

# METRO AREA FARM STAYS A FARM THANKS TO YOU

SPRING 2022 SILT FIELD REPORT



SUSTAINABLE IOWA LAND TRUST

# SILT

PROTECTING LAND TO GROW HEALTHY FOOD  
[silt.org](http://silt.org)

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Photo credit: Jordan Clasen Grade A Gardens



# Young Families in Central and Western Iowa Buy

## FOREVER FARMS



See Grade A Gardens' new farm June 5 at their Garlic Festival.

### Grade A Gardens Moves to Earlham

When we first met Bob Winchell at Scattergood Friends School in West Branch, he was skeptical that someone would want to grow food on the 25 acres his late wife had left in his care. We assured him that the size and its proximity to Des Moines made it a perfect fit for a SILT (Sustainable Iowa Land Trust) farmer.

Jordan Clasen from Grade A Gardens contacted us the day we announced our Adopt an Acre campaign to cover closing costs. Within months, he and his family were purchasing the land at half the cost of surrounding properties. With the savings on land and a crowdfunding campaign for a barn, the Clasens have made fast work of building their forever farm just 30 miles from Des Moines.

Come see what they've done with the place! They are one of 5 Small Farm Summer stops this year and we're part of their Garlic Festival! This would not have happened without the support of you, our loyal donors, who ensure SILT is here to help landowners and farmers.

Consider a tax-deductible contribution today to help us protect more family farms just like these before they disappear forever. Donate at [SILT.org](http://SILT.org) or use the enclosed reply envelope.



### The beginning and end of

In 2015, when SILT launched at Gateway Market in Des Moines, Joe Driscoll drove more than an hour from Council Bluffs just to ask an upstart organization to save his land. Joe, a master plasterer, had spent years trying to patent an environmentally-friendly plaster. It hadn't come through, and he was about to lose his father's farm.

Thanks to an investor we'd met at the 2014 Slow Money National Gathering, we were able to cover the debt. Interest would accrue, but our lender didn't expect us to make any payments until the note was due. A courageous 3-month-old board of directors voted for it. Even though Joe promised to spend the next three years raising the money so we could own the farm outright, we had a Plan B just in case.

The farm became our first story of a landowner trusting his land with SILT. Joe and Sue Driscoll's gift inspired landowners across the state to look into SILT. We had more than 30 landowners representing more than 1,500 acres talk to us that year. The Driscolls had broken the ice.

Three years later, SILT kicked into Plan B: Sell the farm with a SILT easement on it. That proved harder than we thought, in part because the SILT easement is so



## SILT's first story

new to Iowa. Our lender stopped the interest accruing and agreed to delay full payment. Without that, we never could have sold it at an affordable price.

When we first acquired the farm, we knew that a rural residence 20 minutes from Omaha would sell for a half million dollars. Even with the discounted value caused by a SILT easement, we'd be able to sell it for what we owed. But appraisers had a different idea. They'd only appraise it as farm land, even though "McMansions" are going up all over the neighborhood. Appraised that way, minus the 40% discount, we couldn't afford to sell it...until land prices spiked. The Piniarskis found us thanks to another young couple who'd looked at the farm a few years ago.

"They're wonderful," Joe Driscoll said of the Piniarskis. "They want to farm organic, they value the trees that are there and they seem really ambitious." Joe, who is a grandfather, has especially enjoyed visiting with the youngest members of the Piniarski family.

Extra special thanks to Sallie Calhoun, Esther Park and the entire Paicines Ranch/Cienega Capital crew for their support for our very first purchased and sold farm!



## 54 Acre Driscoll Farm Saved!

Tanna Piniarski is a young mother worried about the future for her children Clementine and Georgiana. For years, the former hair stylist and business owner (soaps and lotions) has planned her answer — a farm of their own where they can raise clean, healthy food for their community. She and her husband Johnny, a technician at the local military base, even moved from Omaha to Glenwood IA so they could flip a house to raise money for a down payment.

By then, farmland in the area was going for more than \$12,000 per acre!

In January, SILT sold the 54-acre certified organic Driscoll Farm just outside of Council Bluffs/Omaha to Tanna and John Piniarski for the protected price of just \$250,000.

"We are excited to start our long-time dream of becoming a part of the next generation of young regenerative farmers, said Tanna Piniarski. "We couldn't be more grateful for the opportunity given to us from SILT, Joe Driscoll, and the small Iowa community to grow food the way it was always meant to be grown."

The sale price represents a more than 60% discount from currently inflated land prices in the area and fulfills SILT's mission to make land affordable for sustainable farmers through permanent protection.



# Fairfield Headed to Food Security!

## Circle Our Cities Protects Two New Farms

*Your support made the difference*

Sara Anderson is worried about Iowa not growing food for its own people and what monocropping is doing to our soil and water quality. Her and her husband Jim's answer? SILT.

Anderson Prairie Farm became an exceptional new partner in late summer when Sara and Jim Anderson not only donated their original 20 acres and straw bale home to SILT, but did a last-minute land swap with lifelong friend Russell Schmidt and donated the adjacent 15 acres as well. The Andersons then hosted both a Landowner Showcase and a SILTFest that introduced SILT to scores of more people.

The Sustainable Living Coalition followed suit, donating an easement on its 12 acres with another straw bale structure they call the "eco-barn" that serves as a community center for talks and gatherings. It was the first time a nonprofit donated an easement on land it owns.

SILT's Circle Our Cities Campaign pilot project launched in Fairfield in 2021 protected a total of 47 acres in just one year. Research shows that many acres can feed more than 9,000 people their minimum daily allowance of fruits and vegetables seasonally.

SILT launched the pilot with a \$75,000 commitment and asked Fairfield to match \$37,500. The community came through with so much support that we're continuing the project this year! Meet Land Scout Chelle Rossy at SILTFest Fairfield in June!

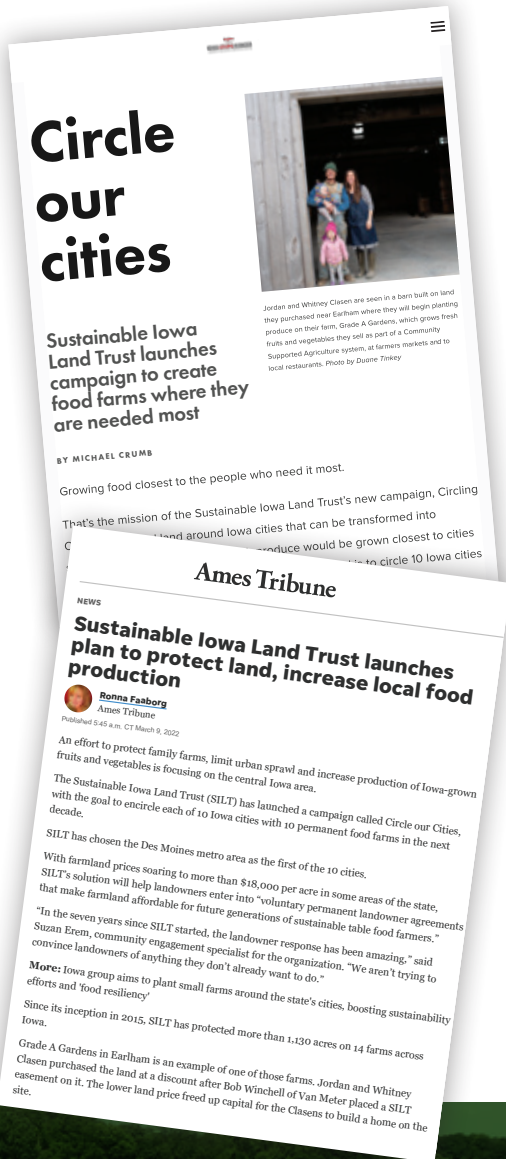
Circle Our Cities is SILT's new strategic vision to circle 10 Iowa cities with 10 permanent food farms in 10 years. The presentation is available by Zoom or in person. **Contact Community Engagement Specialist Suzan Erem (suzan@silt.org) to set one up.**



# With Land Values on Steroids, SILT RAMPS UP OUTREACH



SILT's plan to **Circle 10 cities in 10 years with 10 permanent food farms** has attracted the support of more donors than ever and larger family foundation commitments as well. With 3-year pledges and your support, we're tripling SILT's impact in 2022.



## First Circle: Des Moines

New farmers who want to sell their products in Des Moines face competition for land with housing developers on one side and commodity prices on the other. There simply is no affordable land without permanent protection.

SILT Land Scout Kiara Fish, hired in January, has begun identifying and connecting with landowners in Polk and surrounding counties who have both the passion SILT's mission and the capacity to donate land or a conservation easement. SILT's local board members John Norris, Joe Henry and Lora Fraracci are introducing her to their extensive networks. Kiara is also assisting with SILTFests and field days in Central Iowa and deepening our relationships with our many partners.

Meanwhile, SILT has submitted a proposal under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to protect high-impact lands in the watershed as permanent, perennial food farms.

Know a landowner in Central Iowa who might be interested in permanent protection? **Contact Kiara at [kiara@silt.org](mailto:kiara@silt.org).**

## Is Your City Next? You Can Help

SILT is coordinating ARPA proposals with allies in three other counties. We share this vision and join with allies who want an Iowa that feeds its people healthy, fresh food from land permanently protected for the future. Our proposals get ranked higher when we have more funds to match. Please consider a donation from your Donor Advised Fund, rolled over from your IRA or pledged over the next few years. We'll multiply its impact by using it as matching funds. Corporate donations are welcome. Thank you!

## Want to see a Circle Our Cities or Working Buffers presentation?

Please put some folks or employees together and contact Community Engagement Specialist Suzan Erem at [suzan@silt.org](mailto:suzan@silt.org). She'll meet you by Zoom.



# THIS IS WHAT IOWA FOOD FARMING LOOKS LIKE



SPRING 2022 SILT  
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REPORT

# SILT Fest



## Land Protection Information and Summer Open Houses

Visit any of 5 featured SILT farms across the state this summer for music, cooking demonstrations, farm tours and the opportunity to purchase fresh, wholesome fruits, vegetables and meat from your local farmer!

Each open house sets aside a time and space especially for landowners to learn what land protection means and determine if permanent protection of their farms is right for them.

We couldn't do this without the generous support of our donors. Thank you. The project is funded with more than \$50,000 in individual donations like yours and nearly \$175,000 from the USDA. Each year we'll add new farms and visit the original ones once again!

### 2022 Small Farm Summer Schedule

Phoenix Farm, Iowa City	May 15
Grade A Gardens, Earlham	June 5
Jupiter Ridge Farm, Garber	July 10
Bee Haven Farm, Solon	Aug. 20
Red Fern Farm, Wapello	Sept. 20

Times, addresses and each farm's special offerings will be announced in SILT's monthly e-blast. **Sign up at [silt.org](http://silt.org) and follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for any changes or additions!**

**Have you moved? Please send us your new address at [info@silt.org](mailto:info@silt.org)**

### 2022 SILT Fests Schedule

SILTFest Cedar Rapids	April 16
SILTFest Honey Creek	June 11
SILTFest Fairfield	June 17
SILTFest Decorah	Sept. 15 (tentative)
SILTFest Des Moines	Nov. 16

**Sign up for SILT e-updates for details!**



Jupiter Ridge Farm

## “Does Anyone Really Want to Farm This Way?”

*Finding the right farmer takes time, dedication*

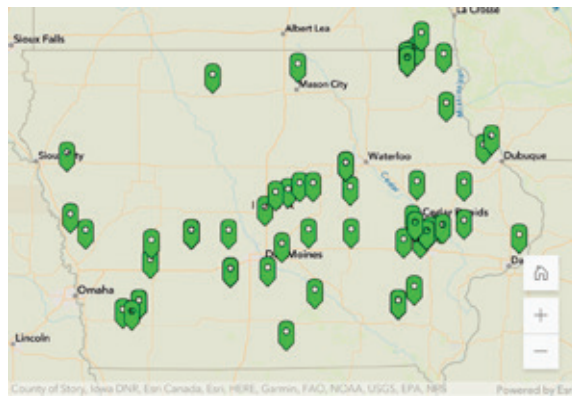
Right now, more than 140 farmers are seeking SILT farms. More than 70% of them want land within 60 miles of an urban area. A large majority would prefer 20 acres or fewer and 68% have a business plan. These are the results of our extensive Farm Seeker Survey we keep posted at [silt.org](http://silt.org).



SILT protects more than 1,100 acres, not all of which are in production, so to bridge this gap, SILT’s new Farm Services Coordinator Shannon Moeller is working with land protectors to connect SILT opportunities with farm seekers.

Shannon grew up in Southeast Iowa and now lives in Waverly. She comes to SILT with 7 years of working expanding cover crop adoption among conventional farmers and study-abroad experience in four countries. She may be best known, though, for her experience as a competitive mule rider!

Shannon is also taking over the monitoring of SILT farms to be sure they are in compliance with SILT and Land Trust Alliance standards and will coordinate two Agroforestry field days, and complete a calculator and case studies we started last year.



## New Website Identifies Healthy Food on Local Farms

Ever seen someone cruising slowly by the farms of their neighbors to see what’s going on?

Well, SILT has harnessed that interest into a new online tool. Now, thanks to generous cooperating landowners, anyone can see what kind of table food wants to grow on farms in their area. **Go to [silt.org](http://silt.org) > About Us > Farms and Land Walks to check it out.**



SILT’s first intern Kya Farag has successfully combined 3 years of land walk consultations performed by SILT Farm Specialist Joe Klingelhutz into a user-friendly website. Kya, a first-year student at Cornell College in Mt. Vernon studying conservation biology, has been an invaluable member of the

team, taking on every challenge we offered and learning a lot in the process.

“Being the first intern at such a new and growing organization, the level of structure and care the work environment has is a pleasant surprise among many.”

Our first intern has been so impressive we’ve renewed her internship for the summer!





Children play “corn swords” with a surprise guest attending the Community Corn Harvest in Linn County last summer.



## Dows Farm Community Corn Harvest Feeds Thousands

More than 1,500 people picked free corn planted by the retiring Dows farmer, who prefers to remain anonymous. A half dozen nonprofits volunteered their time and effort to make it a success, including distribution to thousands more through their networks.

We’ve handed off this project to our partners at Feed Iowa First who are leasing the land for their Equitable Land Access program and wish them the best of luck.

## SILT Partners to Permanently Protect 40 acres of Dows Farm

Dows Farm was always meant to be protected as part of the Dows Farm Agri-Community in Linn County. With land trust protection, no future farmer would compete with housing development for the price of the farm land itself but the development would benefit in higher home values and a stronger sense of place than most.

Any progressive developer would have welcomed SILT as a partner in promoting this innovative housing concept. Unfortunately, despite best efforts, that’s not what happened. So, SILT assessed our own risk combined with our desire to see the land protected, then offered to help another qualified organization hold the easement.

The county took us up on it and we’re helping the local Soil and Water Conservation District learn how to write and hold a conservation easement that will protect the farm from all future threats. We’ve also referred county officials to experienced conservation attorneys to be sure the easement holds up over time.

As of press time, the community was still waiting for the project to break ground.

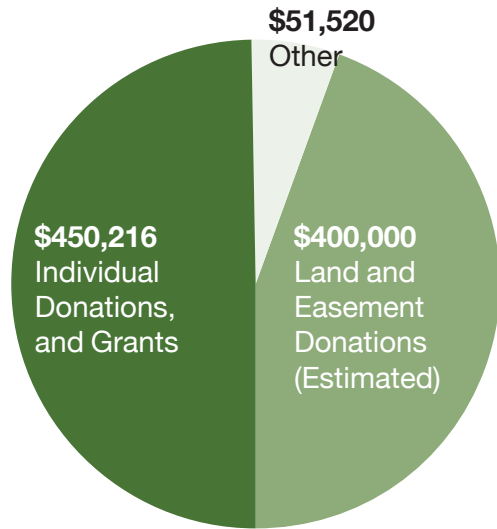


# YOU ARE OUR HERO!

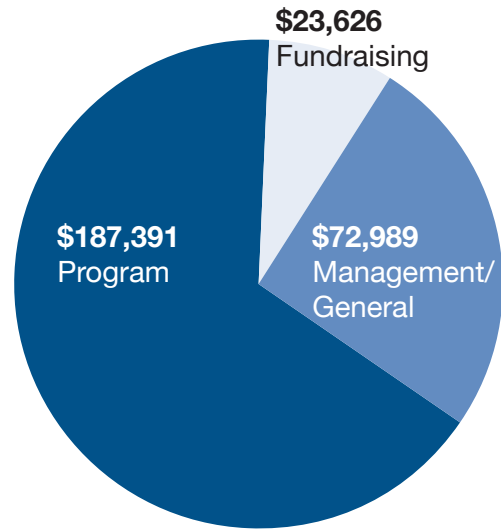
SILT members bridged the fundraising gap we've suffered the last two years due to COVID. You dug deep and donated, even without the bells and whistles of an event or the joy of seeing each other in person. Thank you so much! We hope you enjoy reading up on the results of your generosity and kindness.

## 2021 By the Numbers

### 2021 REVENUE



### 2021 EXPENSES



**1,134**

Number of total acres protected (47 new in 2021)

**226,800**

Number of people fed from SILT land if at full capacity

**30**

Number of land consultations

**143**

Farm Seeker Survey total

**1,360**

Landowners Guide to Sustainable Food Crops distributed and accessed online

**\$570,000**

Money raised toward Circle Our Cities \$3 million goal

**UP 35%**

People reached by social media

**UP 124%**

Visits to silt.org

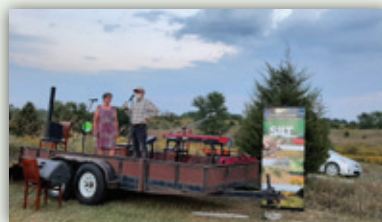


## SILT gets Accredited

SILT achieved national recognition in February – joining a network of over 450 accredited land trusts across the nation that have demonstrated their commitment to professional excellence and to maintaining the public’s trust in their work.

“Accreditation demonstrates SILT’s commitment to permanent farmland conservation in Iowa,” said Suzan Erem, SILT Community Engagement Specialist. “We are a stronger organization for having gone through the rigorous accreditation program. Our strength means special places – such as the Luzum Heritage Farm or Grade A Gardens – will be protected forever, making Iowa an even greater place for us and our children.”

SILT provided extensive documentation and was subject to a comprehensive third-party evaluation prior to achieving this distinction. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission awarded accreditation, signifying its confidence that SILT’s farms will be protected forever. In just 7 years, SILT has protected more than 1,130 acres of Iowa land for nature-friendly table food production and helped nearly 40 farmers stay on or access affordable land. In a state where land prices have skyrocketed and COVID exposed the fragility of the food system, SILT is more necessary than ever.



## SILT is spreading!

- **SILT featured** in *Business Record* Fearless series, the *Des Moines Register*, *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, *UK Independent News*, in at least two books, and podcasts such as *Food Sleuth* and *Cool Solutions*.
- **3 Landowner Showcases**
- **4 Adopt an Acre “Adoptive Parents” visits** - Red Fern, Winchell, Dows, Bee Haven
- **Phoenix Farm SILTFest**, Iowa City
- **Anderson Prairie SILTFest**, Fairfield
- VidMobGives Produced a **Free Marketing Video** for SILT
- Global Reach Donated **Drone Footage of SILT Farms**
- Assisted with the **Paul Johnson Legacy Launch** (statewide)
- **Christmas Past** (West Branch)
- **Partnering** with LSI Global Greens (Des Moines area), PFI’s farmer of color support network, (statewide) Iowa Hunger Coalition (statewide), Regen Ag Alliance (NE Iowa), SWCD Linn County, Catfish Creek Watershed Dubuque, We Arose Cooperative (Waterloo), Terra Cycle and Sierra Club (Fairfield), Feed Iowa First, Olivet, Farm Bureau and FFA (Linn County), NAACP Economic Development Committee (Des Moines), Iowa Food System Coalition (statewide),
- **Presenting** at the Savanna Institute Perennial Gathering and on our Agroforestry grant (Wis)
- **Co-presenting** with Global Greens’ Zac Couture at Iowa Org Conference (Iowa City)
- **Creating land access:** Being part of the Land Access Hub with *Renewing the Countryside* (Iowa/MN/Wis/IL)



## Welcome New Board Members

Maggie McQuown of Red Oak, Darrow Center of Cedar Rapids and Jenn Ripp of Decorah joined the SILT Board of Directors in 2022.

The board thanks Carolyn Van Meter, George Oamek, Nick Wallace and Smaranda Andrews for their service.

### SILT 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Stuart Valentine**  
President

**Les Beck**  
Vice President

**Gina McAndrews**  
Secretary

**Mary Ellen Miller**  
Corydon, Treasurer

**Darrow Center**  
Cedar Rapids

**Lora Fraracci**  
Des Moines

**Matthew Gilbert**  
Waterloo

**Joe Enriquez Henry**  
Des Moines

**Lyle Luzum**  
Decorah

**Maggie McQuown**  
Red Oak

**John Norris**  
West Des Moines

**Jenn Ripp**  
Decorah

**Corbin Scholz**  
Iowa City



SILT has openings for board members. Please contact Les Beck at [LBeck0702@gmail.com](mailto:LBeck0702@gmail.com) or go to [silt.org/about-us](http://silt.org/about-us) for more information.



## Do you have a plan for the future?

Pledges over time are particularly helpful to a growing organization. If you know you'll be donating a particular sum over the next few years, please let us know. We understand that plans change and none of us can predict the future. Still, we will make the most of your pledge by planning appropriately and with always enough room to pivot if we must. Thank you!

## Bequests, Gifts of Stock: Make the Difference of a Lifetime

SILT accepts bequests. A bequest is invaluable to the SILT's growth and stability. We also accept gifts from Donor Advised Funds, Qualified Charitable Distributions and Appreciated Stock. You can direct these funds to be used toward an endowment, general operating funds, our Monitoring and Defense Fund, Farmer Relief Fund or a particular project. **To learn more, please contact Suzan Erem, Community Engagement Specialist at [suzan@silt.org](mailto:suzan@silt.org) or (319) 800-8108.**

## Become a Monthly Donor. Your Support Will Go Even Further. It's Easy and Free and Will Help SILT Save Thousands of Dollars Annually!

Thank you for your support. Now there's an easy way for your support go even further. You can help us on an on-going basis by becoming a monthly donor. Your gift of \$10 or more will be automatically charged to your credit card each month. It's easy, free and will give SILT a sustainable source of income we can count on every month while making giving easier and more affordable for you. It helps us save time and money on printing and mailing costs, which can be used for SILT's programs. To get started, please return the enclosed reply envelope or visit [silt.org/donate/](http://silt.org/donate/) and enter the amount you wish to donate each month. Thank you!



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SILT is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Your contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

## Your SILT team

**Suzan Erem**

Community Engagement Specialist

**Joseph Klingelutz**

Farm Specialist

**Teresa Kurtz**

Operations Specialist

**Sophie Sheeder**

Public Outreach VISTA

**Kya Farag**

Intern

**Kiara Fish**

Polk County Land Scout

**Shannon Moeller**

Farm Services Coordinator

**Chelle Rossy**

Fairfield Land Scout



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Platinum  
Transparency  
2022  
Candid.