

**The following ISU College of Ag and Life Sciences alumni would like their experiences with the ISU Leopold Center to be entered into public record in the debate about the Center's Funding. We asked that they share what past experiences they have with the Center, what work they do with the Center now, and how the Center supports people's careers, especially in Iowa.**

**Andrea Vaage – Des Moines, IA**

- My graduate education in Community and Regional Planning and Sustainable Agriculture was funded through a Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture Policy Initiative grant. We created a guidebook aimed at addressing local zoning issues in regards to a variety of urban agriculture practices. Our research outlined best practices and provided guidance on how to manage health, safety, and welfare concerns associated with local food production. From keeping chickens to managing an urban farm, this research provides valuable information for local jurisdictions and those interested in practicing these activities to find common ground and craft informed regulations. The Leopold Center is instrumental in bridging disciplines in support of a robust and diverse food system. CALS would not be able to provide the support the Leopold Center does in funding projects that provide cross-cutting research on scientific, economic, and policy issues related to agriculture.
- I am currently employed at Lutheran Services in Iowa as a Farm Associate with Global Greens. This program assists refugees to produce and market vegetables in the greater Des Moines area. My work with the Leopold Center is directly related to this program which provides opportunities for refugees to grow food in community gardens or on urban farms. The Leopold Center is instrumental in providing support for alternative forms of agriculture that can be a viable path for beginning farmers without access to land or capital.
- I recently moved back from Washington with the hope that I could continue working in agriculture. I look to the Leopold Center to provide research that can assist me as a future farmer. The existence of the Leopold Center lets me know that Iowa supports a diverse food system and encourages young farmers.

**Ashley Hand (Noonan) -- Bernard, IA**

- I look to them as an information source. My husband and I are farmers (myself both urban and rural). The Leopold Center is one of the resources we rely on regularly to learn.
- I'm a farmer in eastern Iowa, both urban and rural. My husband and I recently moved back to our family's 500 acre cow/calf and corn/soy farm. As a direct result of the research completed by recipients of awards from the Leopold Center, I am able to access and share science which directly relates to on-farm decisions that are relevant to our family's farm management. It helps us make better choices and stay informed, shaping us as beginning farmers and land stewards. In addition, I manage an urban farm in Dubuque which provides food to a community free-meal program 365 days a year. The Ag

Urbanism toolkit and the LC's other work with food systems are essential resources in addressing community needs and impacts for urban farms.

- Resources like the Leopold Center enhance my capacity. It can be intimidating to take over a family farm, especially if you're interesting in shifting that farm to a more sustainable agricultural model. The fact that the Leopold Center exists is one of the reasons we felt like we could farm within our value system in Iowa. They offer so much research and programmatic support for people like us who are just starting out in a new direction.

### **Stefan Gailans – Ames, IA**

- The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture provided crucial funding for my PhD program in agronomy and sustainable agriculture. They've also supported programs for scores of my colleagues who work on crop rotations, cover crops, water quality, agroecology and socio-economic concerns.
- I am now the research and field crops director at Practical Farmers of Iowa--a farmer-member organization that spans the state and spans farm production systems. The Leopold Center supported my graduate studies that trained me to be a scientist and prepared me for my position today. I currently work with farmers to design on-farm research trials to test farm practices that seek to improve both the farmers' productivity, stewardship and bottom line. Support from the Leopold Center while in graduate school was vital to preparing me for my current position.
- By training the next generation of thinkers and scientists that want to tackle Iowa's soil, water and rural socio-economic challenges.

### **Renae Dietzel – Ames, IA**

- The Leopold Center helps young people begin farms in Iowa.

### **Jess Soulis – Des Moines, IA**

- I graduated from Iowa State University's Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture in 2012, and while at ISU, I worked on a research project that was funded by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Many of the organizations that are doing work in sustainable agriculture in Iowa - including Global Greens - Lutheran Services in Iowa, where I currently am employed and the Women, Food and Agriculture Network, where I serve on the board - have benefited from the applied research and outreach that the Leopold Center has supported. There is no other organization in Iowa doing the work that Leopold is doing. Further, their leadership in building a long-term vision of agriculture in Iowa that is economically and environmentally viable has brought benefit to all Iowans and much of the U.S. Midwest. The Leopold Center has helped to build so much of the good that is happening in our state, and this work needs to continue - and continue to grow - in order to improve the sustainability of agriculture and protect Iowa's future.
- Since 2014, I've worked as the Farm Marketing Specialist for Global Greens, a program of Lutheran Services in Iowa that reconnects farmers who came to the U.S. with refugee status to the land. The Leopold Center was instrumental in the creation of this program -

providing our initial planning grant - and has continued to be a crucial support as Global Greens has moved from being a great idea to the important and successful reality it is today. We now support over 200 families in accessing community gardens and growing food - especially produce that can't be found in stores - for their families and are helping 24 families grow their market farming businesses. In 2016, these families made over \$60,000 in sales to their neighbors in the Des Moines area - providing income to the farmers and healthy food to the community. The Leopold Center has helped LSI in our efforts to give these farmers an opportunity to share their knowledge, gifts, and passion for agriculture with their new neighbors. I am also a board member and former employee of the Women, Food and Agriculture Network. The Leopold Center has been instrumental in providing funding for much of the important work done by WFAN, which exists so that women can give each other the information, connections, and encouragement they need to be effective practitioners and supporters of sustainable agriculture and healthy localized food systems. Women are leaders in the sustainable agriculture movement, and the Leopold Center has funded WFAN's programming to provide research opportunities and education for women farmers, landowners, and food system practitioners. This funding is so important to the women who benefit from this programming as well as to the future of the land and people of Iowa.

- The Leopold Center is providing funding for research that is innovative and vital to the land, water, and people of Iowa. Young people who are passionate about protecting the future of Iowa's land, water, and citizens know that they will find support - financial and otherwise - from the Leopold Center. The Leopold Center is also a critical piece of the Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture, which is bringing young people to Iowa with its unique curriculum and breadth of research opportunities. When students graduate from this program, many are able to stay in Iowa because they can find jobs working with programs and organizations that are currently receiving funding from the Leopold Center and/or have received it in the past.

**Saul Abarca-Orozco – Gainesville, FL**

- From 2011 to 2012, I was involved in a research study on Latino Youth and their perspectives on health, local food and agriculture that was funded by the Leopold center. The objective of this project was to raise awareness and generate discussion in Council Bluffs, Des Moines, and Ottumwa, about health, food, and agriculture. The Leopold Center work is crucial for Youth to understand the importance of food and agriculture.
- I am not currently working in Iowa but the opportunity to work with youth on topics like health, agriculture and food have shaped my path as a postdoctoral associate. My current research is about evaluating nutrition education programs developed for youth and adults in the State of Florida.
- Leopold center funds diverse research projects across Iowa and contributes to facilitate social and cultural integration of youth immigrants, refugees and African Americans in different communities.

**Richard Schultz – Ames, IA**

- The riparian buffer conservation practice that is part of the USDA Conservation Program would not have been developed had it not been for Leopold Center support. Our buffer team started as a focus team supported by the Leopold Center and our initial funding source was Leopold Center money. Had it not been for that start-up and early concept

design and development support our program would not have been able to leverage the millions of dollars that the program has been successful in receiving. The buffer work continues today and is expanding to include saturated buffers, stream bank stabilization techniques and channel stabilization practices.

- Our work would not have gotten started without the Leopold Center - we had submitted several USDA grant proposals to get riparian buffers off the ground but we unsuccessful - the Leopold Center gave us our first monies to get the program started and provided support for many years. The program was the model for the USDA national program which is emulated around the country - the state of Minnesota is now going to require buffers of a minimum of 50 feet along all streams in the state.
- Graduate student support and undergraduate hourly support supported by the Center allows them to work in our programs and shows them the unique opportunities and challenges in Iowa and many of those who have graduated are now working for the DNR, USDA and counties in Iowa.

### **David Weisberger – Ames, IA**

- Though I am not currently on a Leopold Center grant, I have received funding from them to support our graduate symposium in inviting out of state speakers, funding that would not be possible from the University. The Center supports many themes around agriculture and all of them are important. Water and soil quality, local food access, rural development are inherently related and important issues. It is clear that focusing only on technical solutions has not worked for water or soil quality in the state. Unsustainable rates of erosion and poor water quality still plague Iowa. We need to keep up research that embraces the complexity of these issues and engages stakeholders on a personal level, while providing them with realistic and viable solutions. The Leopold Center is a trusted and respected entity by farmers and communities from disparate geographic and political backgrounds. Why would we choose to pass along its limited funding to organizations that have neither the respect or history that it does? That is simply poor management of tax payer dollars.
- I work in the field of agronomy, focusing on alternative crops like small grains. One of the main reasons I came to Iowa (from New York) was the reputation and work of the Leopold Center. The research that the center has supported over the last 30 plus years has formed the basis of what I research now as a graduate student. The long term rotation and organic work laid the foundation of what I currently research. Without it, I would have no base line from which to start my own investigations and would have little buy-in or interest from the farmers and groups with which I work. My personal connection to the Leopold Center is also important as members of their staff have been allies and role models during my time at Iowa State. Their advice and friendship over my three years of graduate school have shaped my experience and helped develop my thinking as both a human being and agronomist. I would not have the opportunities I have now nor the passion to continue my work in agronomic systems research without their guidance and support.
- The Center supports research that helps educate new and beginning farmers. The local foods research, for example, aids in developing tools and markets for Iowa grown agricultural products. Developing these tools and skills for young and beginning farmers helps them to establish viable business in rural communities in Iowa. The Center actually

aims to get more people, more farmers and local business owners, working and living in Iowa by supporting initiatives that provide them with useful and meaningful materials on issues from crop production and handling to enterprise budgets.

**Susan DeBlicek – Ames, IA**

- Initiated local foods purchasing program with ISU Dining with Leopold Center funds. Spending on local foods by ISU Dining went from .5% of annual food budget to 10%, putting millions of dollars into local farmer's hands.
- Coordinating the Master Gardener program for ISU Extension and Outreach. The LC's support of my research shaped my career and landed me the job I have today.
- Funding relevant research that builds skill sets that are desirable by local employers.

**Robert Valek – Ames, IA**

- Without the Leopold Center, I would not be in Iowa, and I definitely would not be pursuing my PhD at Iowa State University.
- I hold a BS in Computer and Information Science, and an MS in Information Technology Project Management, an unusual background for working with in agriculture. For years, however, I spent 50-80 percent of my free time studying agricultural topics. Eventually, I decided the interest was more than a hobby, and decided to pursue a PhD in something agriculture related, but I didn't know where to start. I grew up in a military family, had moved 11 times (mostly overseas), and had no idea where to start applying. With my unusual background and low chance of a professor taking a risk on me, I decided to shotgun it. For 3 months, I researched every graduate program in the United States. Every. Last. One. In every program I was still considering, I looked at the research interests of every professor, and built a "short" list. Then I emailed all of them; all 250 of them. 5 interviewed, and only gave me an offer.
- I now work with that professor (Dr. Lisa Schulte Moore) at Iowa State University, on a project called People in Ecosystems/Watershed Integration (PEWI). PEWI is a simple browser-based tool anyone can use to simulate watershed-scale impacts of putting different types of land cover on the land. Farmers can simulate adding small pieces of prairie or wetlands, students can be exposed to farming through a simple game-like interface in the classroom, and members of the general public can more clearly simulate the magnitude of an impact different land-uses have on measurements like nutrient runoff, game wildlife habitat, and crop yields. This project is highly interdisciplinary and, in the eyes of many funding sources, either "beyond our grants' scope" or "too challenging". The Leopold Center funds a proposal the project was involved with, giving it a chance. With that chance, my assistantship was funded.

**Leigh Ann Long – Ames, IA**

- The Leopold Center has been incredibly important in my professional life; they funded the project I worked on as a research assistant while a senior in college (1999-2000) on composting swine bedding from hoop barns. The Leopold Center came up with the initial funds in 1990 for the Bear Creek riparian buffer project that I was privileged to work on full-time as Research Associate from 2003-2012. The Bear Creek watershed has been recognized as a National Restoration Demonstration Watershed by the US EPA and as a

National Research and Demonstration Area by the USDA, and was the model for the riparian forest buffer Conservation Reserve Program practice. Because of the support of the Leopold Center, people nationally and internationally, know not only how riparian buffers can protect soil and water quality, but also how they increase wildlife habitat and can be a source of niche agricultural products. The Leopold Center also helped fund my M.S. thesis research on soil quality under long-established riparian buffers; the results of this research support keeping buffers in place longer than standard Conservation Reserve Program contracts allow. There are over 400 projects that have been funded in the past 30 years by the Leopold Center, and only a portion of those are related to soil and water conservation. Diverting the funds dedicated to the Leopold Center would mean that issues important to diversifying Iowa's agricultural base, such as integrated pest management, alternative livestock systems, and growing and marketing niche crops, would not be researched.

- I currently am the laboratory manager of the Water Quality Research Laboratory in the Department of Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering at Iowa State University; I analyze water samples that come from research projects, some funded in part by the Leopold Center. I originally began studying agronomy in college, thinking I was going to go into commodity agriculture in some fashion. Because of the Leopold Center, I learned about sustainable agriculture and ultimately received a M.S. degree from the Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture from Iowa State.
- Commodity agriculture in Iowa needs fewer and fewer people to produce more and more corn, soybeans, and hogs. Research done by the Leopold Center brings in diversity to Iowa's agricultural system and provides more jobs on the land, whether that's in small, family-run dairies, or wineries, or orchards, or urban farms, or designing best management practices for soil and water conservation.

#### **Carrie Chennault – Ames, IA**

- The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture has provided funding for my research as a graduate student in Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University.
- Currently my research seeks to foster local food systems and increase community food security in Iowa. One-in-eight Iowans experiences food insecurity, and Iowa ranks last in the nation in fruit and vegetable consumption. That means that for many Iowans, accessing fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables is not an easy option. I work with communities across the state, in rural and urban areas, to build up community donation gardening practices. My research focuses on how communities can work together to build the networks, relationships, capacities, and skillsets needed to increase locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables distributed at food pantries, senior citizen centers, schools, and other food access sites. Beyond direct financial support of my research, the Leopold Center has helped shape this work by having housed local foods research, education, and outreach at Iowa State University and continuing to support that work at the university and across the state. They have demonstrated the vital connection between a robust local food system and a more sustainable agriculture in Iowa, for example convening the Regional Food Systems Working Group, conducting numerous food system assessments in Iowa, funding marketing research on the economic impact of local foods, and developing marketing and promotion efforts for local and regional food businesses. There is no doubt in my mind that the Leopold Center has been at the

forefront of developing the local foods movement in Iowa, a movement that is helping Iowans grow stronger and healthier and making Iowa agriculture more socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable.

- Young Iowans want to do agriculture sustainably, and returning to the farm for this generation, now more than ever, is fueled by an interest in local foods and agroecology. As young Iowans, we are interested in smaller-scale diversified farms, incorporating conservation practices, entering into niche and local markets, and developing community food systems. The Leopold Center provides grants and funding at the university and across the state, often to students or organizations filled with younger Iowans who are dedicated to more sustainable agricultural and food systems. The Leopold Center is unique at Iowa State University in its support of innovative research opportunities and as an interdisciplinary hub that connects researchers from across the biophysical, social, and human sciences, as well as the business school. Their work helps keep young people in Iowa both by providing support for higher education and research, as well as making Iowa a healthier, more sustainable place where its young people want to stay, work, and live.

**Alice Topaloff – Decorah, IA**

- I was a graduate research assistant for 6 months, interviewing farmers in Northeast Iowa about 'why farmers farm the way they do'. Analyzing the different production systems and understanding where the economic and environmental opportunities were. I found the Leopold Center (from France, where I was living at the time) by googling "local foods, corn belt": the Center was the strongest result of that search. Nobody else does such broad, significant, and impactful research. No other center studies both the impact of corn crops on soil erosion and the economic opportunities of farm incubators. After my graduate degree, I came back to Iowa to work at the Leopold Center as a program assistant until 2016. Nothing has made me prouder than the opportunity to work at the Center.
- The biggest way the LC has helped me shape my path was by making me move (and stay) in Iowa. I am now a resident of Iowa, pay my taxes and vote here. At the Leopold Center, I learned the importance of research, the necessity of a space to incubate projects that drive rural economies (food hubs, strips, farm to school, farm incubators, etc.). I currently work for a national nonprofit, and am on the Board of Directors of a food hub in Northeast Iowa. This food hub was created in large part thanks to the Leopold Center, is now financially autonomous and has close to
- By creating opportunities, whether it be entrepreneurial, institutional or research based. I know at least 12 young people who have resources to start farming thanks to the Leopold Center.

**Adam Wright – Ames, IA**

- As co-president of the Sustainable Agriculture Student Association, the Leopold Center proved an essential partner for us. The center supplied our organization with ongoing resources and support, especially when we went into the community to present at elementary schools to teach young people more about agriculture in Iowa.
- I recently defended my graduate thesis in the conference room of the Leopold Center. The budget cuts had been announced two days prior, and it was unfortunate to think that

the Center might not continue as a future resource. My graduate co-advisor, Fred Kirschenmann, works for the center and would not be at ISU without its support. Fred is one of the most important sustainable agricultural leaders in the country and has proved to be a wealth of knowledge not only for myself but also countless other students, researchers, farmers, and consumers across the U.S. Losing Fred and the other staff at the Leopold Center would be a devastating loss.

**John Dean – Alexandria, Louisiana**

- Through a work-study program, the Leopold Center gave me the opportunity to work directly with a rural community (Perry) to strengthen its local food economy. Without the Leopold Center's leadership, rural communities across Iowa, such as Perry, would not have access to the resources and knowledge they need to build vibrant local food economies.
- Through its leadership in convening region-specific local food working groups, the Leopold Center has developed a model of collaboration that we are trying to replicate in the rural South. Through its research and collaborative partnership building, the Leopold Center has made Iowa a national leader in building local food economies.
- The Leopold Center continues to work with rural communities across Iowa to develop stronger local economies through agriculture, and therefore more attractive places to live for all ages.

**Virginia Nichols – Washington state**

- As an MS student at Iowa State University and the Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture, I received a small grant from the Leopold Center to do a project of my own design concerning prairies as a cellulosic biofuel source. The ability to obtain small state-focused grants as a student was invaluable to me and my academic career. Obtaining a grant, which ultimately resulted in my first peer-reviewed paper and became part of an extension publication, was a turning point in my career in that I gained the confidence to do sustainable-focused agriculture research. Funding opportunities for sustainable agriculture focused on Iowa's cropping systems are rare.
- I am now working towards a PhD in Plant Breeding, a path that was largely if not completely influenced by research funded by the Leopold Center including Matt Liebman's cropping systems studies and the multitude of cover crop studies done in Iowa.
- The Leopold Center funds research that strives to create a landscape that blends agriculture with livability. This type of agriculture is absolutely necessary in a state like Iowa to keep rural communities alive.

**Jackie Nester – Bloomington, IN**

- The Leopold Center was one of the first places I visited while touring Iowa State for the Sustainable Agriculture Masters program. The Director and staff provided me the groundwork for understanding the tension that exists in Iowa - we are a state that is based in agriculture, but our agricultural practices today are detrimental to our water, soil, and air. The Leopold Center was one of the reasons I decided to go to Iowa State, and I always looked to their publications for the latest research as to how agriculture in Iowa can become more sustainable and ultimately a better place for people to live. Iowa State



College of Agriculture and Life Sciences does not do the same work as the Leopold Center; in fact, the two can be at odds with each other regarding what is "sustainable." The Leopold Center works to better our communities and our agriculture, never to benefit private companies. The research coming from the Leopold Center is unique and sought after by researchers and graduate students that are an asset to Iowa. The Center is on the front line of promoting an alternative agriculture in light of nitrate levels ever increasing, a growing dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, mass conversion of grasslands to monocultures, and ultimately, climate change. Without the Leopold Center, many in the sustainable agriculture program at Iowa State would lose funding and support from this vital center, which in turn could decrease the ability for the school to recruit students. In addition, the benefits of the Leopold Center's research to local farmers would be lost. The resources the Center has provided has fostered relationships between the university and the farming community. As a result, Iowa's farm fields are more sustainable than ever. Without the Leopold Center, we could see a loss in the number of farmers utilizing buffer strips, utilizing low-input and highly diverse cropping systems, alternative hog production, and much more. Lastly, one of the most highly regarded resources for farmers in Iowa is the Practical Farmers of Iowa organization; a loss in the Leopold Center's funding would be detrimental to this organization and would ultimately hurt Iowa farmers.

- I work as a Planner for Monroe County, Indiana. My work deals with how to promote sustainable development in rural areas. The Leopold Center's research on reducing sedimentation into water bodies by using buffer strips was particularly important for my current work as we try to promote vegetation preservation on areas surrounding our reservoirs.
- The Leopold Center speaks to many young people's need for alternative thinking in a state that often follows the status quo. Many students that come to Iowa State for the Sustainable Agriculture program first find out about the program through the Leopold Center. As many state schools develop their agriculture programs and organizations, Iowa will be at a loss without this long-standing, highly respected institution. Without forward thinking institutions, innovative thinkers could leave the state looking for organizations similar to the Leopold Center at other universities.

**Kathleen Delate – Ames, IA**

- I conduct research, supported by the Leopold Center, to strengthen the agricultural economy of Iowa, by finding practices that will reduce our dependence on petrochemicals. These include best practices for manure management, identifying new crops and crop rotations, and determining if resistant varieties and biological control can be replacements for pesticides that may harm pollinators. These efforts are not duplicative with any other center. The Nutrient Research Center focuses solely on ways to reduce nitrogen runoff or leaching, and not on issues of pest management or alternative crops.
- I am currently a professor, and would not have been able to conduct research, nor train undergraduate and graduate students, without Leopold Center support. I have utilized Leopold Center funds to support 60 undergraduate and 11 graduate students in my program aimed at developing more sustainable farming systems in Iowa.

- The majority of undergraduate students trained in my program, and supported by Leopold Center funds, were from Iowa, and have remained in Iowa, to work in various ag sectors. Research showing ways to be more profitable in agriculture, as under development at the Leopold Center, will help to keep young people in Iowa.

**Angie Carter – Davenport, IA**

- The Leopold Center funded a project I lead in collaboration with the Raccoon River Watershed Association and Women, Food and Agriculture Network, building upon my dissertation research studying women farmland owners. The Center's funding was used to engage in watershed-level conversations about water quality and soil health with women farmland owners in the Des Moines and Raccoon River watersheds. The women lead a project using photo essays to share their stories about how they are caring for their farmland and working to improve water quality in their watershed. They put together an exhibit entitled "River Stories: Views from a Watershed" and the exhibit has toured around Iowa this past year. We had a great grand opening in Perry, IA and it has since been at Reiman Gardens in Ames for 2 months on display to the public, at arboretums on display, and at many local and state wide conferences. The project was innovative in that it used local leaders to tell their story about the changes they want to see and to redirect the rhetoric about water in our state back to the local level.
- Currently, I am an environmental sociologist on faculty at Augustana College in the Quad Cities. I teach community based projects and know that the Leopold Center's connections with local and state groups helped to prepare me to do this work. Through the Leopold Center, I met many farmers, policy makers, local leaders, and business leaders across the state and already had great connections before I began teaching. I now draw upon those connections to prepare community based projects for my classes, training the next generation of scientists on the importance of working at the local level to address local problems. I thank the Leopold Center's mentorship in creating so many opportunities for students to engage with speakers, scientists, farmers, and community leaders across disciplines in preparing me to lead local work in this way.
- The Leopold Center creates a community of students, faculty, researchers, farmers, and policy makers that prepared me well to continue in my research after graduation from ISU. Thanks to the Center, I have training working with transdisciplinary research teams, preparing and managing grants, public speaking, and coordinating research. I would not have come back to Iowa to study at ISU if it had not been for the Center.

**Hannah Dankbar – Astoria, OR**

- There is no other university center that celebrates and contributes to Iowa agriculture as holistically as the Leopold Center. The Leopold Center focuses on the social, biophysical, and economic contributions of agriculture and appreciates how these forces work together. The Leopold Center contributes to Iowa farms and Iowa communities because of this holistic approach. People across the state benefit from this Center.

- I currently live in Oregon. However, the Leopold Center funded a portion of my graduate research. This research connected me with professionals in my field which gave me insight to how professionals across the state do their work.
- The Leopold Center celebrates diversity in agriculture. The Center helps students get involved in research and activities that help Iowa farms and communities move towards sustainable food and farming systems. These activities connect students to farms and towns which helps students build relationships that they take with them post graduation.

**Todd Ontl – Houghton, MI**

- LCSA funded my PhD research. This support was absolutely necessary for being able to conduct this work, which focused on land use options for bioenergy production, and proper citing of these for maximizing environmental benefits for Iowa's farmers.
- I work for the USDA helping land managers (farmers, foresters, ranchers) incorporate climate change into their management decision making.

**Andrea Basche – Washington, D.C.**

- During my time as a Ph.D. student in the agronomy department at Iowa State University, I was the recipient of two research grants from the Leopold Center related to long-term impacts and farmer adoption of cover crops. It was an invaluable professional development opportunity for me as an early career scientist: from developing the proposal to helping administer the project and to making decisions on dollars spent. I know that many other students had similar experiences that wouldn't have been possible without the funds and vision of the Leopold Center. In addition to research funds, the Leopold Center supports a diverse dialogue by bringing in valuable speakers and lectures to Iowa State's campus; I shudder to think how that important dialogue will change if the state legislature votes to close its doors. The Leopold Center is responsible some part of nearly all of the alternative conversations happening in the state, so its easy to see why financial interests would want them to go away. Legislators can't let that happen, and if they do, many who benefit from the Center's work will remember their short sighted vision.

**Gabrielle Roesch-McNally – Corvallis, OR**

- I attended events sponsored by Leopold Center while I was a graduate student at in the Graduate Program for Sustainable Agriculture. I also received funding to explore farmer adoption of cover crops in partnership with a diverse group of interdisciplinary scholars. As a result of this work, I was able to mentor an undergraduate student in Agronomy. I also worked with this team to publish two peer reviewed publications as well as an ISU extension publication. This funding leveraged work from another NIFA grant in such a way to accelerate the impacts and outputs associated with our work. I am grateful for this experience and I am certain it has helped to develop me as a scholar and a community member. The study put myself and my colleagues in connection with 29 farmers in the region who were experimenting with cover crops, an important soil conservation practice that is still greatly under adopted in the region, despite great benefits.

- I am now working for the US Department of Agriculture Climate Hubs. Sadly I am not still in Iowa but this work absolutely helped pave my path and I am certain has opened up doors for my work in the world. In fact, as a result of one of the papers that I published from Leopold Center money, I was recruited to join in an interdisciplinary team of researchers in Brazil to discuss how to build greater capacity in the U.S. and beyond to integrate both crops and livestock for a more sustainable agriculture.
- The Leopold Center partners with wonderful organizations such as Practical Farmers of Iowa and regional food hubs that have enabled a number of students, many graduates of the Sustainable Agriculture program, to be employed in the field in Iowa. In fact, I don't know that I would have come to Iowa State if it were not for the cache and reputation of the Leopold Center. The Center is absolutely critical in attracting talented students to Iowa State University and the state more broadly.

**Beth Kersey – Alaska**

- I have been provided a very small amount of funding by the Leopold Center's Agriculture of the Middle. This funding allows me to currently research Midwest regional entities engaged in promoting seed saving/seed exchanging among farmers and/or gardeners. Information gathered will be helpful to others interested in seed saving techniques, especially farmers who seek out lower priced input for their farming operations.
- As important as this funding has been to me, is the reputation of the Leopold Center when I am requesting to meet with people for interviews. Their reputation has meant I have an ability to interview farmers, gardeners and representatives of seed saving/exchange entities that otherwise, would have been much more challenging.
- The Leopold Center is a key focal location for Iowan and Midwest conversations & discussions on sustainable agriculture. It provides a large welcoming tent for all interested in agriculture, its challenges and in strengthening its resilience.