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Co-Op Provides Farmland Access To Communities

The Village Agricultural Cooperative of Rochester, Minn., provides farmland access to recent immigrant communities and other marginalized individuals.

"We focus on sustainability and building stronger, more self-sufficient communities," says Amanda Nigon-Crowley, Executive Director. "We believe by strengthening our local food supply, we create a more food-secure region for everyone."

She firmly believes that access to land changes participants' lives.

"Many of our members live in apartments or rental properties where they're not allowed to grow food. Farmland access allows them to grow culturally specific foods that they might otherwise lose access to. This, in turn, reduces grocery costs. And for many families, the farms provide a safe space for community integration. People find a connection through common values, focused on self-sustainability, and a desire to maintain physical, mental and emotional health through fresh air, exercise and community. And good food."

At present, the Cooperative manages a total of 22 acres over six farm sites.

"Four of our farms are within city limits and loaned to us by churches and other nonprofits," says Nigon-Crowley. "The two farms outside of the city are owned by private parties and rented to our organization. All of these rental agreements are on a year-by-year basis, and we're seeking long-term leases or land ownership for our organization. We currently have over 35 people on our waiting list for the 2025 season. We need more land."

Program participants have access to three

high tunnels and washing and packing stations at the larger sites, along with small tools and implements.

"We support our farmers in building their businesses. This includes administering programs that facilitate produce sales to local businesses and food shelves," Nigon-Crowley says. "During Tuesday evenings from July through mid-October, we host a farmers market at the History Center of Olmsted County."

Candidates can register for the program by adding themselves to the waiting list, which can be found on the website.

"Our farms are full every season and continue to grow through word-of-mouth," Nigon-Crowley says. "Once someone has a farm, they keep it as long as they meet the farm guidelines. We charge a small fee, but use grant funding and private funding to cover most of our costs."

"Community support is really essential to fully actualize our mission. We host volunteer events a few times per season and seek connections to local businesses who are interested in sponsoring a farming season or the farmers market. We have live music every market and want to pay our musicians for their time as well. Likewise, we'd love to connect with anyone in the Rochester area who is looking to transition tillable land to new ownership. We're seeking our own farm, either through a long-term lease or ownership."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Village Agricultural Cooperative, 3703 Country Club Rd. SW, Rochester, Minn. 55902 (contact@rochvillage.org; www.rochvillage.org).

Line System Replaces Mower Blades

In the rugged hills of Northwest Arkansas, where rocks are as common as grass, the founders of Blade Solution Corp (BSC) saw a need to eliminate the hazards of traditional metal lawnmower blades. They developed a new system called REVO6 that replaces steel blades with a flexible, impact-absorbing hub and line system.

Launched by inventor and CEO Richard Nevels, BSC was born out of both personal frustration and safety concerns. Each year, thousands are injured by flying debris or accidental contact with spinning metal blades.

"There had to be a better way," Nevels said. The system works by replacing a mower's traditional blade with a REVO6 hub assembly that uses flexible REVOLINE strips instead of metal. This not only reduces the risk of injury but also prevents damage to decks, spindles, and engines when encountering hard objects.

"I use this on a vintage garden tractor to



REVO6 hub assembly uses flexible line strips instead of metal blades.

mow a rough, rocky, wooded lot. It's safe and easy on the belts and spindles," says Steve Wambold, a REVO6 user.

Ranging in price from \$129 for a single-blade replacement to \$699 for six, they have a 90-day satisfaction guarantee and a conditional lifetime warranty. Flat rate shipping is additional.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Blade Solution Corp. (ph 316-207-9872; support@safemowing.com; www.safemowing.com).



Green County used more than 100,000 gals. of cheese brine this past winter, outstripping the available local supply.

Cheese Brine Used To De-Ice Roads

Green County, Wis., has the best of both worlds with great Italian cheese and safer roads, thanks to leftover cheese brine. Not only does the cheese brine make road salt work better, but used by itself, it's an anti-icer.

"When we apply the cheese brine with its 22% salt solution with road salt, it activates the road salt faster," says Chris Narveson, Green County Highway Commissioner. "When we apply it ahead of a winter storm, it seeps into the pavement surface and prevents snow, sleet and freezing rain from bonding and making the road icy or snow-packed."

The cheese brine comes from the Grande Cheese Company plant. The company produces 280 lbs. of Italian cheese per minute and a lot of brine. The cheese brine is a byproduct that would otherwise be mixed with other industrial waste and sprayed on farm fields.

Green County used more than 100,000 gals. of the cheese brine this past winter, outstripping the supply. Narveson reports using an additional 100,000 gals. of regular salt brine.

"Because of our use of cheese brine, our county has the lowest brine cost in the state and is the least user of salt," says Narveson.

"It's amazing how much it saves us."

Green County has trucks especially equipped to apply brine with road salt or by itself as a pre-storm application. Other trucks can use brine with salt, but not by itself. The county also has two tankers that can spray the preventative.

The cheese brine is well filtered to remove most organics before use. Narveson gives the remaining organics in the brine credit for its superior effect on the roads.

"The cheese brine seems to adhere to the road better than regular salt brine," he says.

He explains that while a brine application costs as much as \$4.20 per mile to apply, an application of rock salt would cost 10 times that. The three-hour job would cost the taxpayers \$10,000 to \$12,000. With the brine on the road, that cost is eliminated.

"We're a small county trying to save money and keep salt out of the environment as much as we can," says Narveson.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Chris Narveson, Highway Commissioner, Green County Highway Dept., P.O. Box 259, Monroe, Wis. 53566 (ph 608-328-9411; cnarveson@greencountywi.org).

Square Feeder Reduces Mess And Waste

Kuhns Welding of Nappanee, Ind., began in 1997 as an aluminum welding and metal fabrication business. Today, the family-managed company, with 15 employees, offers a full range of metalworking capabilities. They make and sell The Hay Stack, a square bale horse feeder that takes whole bales with no need to break them apart.

"It's designed to allow for a full but controlled feeding," says company representative Leroy Kuhns. "Horses will naturally eat for 18 out of 24 hrs. in the day. This feeder helps them replicate that behavior without mess or inconvenience."

The feeder comes with the buyer's choice of a mounting bracket or hooks, depending on the installation location.

"It could be portable, but that's not the most efficient approach," Kuhns says. "You can set The Hay Stack at any height off the ground," he says. "A horse's natural feeding height is at ground level, so the feeder makes it possible to feed them right where they prefer."

The device boasts aluminum construction and is assembled with stainless steel hardware. The bottom compartment includes space for grain. Customers can also choose between one or two welded bars to slow down the flow of hay.

"Some horses are really picky," Kuhns says. "Given unlimited access to hay, they'll pick through it for the pieces they want, leaving a mess on the ground. If you restrict their access, they'll eat more."

Both the 2-hole and 3-hole feeders are priced at \$440. The company accepts checks or money orders. For those far from



"It's far superior to a hay net because it's such a challenge to get the hay positioned correctly when using them," says Kuhns.

Nappanee, The Hay Stack is shipped flat via UPS with a shipping weight of 46 lbs.

"It's easy assembly," Kuhns confirms. "And free shipping."

"I don't know of anything else on the market like this," Kuhns says. "No other gravity-fed square bale feeders. It's far superior to a hay net because it's such a challenge to get the hay positioned correctly when using them."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Kuhns Welding, 10101 Shively Rd., Nappanee, Ind. 46550 (ph 574-862-4592).