Buses depart from outside Prairie Capitol Convention Center—look for signs on buses. Bring tour tickets to board bus.

1. Beginning Farmer Tour—Farm Beginnings® and Beyond

Tour Host: Terra Brockman, Illinois Land Connection

Two diverse vegetable farms and one food store (run by area farmers selling only foods within a 50-mile radius) are featured on this tour. All farmer hosts are involved in new farmer training, serving as presenters and mentors for Central Illinois Farm Beginnings®. On the bus trip, some beginning farmers will talk and share some of the barriers affecting farmers who direct-market their products.

Stops will include:

1) Henry’s Farm, Congerville, IL

You will hear from experienced farmer Henry Brockman and this year’s Farm Beginnings® intern Kris Pirmann about their mentor-mentee relationship and about how Henry uses a 2-year fallow rotation, many cover crops, and intense diversification (650 varieties of vegetables), to build the soil, produce vegetables for local CSA and Farmers’ Market customers, and bring in 6 figures from 10 acres.

2) Blue Schoolhouse Farm, Eureka, IL

Bill Davison left his job with The Nature Conservancy to become a new farmer. He presents on finances and record keeping at the Farm Beginnings® class, and uses a solar-powered tractor and solar-powered weeding/transplanting cart made by his neighbor and landlord, Dave Kennell.

3) Heritage Farmers’ Market, Pekin, IL

After many run-ins with health dept and zoning officials when trying to sell products off the farm, a group of small-scale farmers came together and opened a store that is now selling a wide variety of products, ranging from meats and eggs to fresh produce to vinegars, pastas, baked goods and fudge. All of the products are from less than 50 miles away. The group has just installed an inspected kitchen, and is serving 100% local food at their lunch counter, plus letting community members use the kitchen to produce value-added foods. Two of the Heritage Farmers present on marketing at the Farm Beginnings® class.

2. Bioenergy Tour—Small Farm Energy

Tour Host: Gary Letterly, Natural Resources Educator, University of Illinois Extension, Christian County

This tour will showcase elements of “From Field to Furnace”, a project funded by the Dudley Smith Initiative at the University of Illinois. Stops will demonstrate how a small farm can produce biomass from perennial grasses as part of their sustainable energy plan, an operational biomass furnace demonstrating how it could supplement or replace existing home heating systems, and a small farm that diversified by manufacturing grass furnaces and pelletizing grass.

1) U of I—Dudley Smith Farm near Pana

How a small farmer can get into producing biomass from perennial grasses as part of their sustainable energy plan (plots, history, challenges to producing perennial grasses for biomass, harvesting of grass and rhizomes, planting, weed control options, etc.)

2) The U of I Extension office in Christian County

What a furnace set-up looks like, how it can be modified to complement/supplement/or replace an existing home-heat system. We’ll see, furnace setup, fuel types used, problems-challenges with ash, etc.

3) Big M Berry Patch, home of Big M Manufacturing, Taylorville

Melvin Repscher and his family run a small farm operation that has decided to diversify their operation versus renting more land for traditional row-crop production. They are not organic but they are “family farm practitioners” using a variety of novel approaches to stay on the land (grass furnace manufacturer and likely to have a grass pelletizer on-line).

3. Building Community Support Tour

Tour Host: Deanna Glosser, Slow Food Springfield

The tour focuses on strategies which enhances community support for locally produced foods. Participants will visit a farmer who raises produce and is marketing through farmers’ markets and CSA programs, an urban farmers’ market and a community garden sponsored by the Illinois Department of Agriculture at the Illinois State Fairgrounds, and a commercial food distributor selling local foods to restaurants and grocery stores.

1) Sysco of Central Illinois, Lincoln—Distributing Local Foods

The tour will first stop at Sysco of Central Illinois in Lincoln where we will learn about their new BuyLocal Partnership which will utilize a traditional food distribution model to
efficiently distribute local foods to area restaurants and grocery stores, thus expanding the availability of healthy, local foods to consumers.

2) Veenstra’s Vegetables, Rochester—Community Supported Agriculture

The second stop on this tour will visit Veenstra’s Vegetables, a local producer who raises a diverse selection of produce for the Decatur and Springfield markets and a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in both cities. CSAs represent a mutual commitment between the farmer and the consumer. Learn about this CSA model for Central Illinois.

3) Illinois Department of Agriculture’s (IDOA) Farmers Market & Community Garden, Springfield

The last stop on this tour will be to the IDOA’s evening farmers’ market and community garden located at the Illinois State Fairgrounds. The Department envisioned hosting a market that would not only give local producers another venue to sell their products during peak seasons, but also to showcase Illinois agriculture. All market products must be produced, processed, packaged, and prepared in Illinois. The community garden offers residents a place to both garden and learn from experts.

4. Developing Sustainable Farming Systems Tour

Tour Host: Shannon Allen, Macon County Soil and Water Conservation District

This tour is going from the classroom to the farm field making two stops in Central Illinois. Participants on the tour will learn how a local Community College helps train future farmers on sustainable methods, and then see how a local farmer is putting some of those methods to work.

1) Richland Community College, Decatur, IL

During the past six years, through the combined effort and support of faculty, staff, students and community members the agriculture program at Richland has greatly expanded from a single instructor and a few students to a wide diversity of programs. These programs include agribusiness, biofuels, horticulture, floral design, landscape, turf, and greenhouse management.

The program is known for its practical demonstration curriculum where students work with fellow classmates to plant, cultivate, and harvest a variety of agriculture and horticulture plant material. They learn to utilize a variety of tools and equipment, including tractors and tillers. The Land Lab at Richland is an outdoor classroom for demonstration and crop production. David McLaughlin, Assistant Professor and Agribusiness & Horticulture Program Director, will give us a tour of the site that includes two production greenhouses, perennial nursery, composting bins, All American Selections Display Garden for flowers and vegetables, a plot with corns of the world, farm plots with fruit trees, brambles and vegetables, a demonstration plot with Miscanthus (Miscanthus x giganteus) and sugar cane for biofuels, bee hives, two cold frame greenhouses, flower and perennial gardens, shade plant structure, student designed and constructed walks, waterfall, retaining walls, patio and outdoor kitchen.

2) Pairierth Farm, Atlanta, IL

Dave Bishop will give us a tour of his farm where he will share information about: grazing off the grid (solar fence and water system); managed intensive grazing; feeds and supplements for certified organic grazing; genetics and low-stress handling; multi-species grazing and how to find funding for these grazing systems. Dave will also discuss organic field crops: production and techniques and problems; transition issues, crop rotations and tillage systems and a quick look at the bottom line—Organic vs. Conventional.

5. Exploring Alternative Enterprises and Marketing Opportunities Tour

Tour Host: Roger A. Larson, County Extension Director, University of Illinois Extension, Peoria County

This tour will focus on the “Cycle of Sustainability.” The tour will begin with Living Earth Farm to discuss the issues and victories involved in alternative crop production and marketing. The second stop in the tour will visit Basil’s Harvest, a growing success story. This stop will discuss the growth experienced over the past years; moving from solely crop production to retail to education. The third stop on this tour will visit June Restaurant, a new Peoria Heights eating establishment, which highlights the use of locally grown food in its menu.

1) Living Earth Farm: Anne Patterson, Producer, Marketer, and Organizer

This stop will focus on the production and marketing emphases of alternative enterprises. Living Earth Farm is “committed to a system of agriculture which strives for a balance with nature, using methods and materials which are low impact to the environment.” You will see Anne’s production and hear her “story” of perseverance through marketing and in organizing other producers to bring “local foods” to the Central Illinois area. www.livingearthfarm.com

2) Basil’s Harvest: Erin Meyer, Producer, Marketer, Retailer, Chef, and Educator

The second stop on the tour will visit Basil’s Harvest. Basil’s Harvest was founded in 2007 by Erin Meyer, RD after a long pursuit of great food. With a palette that blossomed through travels in Europe, a passion for growing, harvesting, preparing and preserving the food that was produced on her farm, and working with local farmers and chefs, Erin is able to share her passion for healthy food tasting great through education and creating gourmet foods that others can enjoy. You will hear Erin’s “story” of growth and her vision for the direction of Basil’s Harvest. www.basilsharvest.com
3) June Restaurant: Josh Adams, Chef, Partner

The third stop on the tour will be June Restaurant. Following is an excerpt from a recent press release, “Working with many of the regional Midwestern farms nearby (including one dedicating 80 acres to growing specifically for this 60-seat restaurant), Adams’ menu will feature the best of the season in a contemporary, lively environment. Chef Adams’ menu is ingredient-driven, and pays homage to the many farmers with which he has developed relationships. Thunder Valley, a certified organic farm located in Princeville, approximately 15 minutes from June, will be growing a large portion of the produce used at the restaurant over nearly half of their 200 acres of farmland. In season, approximately 80% of June’s menu will be made using local products. You will hear Chef Adams’ “story” and passion for his work and the promotion of “local foods.” www.junerestaurant.com

6. Managing Business: Keeping the Farm and Ranch Tour

Tour Host: Lindsay Record, Illinois Stewardship Alliance

This tour will stop at two dairy farm operations in Central Illinois where these farmers have made bold business decisions to direct market their milk and dairy products to increase the economic viability of their farms. The first stop will view an on-farm cheese making operation utilizing a mobile unit to process cheese in a contained unit. The second stop will be at a brand new on-farm bottling plant producing milk for direct-market and wholesale.

1) Ropp Farms, Normal, IL—Home of Ropp Jersey Cheese

For 10+ years the Ropp Family had dreamed of starting an on-farm cheese processing facility and retail store. Formerly, production agriculture was a vital fabric to daily life. The Ropp Family would like to share their knowledge and farm heritage to not only educate the public but also promote agriculture as a vital industry to American life. At Ropp Farms they raise only registered Jersey cows. This tour stop will include a visit to their farm to learn first hand how fine quality cheeses are made. We will visit their 600 square foot retail store featuring a cheese slicing room with viewing windows, self-serve product coolers and full-service retail counter.

2) Kilgus Farmstead, Fairbury, IL

The Kilgus Family has been milking cows for over 50 years and selling through cooperatives. In order to take advantage of new market opportunities and to increase economic viability the Kilgus Family will begin selling direct to consumers with the completion of their on-farm processing and bottling facilities in spring 2009. Their milk is sold throughout Central Illinois by local retailers and a local distributor as well as at their on-farm store.

7. Walking Tour: Tour of Lincoln Sites and the 100th Commemoration of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot

Tour Host: Garret Moffet, Springfield Walks

We invite you to spend some time with us touring some of the City of Springfield’s historic treasures. The tour will begin at the Old State Capitol. The tour appointment time is 12:30PM. The Capitol served as the seat of government from 1839 to 1876 where Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A Douglas, Ulysses S. Grant and others worked and served. The guided tour is about 30 minutes in length. It will include the Representative Hall where Lincoln delivered his famous “House Divided” speech.

Lincoln’s Home, the Visitor Center and the refurbished Neighborhood are the next stop.

At 1:50PM you will check in at the Visitors Center. Be sure to watch the new movie presented in the theatre about the Lincoln’s time in Springfield. The Lincoln’s Home and Neighborhood is a National Park Service Site. The tour of the home takes about 25 minutes, but you will be encouraged to “walk his neighborhood.”

By May of 1844, Abraham and Mary Lincoln needed more living space for their young family and decided to buy a home. They selected a Greek Revival-style cottage at the corner of Eighth and Jackson Streets and purchased it from the Reverend who had married the Lincolns. They paid $1,500 for the home and the family occupied the home (after enlarging it in 1846) for the next 17 years.

At 3:15PM, the group will tour The Elijah Iles House. As one of the few original buildings left in Springfield, with direct connection to Abraham Lincoln, the Iles House has played a unique part in Springfield’s history for over 170 years. Elijah Iles, a founder of Springfield, hired Lincoln as a surveyor and lawyer, but is best known as Lincoln’s captain in the Black Hawk War. The Greek Revival Style House also contains the Farrell and Ann Gay’s extensive IL Watch Collection. It’s quite unique. This site’s tour is 30 minutes in length.

At 4:00PM, you will have the opportunity to walk the route of one of Springfield’s most disturbing historical events that prompted a great national civil rights victory. In 2008, Springfield commemorated the 100th anniversary of what has become known as “the Springfield Race Riot of 1908”. The events of two sweltering days in August of 1908 shocked the nation and led to the formation of the NAACP. The entire story of the Springfield Race Riot of 1908 is told in a series of markers placed along the path of the destruction in downtown Springfield.

Each of the sites and the docents or employees will be available to answer your questions. They are all knowledgeable and passionate in their historical information.