

# Market Connection



Bi-monthly Newsletter of the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association • Vol. 10 No. 1 January 2005

## Meet NAFDMA's four board members-elect

The new year brings with it a new convention and a new annual meeting. And that means NAFDMA will say goodbye to several board members while welcoming the new.

In February at the annual meeting, NAFDMA's four board members-elect will officially assume their new roles on the board of directors. These four have been part of board communications during the past few months as they're brought up to speed regarding the many issues that the board discusses.

They've also been paired with a mentor to help get them acquainted with what it means to be a NAFDMA board member. Mentors also answer questions and discuss the issues in depth to keep discussions in the board room moving forward.

The four board members elect are Dede Beck, Uncle John's Cider Mill, St. John's, Mich., Midwest; Stuart Beare, Tulleys Farm, West Sussex, UK, At-Large; Al Rose, Red Apple Farm, Phillipston, Mass., Northeast; and Mark Saunders, Saunders Farm, Munster, Ont., Canada East.

These four join incumbents Randii MacNear, Davis Farmers' Market, Davis, Calif., Southwest, and Chalmers Mikell, South Carolina Farm Bureau, Columbia, S.C., Southeast. Randii and Chalmers were



*NAFDMA bid farewell to outgoing board members in Sacramento, Calif. More change happens again in Boston.*

both reelected to their second terms on the board.

The incoming directors are young and energetic and represent some of North America's best farms. Here's a quick introduction to your new board members.

### **Dede Beck, Midwest**

Dede has a degree in journalism with a concentration in Public Relations, Marketing and Advertising. She joined her husband, Mike's, family farm eight years ago.

Dede and Mike were honored as finalists for Farm Market of the Year.

Dede is excited to be part of the board of directors. "As a board member, I hope to help find a balance between the 'new-comers' and the established businesses by helping to tailor the conferences and resources to meet everyone's needs.

"By working on the farm and direct marketing every

day, I have an insight to what's going on and the struggles we all face. Many of our businesses seem to 'look alike' right now, and many of us are in the process of moving our farms to the next generation," she says.

"I believe the next step is for us to become more profitable and streamline our existing businesses while coming up with new ideas for future growth."

### **Stuart Beare, At-Large**

Stuart is a third-generation family farmer who will bring an international perspective to board meetings.

Tulley's Farm was named Outstanding Farm Market of the Year in 2004.

"Being a part of NAFDMA has helped Tulleys Farm to look to the future," says Stuart. "It's also having a dramatic effect on the entire U.K. direct marketing industry."

### **Al Rose, Northeast**

Al and his wife, Nancy, are the fourth generation at Red Apple Farm.

Al received a B.A. in International Relations from Boston University and an M.S. in Agricultural Economics from Cornell University.

Al believes that consumer orientation is important to understanding customer's needs and wants and how a farm can best adapt to meet them.

"There exists a 'willingness-to-pay' from both the public and private sector to maintain family farms and the landscape they preserve," says Al. "As managers, it is our challenge to meet this willingness with innovative and value-driven ideas."

### **Mark Saunders, Canada East**

Mark Saunders bills himself as the Director of Fun at the family-run Saunders Farm. In 2002 Saunders Farm was named Outstanding Farm Market of the Year.

"I am passionate about our industry and its bright future," Mark says. "Direct farmer marketers are in the customer service business, and I believe that NAFDMA should lead by example; we should showcase and mirror the best of the best. We must also focus on creating the best learning opportunities for our members at the annual conference and beyond."

## 2004 Board of Directors

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# Stepping back to find the “easy money” on our farm

By Wayne Bishop  
Wheatland, CA



In conversations with NAFDMA members over the last few years, and especially after 500 of you visited last winter, we are often asked why we don't charge admission to our farm. It seems to be the conventional wisdom now that charging admission should go hand in hand with adding entertainment to your farm. It is certainly true that some of our most successful members are charging admission and more and more of us are headed that way. I have been known to debate the subject for hours but what it really comes down to in our business is that we have been able to find some more subtle ways of extracting profits from our visitors. For those of you thinking about moving towards admissions, I would encourage you to step back and see if you can find some other “easy money” instead.

By “easy money,” I'm not talking about your gift shop, bakery, or retail stores. These are certainly vital parts of your operations and can return gross profits (sales – direct costs) of as high as 50 percent if well managed. I'm talking about enterprises within your total operation which can return gross profits as high as 90 percent. You can find “easy money” in any product or service where your cost of providing it is 20 percent or less of the perceived retail value. By finding these high profit enterprises, you can avoid the challenge of convincing your customers that your gate charge is a good value; and instead sell him something that he already thinks has more value than it really does.

**Start with beverages.** If you allow folks to play for free, they can work

up a powerful thirst. Our bottled water sells at 78 percent gross profit and soda is about the same. Our Pepsi supplier provided equipment to us at no charge to convert us to the bag-in-a-box system which puts our cost for a soda at a penny an ounce, including cup, ice, etc. Movie theaters, fairs, and other entertainment venues charge much higher prices for drinks than we do and therefore have even higher margins.

**Add some high margin snacks** (and get rid of any that are not.) If you don't have a Gold Medal catalog, get one and ask them for their newsletter on making money with snack foods. Figure out what the hot selling snack foods are in your region and get them. For us, corn dogs, soft-serve ice cream, caramel apples, and cotton candy are all in the 80 to 90 percent gross profit range and people will line up to get them. We dumped kettle korn this year because the margins were not that high and it was only popular when the weather cooled off. Now you know we're crazy, no admissions and we dumped kettle korn. Next year, I'm looking into the lemon shakers I sampled recently at a NAFDMA member's ranch. They're selling 15 or 20 cents worth of lemon, sugar, ice, and water for 3 or 4 dollars! That's right around 90 percent GP after labor!

**Add an ATM machine and evaluate your credit card service.** Our ATM machine has dispensed about \$250,000 in the three seasons we've had it. We don't know how much it has helped increase customer spending, but we do know that we keep \$1.45 of the \$1.50 transaction fee

*Continued on page 3*

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# Stepping back to find the “easy money”

*Continued from page 2*

charged to the customer. We have collected over \$6,000 this way, which has more than paid for the machine. We discovered around the same time that we were paying far too much in credit card processing fees. Costco and Sam's Club both offer processing services. We saved about \$3,000 the first year we switched. The savings are even greater now with the increasing popularity of debit cards.

**Add a paid attraction.** Our train, corn maze, and slide mountain have become key profit centers for us, each returning 80 percent gross profits or better. The maze was certainly the easiest to add. We asked lots of questions on NAFDMA buses and went home and did it. Ours is not as large or intricate as many of the ones

out there, but it fits our operation well and is very inexpensive to create each year. Whatever you add, spend the extra time and money to decorate it, theme it, finish it. Your paid attractions must achieve a higher standard than your free play areas.

**Consider charging for parking.** We started with a dollar per car almost 20 years ago on weekends only. We now get \$5 but still only on weekends. You could argue that we really are charging admission in this way, but we think it's more subtle, and it has the added benefit of helping to steer customers into coming out on weekdays. Many of our weekdays are now bigger than the Sundays of just a few years ago.

Since we started food service years ago, we have paid the sales taxes rather than charging the customer on the

theory that we were making it easier on ourselves. It was a small amount of money at first but next year we are going to find a nice sum of easy money by making the customers pay the tax. It will take our cashiers a few more seconds to count back change, but we will get to keep around \$12,000 that we have been sending the state in taxes.

Bishop's Pumpkin Farm has just finished its 32<sup>nd</sup> season. It could be argued that we could have been more profitable sooner had we started charging admission years ago. I believe, however, that we have built a business without admissions charges that will last and be profitable for years to come.

If you see me in Boston, please tell me where you have found easy money in your business, because I'm addicted to it and would like to

find some more.

I wrote this article and let it sit a few days. I realize I'm going against the grain here a bit and don't want to offend any of my NAFDMA friends. Interestingly, last night my wife and I stopped at a Barnes and Noble bookstore for the third time in the last few weeks. As I paused from reading a book I wasn't going to purchase, I realized how similar their business model is to ours. On each visit, I have found a comfy place to sit and sip a way over-priced cup of coffee while I enjoy skimming through a few books and enjoying the atmosphere for free. By the time we leave, we have gone ahead and purchased a book or magazine or two. They have managed to extract some easy money from me, and I keep going back to let them do it again.

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# Rewards and challenges of foreign interns

*Dana Huber, marketing manager of Huber's Orchard & Winery, Starlight, Ind., recently discussed hosting a foreign intern with NAFDMA board member Kerry Engel.*

## What does the intern do?

Our intern student from the University of Purpan in Toulouse, France requested to work with us to learn more about the winemaking and agri-tourism process. The responsibilities (tasks) and knowledge that this intern will acquire during her stay include:

- The trainee will acquire knowledge of the winemaking process.
- The trainee will experience American hospitality and customs.
- The trainee will gain hands-on knowledge about crushing and destemming.
- The trainee will gain hands-on knowledge about the bottling process.
- The trainee will gain hands-on knowledge about lab analysis work.
- The trainee will experience agri-tourism and American farming.
- The trainee will gain experience with wine shoppe retail activity.
- The trainee will learn wine production from harvest to bottling.

## What does the intern bring to your business?

Our intern student brings an international view and opinion to our procedures and processes. This student is able to share experience on the way farming happens in France as compared to what they see in America.

## What challenges have you encountered?

We have been very fortunate to have a student that is extremely adaptable, easy-going, and very personable.

She speaks very good English (she has studied English for 12 years) and is able to participate in American conversations quite easily. She has participated and enjoyed being a part of our family and social activities

Our student was very prepared and brought translation dictionaries to assist with her work in America. She takes notes daily, participates in all grape harvest and cellar activities. She is required to write a 15-page report at the end of her stay in English that will be graded by her University with a copy being sent to us—a tough assignment considering that the report is not written in her native language.

The only challenges that we have encountered are with procedural issues surrounding the internship—acquiring a Social Security card, selecting the most cost-effective calling card, ensuring that we have her VISA at all times, and reporting to an agency called CIEE at the required times.

I spoke with our intern and the University of Purpan many times before she arrived, and we were given very thorough documentation of where to call if we encountered any issues or problems. The program has been very well organized.

## How does one get involved with an intern program?

We were asked to travel to France by a local university last fall (2003) to experience international agriculture. We visited the University of Purpan where our intern is a student. During our stay, we shared with the staff of the university our openness to hosting an intern sometime in the future. So, the best thing to do is to let universities and your local chamber and businesses know that you are in-

terested and supportive of the intern experience. Hosting an intern does take time and patience so you need to be prepared to slow down from your normal work routine. However, it is very rewarding knowing that you are helping a young student better understand the pros/cons of a particular industry.

On a side note, our student is **required** by her university to travel abroad for a defined number of months before she can complete her degree in agriculture. So, her involvement was easy considering that it was a requirement. Most American universities have counselors that promote internships, and these counselors can help put you in contact with the right process. Bottomline, there are students in need of internships, and the best thing to do is to let these businesses know you are interested in helping their community grow stronger by hosting interns.

## Tip(s) for those interested in bringing an intern into their business.

I have to admit I was a little worried about how all of this would work from a “home” perspective considering that we have two boys that are 6 and 8 years old. But, I have been pleasantly surprised how well we all have transitioned.

I think international interns are somewhat easier to transition with because they are not only looking to acquire knowledge about a specific industry (agriculture) but they like to observe and participate in the simplest American traditions and way of life. For example, going to the grocery, preparing dinner, shopping, going to a baseball or football game. These simple activities are very interesting for international students and they can compare

to some of the things that they do in their own country.

## Some tips for anyone considering hosting an intern student:

1. Do not change the way you do anything. The fact that we have two young children and work two full time jobs is the American way of life and that is what they want to learn more about.
2. Cook together and eat together each evening.
3. Organize short getaways that are typical in America—baseball game, movies, grocery shopping.
4. Share experiences. Why you do things the way you do—family traditions, school traditions, how you make brownies, your favorite dish, etc.
5. Visit American tourist attractions—local convention and visitors bureaus, monuments, whatever your area might be noted for.
6. Accommodate your student with their own room so they have their own privacy.
7. Access to the Internet. Many forms and information required for an internship are easily accessible through the Internet. Also, our intern corresponds via email to her family and friends as well as via the phone. The Internet is a great tool for a student if you can get access.
8. Shared household responsibilities. Interns should be responsible for doing their own laundry, keeping their room clean, helping with the dishes, etc. This should be a shared responsibility since they are living with you.
9. Have fun and learn new things! It is exciting hosting a student because each and every day we learn something new about them and they learn something new about our way of life.

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For exhibitor information contact Kirstin Wright, Exhibit Manager at [kwright@hauntcon.com](mailto:kwright@hauntcon.com) or by phone at 813-760-6311.



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## Parallels to American History

On Feb. 1, 1775, in Cambridge, Mass., a provincial congress was held to prepare for a state of war against England. On Feb. 9, the English Parliament declared the Massachusetts colony to be in a state of rebellion. Patrick Henry delivered his speech against British rule in Virginia, proclaiming, "Give me liberty or give me death!" on March 23. Then on April 19, a storied shot is fired in Concord, Mass., that is "heard 'round the world."

Anyone who goes on a NAFDMA pre-conference tour this year will come away with a new understanding of the finer points of these historic events.

Two hundred thirty years later, on Feb. 10, 2005, the Farmers' Market Coalition (FMC) of the North American Farmers

Direct Marketing Association will hold its own annual meeting and will elect its first self-governing council.

On that same date, NAFDMA will introduce the two newest members of its management company, Ed Maltby and Nora Owens. Together with the new council, they are assigned to coordinate the future of FMC.

These are just a couple of tangible events that mark an ever-changing, and much more peaceful, evolution of the direct marketing industry in North America. I'm certain that the FMC will have every bit as much impact on farm direct marketing over the next 20 years



as NAFDMA has had over the past 20 years.

Farmers' markets are the most visible venue of direct marketing for our neighbors who live in urban areas. There are

more than 3,600 farmers' markets in the United States, plus something near 400 of them in Canada. It's estimated that over 40,000 family farmers participate in these markets. Several million consumers shop at farmers' markets regularly, and over a hundred million have visited a farmers' market sometime in the past three years. The farmers and managers who participate in them have long been known as "agricultural ambassadors to the urban public."

The truth is, the growing number of farmers' markets in rural and sub-urban communities makes them our ambassadors to that 98.5 percent of the public that does not live on a farm.

Farmers' markets are not a brand new phenomenon. Thousands of pioneers are responsible for their positive growth across the continent. Now, a more focused "nation" for thousands of folks who want to advance the benefits of farmers' markets has emerged.

Congratulations on your successes, FMC Steering Committee. Welcome aboard, Ed and Nora. Best wishes for continued success, FMC Council.

Is an Agritourism Coalition next? What a revolutionary thought!

## Call of the FMC Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Farmers' Market Coalition of the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association will be held on Thursday, February 10, 2005 at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel in Boston, Mass. at 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

### Agenda

9:00 Call to Order and Welcome from the President  
Randii MacNear

9:05 Introduction of Steering Committee  
Randii MacNear

9:10 Introduction of Attendees  
Facilitated by Randii MacNear

9:30 FMC in Review and Beyond  
Charlie Touchette

10:00 Introduction of FMC Coordinators  
Charlie Touchette

10:15 Break

10:30 Nomination and Election of new FMC Council  
Esther Kovari

11:00 Certificates of Appreciation for outgoing Steering Committee Members  
Randii MacNear

11:15 Farmers' Market Coalition Business  
Acceptance of previous meeting Minutes  
Financial Report

11:30 Calendar for upcoming events/activities  
FMC Council Meetings  
Function of members on Committees

2006 Convention in Texas  
Brief introduction of afternoon activities  
General questions and discussion

12:30 Lunch

1:30 USDA/AMS Cooperative Agreement  
Errol Bragg and Carmen Humphrey

1:35 Review the roundtable discussions, topics, procedures  
Ed Maltby and Nora Owens

1:45 Group discussions for 7 different topics.  
\* EBT  
\* Liability Insurance  
\* National Policy Initiatives  
\* Regional Workshops  
\* Association development  
\* Media and communications  
\* Identification of research needs

2:30 Reports from group discussions and full membership review

4:15 Closing remarks: Looking to the future; Building on the momentum

4:30 Adjourn

## My, how time flies...

Where have the past six years gone? It seems just like yesterday that I was elected to the NAFDMA Board of Directors. Now I can look forward to a more relaxing time at the annual conferences with confidence that NAFDMA has the tools that it needs for the future.

I have seen many changes in NAFDMA in the past six years. As a member of the Board of Directors, I have watched a comprehensive policy handbook and a good budget being developed. As I have found out, a good policy handbook and budget answer many questions and settle many more discussions. With these two tools, an organization can run very

smoothly.

It seems that every year there were additions and adjustments made to these documents. Our first policy was a booklet of approximately 25

pages with few references to the by-laws. Now the policy is on a compact disc along with cross-references to the bylaws; it is a very thorough and solid document.

Along with these tools, a five-year plan has also been put together. This also has matured during the years and is constantly changing with many things accomplished, many projects on-going and



others to be accomplished in the future. It provides good direction for the executive director and guidance for the different board committees.

Of all of the “non-paying” jobs that I have taken on in the past, being a member of the NAFDMA Board of Directors has been the most rewarding and educational. Educational because I have been able to work with and learn from many different people, from many different states and countries. Rewarding by watching this industry come together, grow, share knowledge and ideas,

and be recognized as the most spirited and energetic group of agricultural people.

I guess what I am trying to say is, *Thank you all for the past six memorable and rewarding years.*

After spending one and a half years in Viet Nam, I have often remarked, “I wouldn’t take a million dollars to do that again, nor would I take a million dollars for the memories and experiences.”

As for serving NAFDMA, I would gladly do it all again just for the memories, experiences, and the many friendships I have gained during these past six years.

## Call of the Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the North American Farmers’ Direct Marketing Association will be held on Saturday, February 12, 2005 at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts at 7:30 a.m.

### Agenda

- 7:30 Call to Order and Welcome from the President  
President Richard Tanner
- 7:32 Introduction of 2004 Board of Directors 2004 Board  
President Richard Tanner
- 7:35 Welcome to newly elected Board members for 2005  
President Richard Tanner
- 7:37 Secretary’s Report – review of previous meeting minutes  
Secretary Brent Warner
- 7:40 Treasurer’s report – review of FY2004 Year-end Financial Statement  
Treasurer Rob Leeds
- 7:45 Executive Director’s Report – review of 2004 activities  
Executive Director Charlie Touchette
- 8:00 Policy/USDA/Government Relations  
Executive Director Charlie Touchette
- 8:10 Best Management Practices/Insurance  
Executive Director Charlie Touchette and Rob Leeds
- 8:20 Nominations Open for Board of Directors for 2006  
President Richard Tanner and Bonnie Remlinger
- 8:30 Meeting Adjourn





**NORTH AMERICAN FARMERS' DIRECT  
MARKETING ASSOCIATION**  
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**WWW.NAFDMA.COM**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **Jan. 24 - 26, Alberta**

Explore Direct Provincial Conference 2005, Red Deer Lodge, Red Deer, AB. **Rob Leeds, NAFDMA treasurer, is speaking Jan. 25 and 26.**

Contact: Lisa Sharp, 780-679-1362, e-mail [lisa.sharp@gov.ab.ca](mailto:lisa.sharp@gov.ab.ca), or [www.agric.gov.ab.ca](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca). Rob Leeds, NAFDMA treasurer, is speaking on Jan. XX.

### **Jan. 27-28, Nova Scotia**

Scotia Horticultural Congress, Old Orchard Inn, Greenwich, N.S. **Charlie Touchette, NAFDMA executive director, is speaking on Jan. 27.**

For more information, visit [www.hortns.com/conferences](http://www.hortns.com/conferences), e-mail [hortns@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:hortns@ns.sympatico.ca), or

call 902-678-9335.

### **Jan. 28-29, Wisconsin**

Midwest Value-Added Agriculture Conference, Plaza Hotel, Eau Claire, Wis.

Contact: Heather Amundson, 715-834-9672, [River\\_Country@hotmail.com](mailto:River_Country@hotmail.com), [www.rivercountryrca.org](http://www.rivercountryrca.org).

### **Feb. 7-14, Massachusetts**

**North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Convention**, Park Plaza Hotel, Boston, Mass. Pre-Conference Bus Tours, Workshops, Conference, Trade Show and Post-Conference Bus Tour to New York City.

Visit the Web site at [www.nafdma.com](http://www.nafdma.com), e-mail [info@nafdma.com](mailto:info@nafdma.com), or call

413-529-0386. Registration begins Nov. 1. Preregistration deadline is Jan. 6.

### **February 22-23, Ohio**

Ohio River Valley Farm Marketing Conference, Kings Island Resort and Conference Center, Mason, Ohio.

Contact: Travis West at 740-289-2071 or e-mail [west.222@osu.edu](mailto:west.222@osu.edu)

### **February 25-26, Manitoba**

2005 Direct Farm Marketing Conference, Royal Oak Inn, Brandon, Manitoba. **Brent Warner, NAFDMA secretary, is speaking on Feb. 26.**

Contact: Susan Nicoll, 204-376-3306 or visit [www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/news/direct.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/news/direct.html).

### **April 20-24, Texas**

HAuNTcon 2005, Adam's Mark Dallas Hotel, Dallas, Texas. Pre-show bus tour is April 20 and 21. Convention and tradeshow include: 2 Days of Actor Training Classes and Workshops. The Haunted Garage Sale, and Hearse/Parade Car Rally.

Registration is \$50. Mail a check or money order to: HAuNTcon, PO Box 220286, Charlotte, NC 28222, or pay by PayPal to [Info@HauNTcon.com](mailto:Info@HauNTcon.com).

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