

# Kowalski, Love Farms Earn Earth Steward Awards From Conservation Service

By Amy Polk

While many farmers work hard to conserve land quality, often without any recognition of their good work, two Rudyard families, the Kowalskis and the Loves, both of Rudyard, have become the first farmers in the Eastern Upper Peninsula to receive Earth Steward awards, announced Will Bomier of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) rewards farmers working to minimize or eliminate pollution of land and water, the Kowalskis and Loves join 365 other farmers who have been verified through the Environmental Assurance Program.

At a time when the news seems filled with stories of large-scale, commercial farms creating pollution, Eastern Upper Peninsula farms lean in the other direction, Mr. Bomier said, speaking at the Chippewa/East Mackinac Conservation District January 31 annual meeting. Many farmers manage their property for the benefit of wildlife, soil preservation, and water quality, he pointed out.

Joan and Mike Kowalski operate a cow and calf operation at their Lazy K Farm, which they have owned for 18 years. Mr. Kowalski is a licensed crop insur-

ance adjuster and has farmed all his life. The Kowalskis have been active in the Eastern Upper Peninsula farming community for several years.

Among the reasons they qualified for verification, the Kowalskis moved their livestock fencing away from their water well to keep livestock, a potential contamination source, further from the property's water source. They also moved oil, chemical materials, and other contaminants further from their well, said Christine Perreault, local Michigan Groundwater Stewardship coordinator who also assisted the Rudyard farmers with their Farmstead and Cropping verifications. Mr. Bomier is working with them on the Livestock Verification.

Tina and Bob Love and their two children, Bobbie Ann and James, operate a 600-acre farm. Mr. Love is on the Chippewa County Farm Bureau Board, while Mrs. Love serves as the Conservation District's secretary. The Loves also operate a meat processing business in Rudyard.

At their farm, they have installed fencing over the past 10 years to encourage intensive grazing, which rotates livestock grazing pressure from one section of the field to another. They have

also improved the land for grazing, amending the soil and planting grasses. They have built stream crossings allowing livestock to move from one field to another without tramping through the streams and polluting the water.

Both families accepted the Earth Steward awards, verification plaques, signs, and congratulations from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Conservation District at the annual meeting. The signs they receive can be posted at their farm to make the public aware of their efforts.

"It really is about recognizing the good things you guys are already doing on your land," Mr. Bomier said.

Farmers can be verified in three areas, including livestock, farmstead, and cropping, through the Environmental Assurance Program. The Kowalskis and Loves each received Farmstead and Cropping verifications. Farmers must meet different environmental quality recommendations for each of the areas, Mr. Bomier said. Each area focuses on a different part of the farming operation. A farmer may opt to use fewer pesticides on hay ground, for instance, to minimize pollution on the land. Livestock operators



Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Coordinator Christine Perreault (far left) gives Earth Steward awards, plaques, certificates, and signs to Rudyard farmers (from left) Joan and Mike Kowalski, and Tina and Bob Love at the Chippewa/East Mackinac Conservation District annual meeting January 31.

may choose to control odors created by their farm through long-term manure storage, or some other method.

Verification is a three-step process, Mr. Bomier said, and includes evaluating a farm to find areas to improve. Farmers will then work with resources professionals like Mr. Bomier and Ms. Perreault to create a plan to follow

the recommendations. Farms that follow the recommended actions will get verified.

"When I worked with Tina and Bob (Love), most of the planning was done around a kitchen table, and that took about two hours," Mr. Bomier said. "But implementing might take two years. That's the hard part."

The rewards are better ground

and surface water quality, less soil erosion, better plant health and productivity, and improved wildlife habitat, he said.

Earning verification, he added, is simply "like the gold stamp that says you have met all the requirements of protecting and improving natural resources."

Any farmer who wants to enroll in the Environmental Assurance Program should call Christine Perreault at (906) 635-2136. MAEAP is a voluntary program, and enrollment does not obligate the farmer to do anything.

## Little Bear East Arena

# Family Fun Day Will Be This Saturday

Open skating, children's games, a cupcake walk, and prizes will be among activities offered Saturday, March 15, at Family Fun Day at Little Bear East Arena in St. Ignace. A firetruck will be displayed for youngsters by the St. Ignace Fire Department and two bicycles will be the day's grand prizes, donated by Sault Tribe Law Enforcement. Activities are open to all families and will take place from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

All activities and games are free of charge and are offered by many community agencies to promote Parenting Awareness Month in March, said organizer Shirley Goudreau of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

"There will be food and ice cream, and every table will have an activity for children," Mrs. Goudreau said. "There will be prize drawings going on all afternoon."

Family Fun Day is sponsored by Anishnabek Community and Family Services. The U.S. Forest Service, Straits Area Sportsmen's Club, the Intermediate School District's Early On program, and the St. Ignace autism support group will be among many presenters at the event.

# Roundtable Will Offer Family Night

Mackinac County Child Protection Roundtable will host a Family Fun Night of bowling Wednesday, March 19, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Gateway Lanes in St. Ignace. Children accompanied by an adult may bowl free of charge, and the adult price for bowling will be \$3. Pizza will be free of charge, and door prizes will be given.

This event is planned in recognition of Parenting Awareness month, emphasizing the importance of effective parenting in nurturing children to become healthy, caring, and contributing citizens.

The Mackinac County Child Protection Roundtable comprises local organizations including, but not limited to, Department of Human Services, Michigan State University Extension, Child and Family Services, area schools, Diane Pepler Women's Resource Center, 4C of the Upper Peninsula, Family Court, law enforcement, and LMAS District Health Department.

# Annegret Goehring Will Be Featured in UP Art Festival

Annegret Goehring of Hessel will demonstrate the art of scissor cutting in the Upper Peninsula Folklife Festival this Saturday, March 15, in Marquette.

The festival is presented by the Beaumier Heritage Center at Northern Michigan University, an on-campus museum dedicated to preserving and presenting the history and culture of the Upper Peninsula's people. Mrs. Goehring will demonstrate her art form Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. She will be part of a demonstration of Upper Peninsula craftsmanship, along with eight other artists demonstrating loom and rag rug weaving, ski making, decoy carving, quilting, basketry, fly tying, gourd decorating and painting, and

spinner making.

The mission of the Upper Peninsula Folklife Festival is to present the traditional arts and crafts of its diverse population, combining performances, craft demonstrations, workshops, dancing, and regional cuisine. Most events are free to the public, with the exception of Friday night's concert featuring Le Vent du Nord from Quebec, and a buffet Sunday.

All activities will be at Northern Michigan University in the Explorer and Great Lakes rooms of the University Center. The Friday night concert will be at the Forest Roberts Theater on campus.

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Annegret Goehring cuts the delicate silhouette of native flowers from black paper, which will be placed on a white or colored background.

# Hikers Say 'Yes' to New Hessel Trail

By Amy Polk

February 23 was the perfect day to consider whether to add more than two miles of trail to the Birge Preserve in Hessel. Winter days don't get much better when 30 degree temperatures and bright sunlight enhance winter's beauty, and 26 people showed up for a snowshoe tour, led by the Little Traverse Conservancy, along its proposed non-motorized trail.

Doug Fuller, director of stewardship for the conservancy and leader of the trek, said participants were enthusiastic about the prospect of a new trail.

"They really would like us to build another trail on one of our preserves in the area," he said.

Only four non-motorized trails for hiking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing have been created in Clark Township, including the Search Bay trail on St. Martin Point, Peek-A-Boo Trail in Cedarville, and the Greentacker Preserve trail east of Cedarville. The Birge Preserve on Point Brulee, along 1.2 miles of Lake Huron shore, has a quarter-mile trail to an observation platform at Loon Lake.

The proposed new trail starts on Point Brulee Road, about one mile north of the existing trail and Birge Preserve sign. It will head west through the woods, then make a rectangular loop back to the east/west trail. The conservancy plotted a portion of the trail along the "Old Wheel Road," the route of the first road into the area. If eagle nests are still in the area, the trail must be at least a quarter-mile from them.

Little Traverse Conservancy seeks public input on the proposed trail, and distributed surveys to all of the February 23 snowshoe hike participants. It asked them if more trails are needed in the area, whether they liked the trail, if a parking lot is needed, and asked for volunteers.

The conservancy is considering two possibilities: A year-around trail with boardwalks over wetlands, or a seasonal trail to be open only during the dry summer season and in winter. The boardwalks would be expensive to build.

"I'm looking toward developing it as a seasonal trail," Mr.

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# Students Present Night of Jazz at St. Ignace

Event Draws Large Audience for Evening of Entertainment

At right: Among members of the school's Jazz Band are Dustin McKenzie on drums, and, to his left, Shawn Cowell and Grant Simmons on trumpet, and Zach Lane on guitar. The band was one of several student groups performing at Night of Jazz at LaSalle High March 8.



LaSalle High School Band Director Jason Byma leads the jazz band during the opening number of Night of Jazz at the school Saturday, March 8. Members of the band pictured are (front, from left) Audrey Wyers, Morgan Postma, Angela Cena, Cole Christiansen; (back) Dane Christiansen, and Brennan Danielson. Night of Jazz features an evening of entertainment by St. Ignace student bands, and a catered dinner in the school gymnasium, which is decorated with lights for the occasion.



St. Ignace school steel drum band members pictured are (front, from left) Stacey Goldthorpe, Molly Paquin, Erin Barthelemy, Angela Cena; (middle row) Dustin McKenzie, Sarah Cullip, director Jason Byma, Megan LaRocque, Nickole Lanczek; (back row) Miska Carrdin, Autumn Huskey, Ivy Thurston, Zach Lane, and (hidden) Luke Paquin. The Saints of Steel performed several numbers at the school's Night of Jazz March 8, closing with "Ants Marching" by the Dave Matthews Band, for which they received a standing ovation from the audience.