

Report by WFRRD Board President

Rod Backhaus

The year 2000 was a busy and productive year for the WFRRD. I would like to take this opportunity to describe some of the highlights of the year, and to elaborate on the challenges we have identified for the future.

There were 145 workshops/seminars/field days at the Wallace Foundation Learning Center in 2000, which were attended by 3,323 people. We are very proud to see the farm and the Learning Center being used to meet the needs identified for research, education, and rural development.

The Wallace Foundation Innovation Center, staffed by Jill Euken and Mike Glenn, was active in working with several new value-added ventures in 2000. The Wallace Foundation believes these businesses are key to creating a profitable and sustainable population base and infrastructure base for southwest Iowa. The Innovation Center has assisted the following entities in 2000:

- **BioMass Agri Products** – a group of producers in Shelby/Pottawattamie/Cass counties who are harvesting, collecting, and processing corn stover for companies who market mulches, novelty products, and paper products.
- **Quality Iowa Maize** – a group of white corn growers in Fremont/Page/Mills counties. The group has leased and equipped a corn cleaning facility and is cleaning and bagging corn for food-grade corn markets.
- **Iowa Quality Producers Alliance** – a group of 80 producers from 15 SWI counties who have formed an alliance to procure specialty grain contracts for producers and to research and develop producer-owned grain processing.

- **Tall Corn Ethanol** – a group of producers in Carroll, Crawford, Shelby, Audubon, Cass, and Pottawattamie counties who have raised the funds needed to build a corn ethanol plant.
- **Heartland Organic Cooperative** – a cooperative of organic producers conducting feasibility studies for capitalizing and building producer-owned processing capacity for organically-produced Iowa crops and livestock.

A real highlight of 2000 was burning the mortgage for the Armstrong Research Farm. The Wallace Foundation is grateful for the continued contributions of individuals and businesses in southwest Iowa, as well as the ISU Agricultural Foundation and the Wallace Genetic Foundation for their generous contributions.

The board is working on developing a strategic plan for the organization. Primary goals for the WFRRD have been identified follows:

- The Wallace Foundation will help develop an economy where 80% of the commodities produced in southwest Iowa leave as consumer-ready, value-added products with producers owning equity in processing and merchandising businesses.
- The Wallace Foundation will establish a direct relationship between WFRRD and the agricultural education programs in southwest Iowa. It will establish an agricultural education advisory board and a board of students.

- The Wallace Foundation will assist and strongly encourage the development of new business by:
 - working with other organizations, including several universities, venture capitalists, a SWI Coalition, counties, and communities;
 - providing training opportunities for leadership and community involvement; (The Wallace Foundation can document a measurable increase in career opportunities in southwest Iowa).
- The Wallace Foundation will work with other agencies, organizations, businesses and southwest Iowa citizens to insure that

every home, business, and community has high speed communications.

- The Wallace Foundation will work with other SWI entities to maintain a wholesome environment in southwest Iowa that includes economic opportunity, recreational opportunities, quality health care, safety, a caring society, and mobility.

The Wallace Foundation Board of Directors has spent a great deal of time during our fall and winter board meetings addressing the concerns of financial sustainability and staffing for the foundation. We ask for your support and participation as we look for resources to continue the important work we have begun in southwest Iowa.