



**"Building a Culture of Conservation ~ Farmer to Farmer: Iowan to Iowan"**

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Introducing ILF Conservationists**

AMES, Iowa –“We all need to be aware of the gift that we have in the farms of Iowa. We need to maintain them and build them back to where they were.” Dave Ruden, Dubuque, is an Iowa Learning Farm (ILF) Conservationist who believes in the importance of our natural resources.

Ruden, farm manager for the Melleray Abbey located south of Dubuque, is one of 10 people across Iowa who are helping with the ILF project by serving as an ILF Conservationist. These spokespeople are champions of the conservation cause. They are community leaders and role models who practice, understand, and are willing to speak out about the need for a renewed commitment to a Culture of Conservation.

The ILF project is working to build a Culture of Conservation— strengthening our commitment to the belief that natural resource conservation is important to our quality of life. A Culture of Conservation encourages us to more fully appreciate our environment and not take our natural resources for granted. The goal of ILF is to increase the understanding between individual decisions and the aggregate impact on the environment.

Until now the ILF project has consisted of farmer cooperators, agency partners and ILF team members. The farmer cooperators are demonstrating various conservation practices on their land. ILF team members are conducting scientific and economic research, testing water quality, offering guidance, and finding what motivates us. The project is supported by the agency partners. With the addition of the ILF Conservationists, a new dimension has been created.

Initial ILF Conservationists include Steve Berger, Wellman; Jon Gisleson, Floyd; Bill Hammitt, Portsmouth; Mark Ingwersen, Spirit Lake; Jody Kerns, Edgewood; Laura Krouse, Mt. Vernon; Barry Kusel, Manning; Norm Lust, New Virginia; Dave Ruden, Dubuque; and Dave VanWaus, Colo. More spokespeople may be added as the project moves forward.

The ILF Conservationists will be involved in various ways. They might present a program at a local service organization meeting, write editorials for local or regional newspapers, host a field day on their farm, or speak to students at an FFA or 4-H meeting.

Bill Hammitt, Portsmouth, knows local impact is important. “It means a lot more to people when they read an editorial from a local person. Seeing somebody’s name they know brings the message back to the local community.” Hammitt is a full-time farmer who previously worked for the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

These spokespeople will share their own experiences, incorporating science-based information provided by the ILF project, Iowa State University and other research institutions. Most ILF Conservationists are farmers, but urban and rural non-farm Iowans are also involved, as building a Culture of Conservation

includes everyone. Raising awareness about the fate of chemicals and fertilizers applied to lawns and golf courses is just as important as those applied to fields.

Conservationist Mark Ingwersen, Spirit Lake, a soil and water commissioner for 20 years, sees the big picture. "There needs to be a willingness for people to look beyond their back yard or farm to realize that we're all in this together. We need to appreciate what we have and maintain or improve it as best we can."

You can help build a Culture of Conservation with the Iowa Learning Farm project by asking one of these passionate people to speak to your club or organization. Better yet, adopt one (or more) conservation practice on your land or property.

To find out more about the ILF Conservationist program, contact the Iowa Learning Farm at 515-294-5429, email: [ilf@iastate.edu](mailto:ilf@iastate.edu), or visit the website: [www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf). We can put you in touch with the Conservationist nearest you.

The Iowa Learning Farm's focus is on helping strong conservationist farmers teach other farmers about systems that will improve the quality of the soil and water on their farms, while remaining profitable and sustainable. The Iowa Learning Farm is a partnership between the Iowa Department of Land Stewardship, Iowa State University Extension, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa National Resources Conservation Service, Iowa Department of Natural Resources; in cooperation with Conservation Districts of Iowa and Iowa Farm Bureau.