and its "Beginning and Minority Farmer Outreach & Assistance Program." The initiative is made possible through a USDA Risk Management Agency grant. The Wisconsin Farm Center provides information and services to all farmers and agribusinesses including: financial counseling, farm

mediation, stray voltage program, legal information, lawyer referral, vocational career transitioning, drought preparedness and agriculture. The Farm Center also offers access to mental-health counseling. Call 1-800-942-2474 or go to <http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/mktg/agriculture/farm-center/>.

## WHAT'S NEW

The Wisconsin Dairy Workers Safety and Health Initiative is a partnership joining NFM with the University of Wisconsin and its Agricultural Research Stations, the Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin, Dairyland State Academy/Northcentral Technical College, and other organizations. Key activities will include research into the ergonomics of dairy tasks and training for language-limited workers, on-farm injury prevention consultation services, and education and training in the use of personal protective equipment. The goal of the initiative will be to identify and address major disease and injury concerns that impact the wellbeing of workers in Wisconsin's dairy industry. A Ph.D.-level scientist is being recruited to lead this new core-competency program of NFM.