

Reporter

ST. CHARLES COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Volunteer Assists NRCS/SWCD

Lauren Iffrig has joined the office as an Earth Team Volunteer, providing office assistance to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the St. Louis and St. Charles County Soil & Water Conservation Districts.



Lauren has been performing many tasks including filing, mail list updating, organizing slides, creating presentation materials and much more. She came to the district through the Mers Missouri Goodwill program which provides opportunities for persons with barriers to employment to work and live more independently in the community. While Lauren provides the office with much needed assistance, the staff is reciprocating by providing her with training to increase her skills.

Lauren enjoys reading and listening to music and has a talent for writing. She is the daughter of Herb and Mary Iffrig, St. Charles County farmers.

NRCS Sponsors Intern

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has welcomed Becca Travis as a summer intern. She will be assisting NRCS and SWCD staff as she learns various technical and office responsibilities.

Becca is the daughter of Kent and Nancy Travis of Frankford, Mo. She is a 2012 graduate of Bowling Green High School, and attends Missouri State University in Springfield where she will double major in Wildlife Conservation and Management and Agronomy. Her hobbies include horseback riding and trap shooting.



Office Receives Award

SWCD and NRCS staff were recently recognized by MEEA, the Missouri Environmental Education Association, with the 2012 Organiza-



tion Environmental Education Service Award for their efforts with the Envirothon program. This award is given to an organization, agency or business that promotes environmental education. Staff has provided resource training to hundreds of high school students and provided workshops and materials to teachers across the state. Pictured are Renee Cook, Frankie Coleman, Theresa Dunlap, Jennifer Lewis and Charlie Perkins. In front is Shawn Keller.

“I Always Dreamed of Owning Ground and Growing Things”

Jose Fonseca is not a rich man, but as he revealed the story of how he became a first-generation St. Charles County farmer, he remarked that he felt like a millionaire. His mustache strained to stretch with his big grin as we stood on the 20 acres of land he purchased in Greens Bottoms, and where nearly six foot tall tomato plants flourish in an NRCS program funded seasonal high tunnel. Jose and his wife, Gloria, bought this bottomland farm in 2009, after outgrowing the leased acreage along Mexico Road in St. Peters where they’ve farmed



vegetables since 2004, and where they have multiple green houses for fruit, vegetables and flowers. The whole family works the fields, greenhouses and the on-farm store located on Jungermann Road, and they also offer their produce at a local Farmer’s Market on Saturdays and the Wentzville Flea Market on Sundays. This extremely busy and equally upbeat family is not only making a living, but are making people happy. “It’s so much work,” Gloria admitted, “but it’s fun and we get satisfaction when we see the people are so happy.”

Gloria is not shy about rolling up her sleeves and getting dirty. A visit to the greenhouse directly behind the Jungermann produce store reveals the “fruits” of her labor. Gloria grows so many beautiful flowers and arranges them in various hanging baskets, pots and planters; and sells them by the tray as well. She said she



Jose stands in front of his High Tunnel on the farm in Greens Bottoms.

Farm Feature

A first-generation farmer, an immigrant, a landowner, a vegetable grower and flower producer, a father of five and grandfather of two; a man with a serious work ethic and a generous smile...



Meet Jose Fonseca

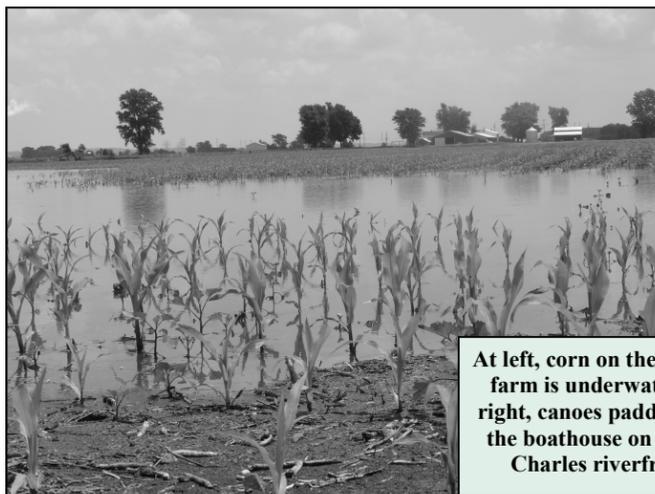


starts the plants around December or January and stays busy in the store clear through the fall, adding seasonal fruits and vegetables all summer, and melons, pumpkins and gourds in the fall. Their children, Crystal, 24, Elena, 18, Jose, 17, Carly, 13 and Alberto, 8, all have responsibilities on the family’s land, leased acreage and in the store. Crystal and her husband, Beny, have two children: Zachary and Nicole, who also spend time on the farm with grandma and grandpa. Two of Jose’s brothers also work for the family.

So how does a “dirt poor, son of a Mexican

[See Fonseca, pg. 3](#)

Flood Report Dated June 5, 2013



At left, corn on the Kroner farm is underwater; At right, canoes paddle up to the boathouse on the St. Charles riverfront.

Nerves were on edge for a while as May slid into June and the Mississippi River threatened hundreds of acres of farm land along the bottoms. Thankfully the waters began to recede around June 6, and it looks like we’ve headed into a warmer, drier weather pattern. On June 5, the District made the following report to the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Cora Island Levee District: 300 acres were flooded when the levee was topped.

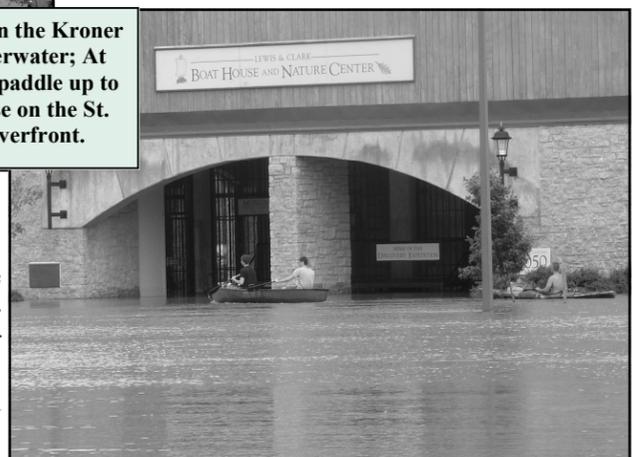
Kuhs Levee District: 1,000 acres of cropland were

flooded due to levee overtopping.

Consolidated North County Levee District: 5,300 acres of cropland were flooded due to multiple breaches of the levee near West Alton and near Portage Des Sioux where the levee experienced a sheer failure.

Spencer Creek Levee: 700 acres of cropland flooded due to breach of levee.

Dardenne Creek Levee: 800 acres flooded due to levee overtopping.



Incarnate Word Student Receives Mary S. Burt Memorial Envirothon Scholarship

Alicia McCabe, a graduate of Incarnate Word Academy in St. Louis was chosen as the recipient of the Mary S. Burt Envirothon Scholarship. Alicia, pictured at right receiving her check from Peggy Lemons, State Envirothon co-chair, will attend the Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, Mo., where she plans to study biochemical and environmental engineering. She said she is interested in working on water quality issues, in which she became interested through her involvement in Envirothon, Stream Team, and the Shaw Internship for Field Research and the Tyson Environmental Research Fellowship. Alicia is the daughter of Tim and Mary McCabe of St. Louis.



Where Do County Farm Products Go??

The Reporter would like to run an article in an upcoming issue highlighting the varied farm products in St. Charles County and where they are used/consumed.

For example, we have corn and hogs that are sent to China; we have fruits and vegetables that feed local families; and there is milk and cheese in local grocery stores that came from a dairy in the southwest part of the county.

Please help show the far-reaching benefits of the food and fiber produced in our county. Fill out the little form below and mail it to the SWCD at 160 St. Peters Centre Blvd., St. Peters, Mo., or call Theresa at 636-922-2833, ext. 110. Feel free to use your own paper if you need more space. Thanks!!

Name & Phone: _____

Farm Location: _____

Products and Destination: _____

Ag Loan Program Expands

Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA) announced an expansion of the Bridge Loan Program managed by the Missouri Agricultural and Small Business Development Authority (MASBDA). Landowners may now take out a Bridge Loan to complete soil and water conservation practices in cooperation with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Soil and Water Conservation Program (SWCP).

Recently, the Missouri Agricultural and Small Business Development Authority (MASBDA) voted to expand a 2012 loan program focused on produce to include a much wider range of programs, including cost-share programs available through the SWCP and the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This loan program will assist landowners with another tool to implement conservation practices. Producers with an approved contract for a SWCP practice or a USDA NRCS EQIP practice may review the specifics on the Bridge Program located at the MDA website <http://mda.mo.gov/abd/financial/bridge.php>.

The Bridge Loan Program builds on 2012's High Tunnel Loan Program, which allowed producers to combine the loan with their participation in the USDA-NRCS program, reducing producers out of pocket costs. Reimbursement funds issued after producers completed their projects were used to fulfill the short-term loan notes. Approximately one-third of Missouri producers approved for USDA high tunnel reimbursements in 2012 also participated in the loan program.

To be eligible for assistance through the Bridge Loan Program, producers must be approved for cost-share reimbursements through USDA-NRCS, EQIP and/or SWCP and show proof of financial ability to cover any gaps between reimbursement amounts and project costs, should a gap arise. Applicants must be materially participating in the farming operation and at risk for price or production costs and must commit reimbursement payments from NRCS or SWCP to fulfill the loan note.

Loans offered through the Bridge Loan Program will include monthly interest payments of 5.9 percent and a \$25 closing costs. Funds may be withdrawn only when practices are being implemented, and loan terms may be up to the duration of the USDA-NRCS, EQIP and SWCP programs.

According to the last Census of Agriculture, Missouri's average farm income after expenses was \$13,600, with only 16 percent making more than \$50,000. The large upfront investment typically required by cost-share programs can make it difficult for many farmers and farm families to participate. The Bridge Loan Program lowers some of the financial hurdles, making it easier for Missouri's farmers to access those resources.

Loan applications are available online, or by contacting the Missouri Agricultural and Small Business Development Authority at masbda@mda.mo.gov.

For cost-share assistance, contact the NRCS or the SWCD at 636-922-2833, extension 3.

Weed Control

If you were unable to spray for weeds this spring due to wet field conditions and have had to add tillage to knock them down, contact the NRCS at 636-922-2833, ext. 3, and ask for Shawn.

Maintaining Grassed Waterways and Terraces

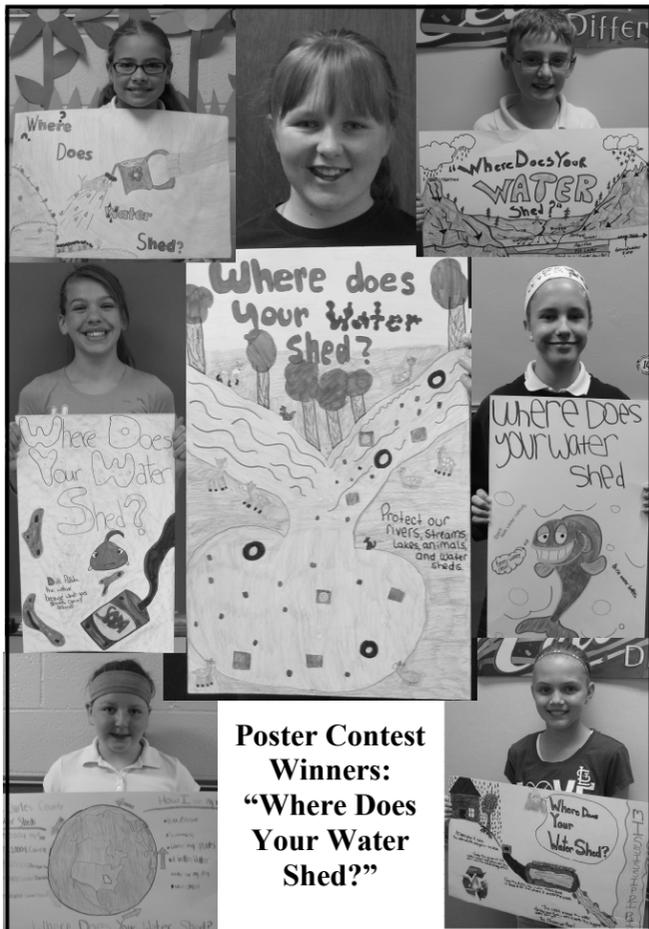
Early in the establishment of grass, either in grassed waterways, terraces or water and sediment control basins, inspect the grass for bare spots or where rills have started to erode the soil. Reseed areas if necessary and repair rills while small. Removal of temporary berms is occasionally overlooked, but it needs to be removed for proper operation of the grassed waterway. The entire waterway needs to have well established grass prior to removing the berms. Annual fertilization is beneficial to grassed waterways during establishment. Typical grassed waterway maintenance includes mowing to control weeds and brush. Patience and perseverance may be the two things to remember when establishing the grass and patching minor rills prior to berm removal.

Typical terrace maintenance includes removing sediment from the channel and building the berm heights to original grade. Some operators choose to plow up the terraces, others may hire heavy equipment contractors to rebuild the terraces. Inlets for tile outlets often need to be replaced over time. Many operators find it useful to mark relief wells in grassed waterways to prevent equipment damage. A simple way to mark outlets is to drive a fence post into the ground near the relief well. Then place a brightly colored piece of PVC pipe over the fence post. Relief wells occasionally erode near the pipe especially if not cut level with the ground. If the outlet has eroded, tamp large rock around the outlet.

It is vital to control brush on pond dams while it is small. Tree roots will grow through dams and cause leaks. Cutting trees on dams always presents a question: Will the roots die and rot...causing leaks? Have the roots penetrated the dam? There is no single answer, but control while the brush is small is critical. Large tree removal is not recommended unless you are prepared to rebuild the entire dam.

University of Missouri Extension has guides G1504, Maintaining Grassed Waterways, and G1503, Operating and Maintaining Grassed Outlet Terrace Systems. These guides are available online at: <http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/index.aspx> or at 260 Brown Road, St. Peters, Mo., 63376, 636-970-3000.

Contributed by Charlie Perkins, SWCD Tech



Poster Contest Winners: "Where Does Your Water Shed?"

Seven children were awarded cash prizes for their entries in the 2013 SWCD Poster Contest themed "Where Does Your Water Shed". There were over 100 eligible posters, and many of the children did a wonderful job researching the topic and illustrating the dangers of polluted rain runoff. Pictured above are (clockwise from top right) Dylan Bateman, 4th grade; Hannah Wroblewski, 5th grade; and Ashleigh Niemczyk, 4th grade; Makenzie Mersman, 5th grade; Taylor Milbert, 5th grade and Madison Brothers, 4th grade. At center is the Grand Prize winner: Morgan Bolk—a sixth grader at All Saints School in St. Peters.

Operation Clean Stream Removes Tons of Trash

The Soil & Water District once again participated in the annual Operation Clean Stream event, both as organizers and stream cleaners. This year, over 26,780 pounds of trash were removed from local waterways...as well as an additional 183 tires and over three tons of metal trash.

Approximately 23 sites plus six river miles and 30 acres of Cora Island were cleaned by 895 volunteers. Partnering agencies include Greenway Network, City of Lake St. Louis, St. Charles County, and the St. Charles County Soil and Water Conservation

District. The most common items removed from our streams: plastic bags and plastic bottles.



Fonseca, From Pg. 1 fisherman” end up putting smiles on the faces of St. Charles Countians who want to buy top quality local fresh produce?

Jose Fonseca was born about 45 years ago in an extremely poor little town of around 150



Alberto and Carly enjoy helping dad with the farm work.

people called La Manzanilla on the Pacific Coast of Mexico, 3 1/2 hours south of Port A Vallarta . “My dad was a fisherman who owned a small restaurant by the beach,” he said. “I had good parents who wanted to give us everything they could, but we were dirt poor.” Jose is one of 11 children born to the Fonseca family. “Dad fished, but he also grew some corn, squash and cucumbers. We went to school, but we had no electricity and I didn’t even own a television until I was an adult. We made our own candles out of coconuts, and we carved our 12 foot fishing canoe by hand.”

As a boy, it looked as if he would be groomed to join his father in fishing, but young Jose never liked the ocean. “I would get seasick every time,” he revealed. “Dad would take us out into the ocean in a 16 foot canoe for a week at a time. I would spend as much time as possible in the water—not in the canoe—because I would get so sick.”

At twelve, Jose told his dad that he was going north and would be a farmer. His family tolerated the dream but never thought the boy would act on it. “I always had this dream that I would own ground and grow things. When I told my sister, she said I was crazy.” But the seeds of the dream were planted. Maybe some of this grew



The Jose Fonseca Family: At left: Beny, Zachary, Nicole and Crystal. At Right: Gloria and Jose with Elena, Alberto, Carly and Jose Jr.

out of stories his dad told of Jose’s grandmother: stories of a big farm with cattle, pigs and crops. Jose spent a lot of time with his grandmother, and while by that time the farm was gone, the old woman still grew coconuts, lemons and oranges....and she told stories.

“We’ve always grown peppers,” Jose began as he recalled one of his favorite grandma stories. “The whole family loves peppers....we have to have the hot. My grandma said it was the peppers that kept the pigs free of worms. She would see the Iguanas eating the hot peppers, so she would catch the iguanas, kill them and drop them into boiling water and then throw them to the pigs. Those iguanas took care of the worms in the pigs.”

But Jose saw there wasn’t much of a future in a fishing village for a boy who gets seasick every time he ventures out on the sea. He was the fourth child, which meant there were 7 younger brothers and sisters the year that he was to complete eighth grade. “My parents wanted me to attend school, but I told them “no”, and at 15 I left the village and went to the city to try to find a job. He soon found work driving a taxi cab, shuttling tourists around from their five-star hotels to the many restaurants, beaches and tourist attractions. While he was glad to have work, Jose soon realized he was going nowhere fast in the city and that to stay meant he would continu-

ally face the pains of poverty, crime, and possible recruitment into drug trafficking. Sadly many young men wanting to earn their own way end up doing the bidding of the drug lords in order to survive. Not Jose!

“I knew I had to go north if I was going to survive...if I would have a better life. If I stayed where I was I would soon go hungry”

So at 17, Jose made the decision to immigrate to America, traveling more than 2,000 miles from home to work the farm fields as an agricultural worker in California and Oregon. The long process of becoming an American citizen began when his employer in Oregon

sponsored him for a permanent visa. It was during this time that Jose and Gloria, whose family had previously immigrated to America,



Gloria designs another floral display.

decided to marry and they soon welcomed their first child, Crystal. All of the other Fonseca children were born at St. Joseph Hospital in Lake St. Louis....and they are fully American—for example, little eight-year-old Alberto refused to go into the basement during the recent tornado storms without his tablet (for you old-timers...a tablet is basically a handheld computer). Jose and Gloria became American citizens in 1999.

The family came to St. Charles County around 1993, and Jose worked for a local farmer who quickly recognized the strong work ethic of this young father. Jose was given more and more responsibility and gained the respect of the people he worked with. His employer was Ron Koenig whose extended family has owned and farmed property along Jungermann Road for many years, consistently providing the community with fresh produce and flowers. Jose now rents from Ron the 9 tillable acres along Mexico Road, and the store front spot on Jungermann. Among the things they grow are tomatoes, beets, cabbage, romaine lettuce, zucchini, squash, cucumbers, okra, green beans and sweet chard.

About 4 years ago, Jose had the opportunity to buy 20 acres in Greens Bottoms. “One of the people who bought produce from Ron knew that I wanted to own property and farm it, so when land became available next to his property, he encouraged me to buy it.” Jose wasn’t sure how to proceed, but the neighbor told him to talk to a banker. “There were a lot of questions, a lot of papers...but the credit came through and I bought the land.”

It is on that fertile piece of ground that Jose constructed his high tunnel which at this time is filled with tomatoes, onions and beets. With the extended growing season, many of Jose’s tomato plants are over five feet tall and already have large, bright, juicy tomatoes. “I planted them April 1st, and it was 27 degrees April 2nd,” he

said. The high tunnel is a cold frame, so no heat is provided to the plants. He has enjoyed the benefits of the high tunnel so much that he plans to install two more—“whether or not I get assistance with them.”

Jose took part in the NRCS Seasonal High Tunnel program last year, and he said it was an easy program to navigate. He also enrolled in a cover crop program. “It’s good for the soil,” he said of the cover crop. “I don’t like to use herbicides and chemicals, so I try to farm the conservation way...to keep the soil healthy. Once I can get into the wet field and turn the winter rye back into the ground, I’ll plant cabbage here.” He also has a few fruit trees on the property and will grow 7 acres of pumpkins and approximately 4 acres of watermelons.

As a young man, Jose worked 14 hour days in the sharecropping fields. He doesn’t count the hours now, but works if the sun is up and many mornings when its not. He doesn’t have a lot of spare time and the whole family has to pitch in; but as he stands on HIS ground with his crops flourishing behind him, he knows he has achieved his dream.



Jose’s standard method of planting.

Learn More About High Tunnel and Cover Crop Programs

You can extend your growing season for many fruits and vegetables through the use of a high tunnel: constructed from a manufactured kit, the high tunnel frame is metal, durable plastic or wood, and is covered with a single or double layer of polyethylene. They are easy to build, maintain and move; and they provide an energy-efficient way to extend the growing season. Unlike greenhouses, they require no energy, relying on natural sunlight to modify the climate inside to create favorable conditions for growing vegetables and other specialty crops. Those crops can be



sold locally fulfilling an increasing demand for locally grown produce and providing extra income for the farmer.

Cover crops are one of the best ways to improve the soil in your fields. This practice will build organic matter, increase the soil’s water-holding capacity, strengthen soil biological communities, and help suppress diseases and weeds. Healthy soils aid in the reduction of runoff that causes flooding, and help keep nutrients and sediment from being carried off the farm into lakes, rivers and streams.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service offers assistance with high tunnels and cover crops through EQIP, the Environmental Quality Incentive Program. Applicants will receive personal attention in deciding if the programs are appropriate for their farm operations, and conservationists will determine the proper methods of establishment. EQIP has a continuous sign-up, and current applicants will be on schedule to implement their practice components in 2014. Call Shawn Keller, Curtis Hoeft or Renee Cook at 636-922-2833, ext. 3, to learn more.

The soil and water conservation district does not endorse nor recommend any of the vendors/contractors advertised in this newsletter, furthermore, any contractor/vendor that wishes to be added to the district’s contractor/vendor list can be added upon request.



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ST. CHARLES COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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160 St. Peters Centre Boulevard
St. Peters, MO 63376-1695

Return Service
Requested

We Need Your Farm Photos Enter the SWCD Photo Contest and Win \$\$\$\$

The St. Charles County Soil & Water Conservation District is sponsoring a photo contest which was announced in the last issue of the Reporter. To this date, we've received zero photos. **We need your help!!** This contest will help us compile farm photos that can then be used in future publications such as brochures, PowerPoint presentations and this newsletter. Sometimes we just need a picture of a cow. Sometimes we need a picture of soybeans. We just need pictures!!

We're going to give the contest another few months, and sadly if we do not receive enough photos we will have to cancel. So pull out your camera, or dig out that old box of farm photos, and help us out. The original contest announcement asked for digital prints. We are now **accepting all photos** (even those old faded ones) and we will scan them into a computer before returning them to you.

Here are the rules and guidelines:

Who May Enter: Any person in St. Charles County, excluding employees and

board members of the district. If under the age of 18, a parent signature will be required on the submission sheet.

Contest Deadline: Submissions will be received beginning April 1, 2013 and ending October 15, 2013.

Announcement of Winners: Winners will be announced at the Annual Meeting of the SWCD in November 2013.

Prizes: Four cash prizes will be awarded. Grand prize will receive \$150; First place will receive \$100; Second place will receive \$50 and Fourth place will receive \$25. Prizes will be awarded at the Annual Meeting, and winning photos will be framed and hung in the SWCD/NRCS offices.

What to Enter: We are looking for images of life on the farm. These could include photos that show conservation practices, machinery, families, crops, farm buildings, farm animals, wildlife on the farm, etc.

Photos Featuring People: People in the photograph should be identified by name. It is the responsibility of the photographer to provide a signed photo release statement for each person whose face is visible in a photo. The SWCD office can provide you with a photo release form.

How To Enter: Photos and a short caption can be submitted via email to theresa.dunlap@swcd.mo.gov. If you are unable to send the photo via email, you may bring it into the office and we will download it to one of our computers.

Rights to Publication: By entering the photo contest, you agree to allow the use of your photo in SWCD and NRCS media that promotes farming and conservation practices; in the Reporter Newsletter; on the SWCD Flickr photo sharing site; and any other media that promotes the goals of the SWCD and NRCS.

Your Rights: All uses of your photo will include a credit line with your name on the photo in the lower corner.



Stevens Takes Home Prize Envirothon Students are the Winners

Keith Stevens is the winner of the brand new Remington shotgun in the drawing to raise funds for the Mary S. Burt Envirothon Scholarship. Mr. Stevens, a board member in Polk County SWCD, purchased his ticket during the SWCD training conference last November. He was surprised to receive the phone call informing him that his name had been drawn. "I was just happy to help support the scholarship," he said.

Ticket sales for the fundraiser were \$587, which will fund the next two scholarships.



County Accepts Household Hazardous Waste for Recycling

St. Charles County residents may safely dispose of household hazardous waste that typically is not collected by curbside recycling programs. Residents may bring unwanted items like chemicals, automobile fluids, pesticides and oil-based paints (not latex) to the Recycle Works Central location (60 Triad South Dr. in St. Charles) from 9 am to 3 pm, Tuesdays through Fridays and the last Saturday of each month through October 26.

There is a small fee. For details visit <http://health.sccmo.org/health> or call 636-949-1800.

St. Charles County
Soil & Water Conservation District
160 St. Peters Centre Boulevard
St. Peters, MO 63376-1695
636-922-2833, ext. 3

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Renee Cook, District Conservationist
Shawn Keller, Soil Conservationist
Curtis Hoeft, Soil Conservationist
Kervin Bryant, Soil Conservationist
Deb Frazier, ACES

The mission of the Soil & Water Conservation District is to conserve the soil and water resources of the county; promote the wise use of these resources through education; protect residents from undue hardship caused by erosion, sedimentation and flooding; protect the agricultural soil base to ensure continued productivity; and preserve the quality of water and water courses within the county.