



GEORGE MORRIS CENTRE

MEDIA RELEASE

**George Morris Centre program graduates win
2010 Canada's Outstanding Young Farmer awards**

Guelph, ON (December 2, 2010) The George Morris Centre is proud to congratulate alumni of its Canadian Total Excellence in Agricultural Management (CTEAM) program on their 2010 Canada's Outstanding Young Farmer titles.

Ryan and Lauren Maurer of Land and Sky Grains in Grenfell, Saskatchewan and Steve and Lisa Cooper, of Cooper's Farm and CSA in Zephyr, Ontario were recognized as the 2010 Outstanding Young Farmer national honourees. Ryan, Lauren and Steve all graduated from the 2009 CTEAM program.

The Maurers' success is due to their excellence in identity-preserved food markets. Today, 75% of the production from their 11,000 acres goes to identity preserved food markets, meaning their crop production practices must follow specific protocols and be completely segregated from other stored grain. This earns the Maurers premiums for their grain. They have become major suppliers of wheat to Warburton's Bakery in the U.K., and in 2010 were approached by Prairie Malt to grow 1,100 acres of a special barley variety for a brewery in Japan. Additional acres are dedicated to a variety of attribute-specific spices and alfalfa for the US market.

Lauren credits the CTEAM program for helping them enhance their business planning skills. "The Centre's commitment to moving agricultural producers to the next level is incredible. The course covers all aspects of business, and is a definite necessity for producers today."

Steve and Lisa Cooper farm north of Toronto. What began as the family cattle and sweet corn operation has now become Cooper's Farm and CSA, an on-farm store, and an agri-entertainment area with a corn maze, kid's play area, fall festival and, even more recently, an expanded pick-your-own section.

In 2007, the Coopers entered into a Community Shared Agriculture program to market their fruits and vegetables. Fifty families signed up and paid to receive a weekly basket of vegetables for 20 weeks. In 2008, this was expanded to 235 families from across the Greater Toronto Area. They continue to expand this aspect of their farm with the building of a small greenhouse and the planting of late spinach and greens in order to extend the growing season. They now deliver produce 23 weeks of the year. The Coopers have also added goats, pasture beef and pasture-raised broiler chickens to the product list, and their farm and products are certified by Local Food Plus. Over the past ten years, they have reduced their pesticide use by more than 75%.

To date, more than 85 Canadian farmers have graduated from the CTEAM program. “These are highly motivated people,” says Larry Martin, Senior Research Fellow and Education Director at the Centre. “They come ready to learn and apply what they learn to their businesses.” Martin says. “They understand the opportunities available in Canadian agriculture, and they’re extremely committed to achieving their goals. Lauren, Ryan, Steve and Lisa are representative of a new generation of Canadian farmers who will put Canada back on the map.”

Classroom instruction, farm tours, and student interactions and discussions provide a foundation of knowledge upon which CTEAM participants can build strategic plans for their farms, including action plans to achieve their strategic intents, as well as processes and systems to ensure that progress is monitored.

Applications for the 2011 – 2013 program are currently being accepted. Application forms and additional information on the course can be found at www.georgemorris.org or by calling (519) 822-3929.

The George Morris Centre is Canada’s independent agri-products think tank, dedicated to provoking informed dialogue on policies and issues and fostering excellence in the agri-products sector.

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