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## **2012 Annual Report to Members**

*Submitted on behalf of the Board of Directors by John Hooper, Chair*

The year 2012 began with the Board of Directors, fortunate and respectful of the privilege to be elected to lead the Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance into its third decade, seeking to resolve some key questions. Our focus this last year, in addition to the education and outreach that is constantly ongoing, was to determine how best we could serve the organic community in Michigan in the ensuing years. While the direction seems clearer at this moment the implementation remains a work in progress. This should not reflect unkindly though on the enthusiasm and positive outlook exhibited within the board and throughout the entire the organization!

A comprehensive survey crafted by Carolyn Lowry, Melissa Hornaday and John Biernbaum was sent electronically to our membership and beyond; the results of which were shared in a newsletter in late spring and in the program for our Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> event. This information is also available at our new web address [www.moffa.net](http://www.moffa.net). The bottom line was that there are moments when the relevancy of an organization is questioned, as needs and events change in our lives. In short the board needed reassurance that in the era we find ourselves MOFFA had a viable role. The positive response and number of respondents encouraged us enormously and allowed us to forge ahead with renewed optimism.

2012 began with the arrival of our electronic newsletter. We had been without a tool to communicate with the MOFFA membership for a number of months as we made the transition from a paper to electronic media. As an all volunteer entity we just no longer had the resources or time to create then mail 400 plus paper copies. Now MOFFA is able to reach at least twice the number and our time can be spent more judiciously. Anyone wishing to receive a copy via snail mail is welcome to contact us to arrange this delivery.

Late in 2011 the MOFFA board made a decision to change the date of our annual event (known previously as the Michigan Organic Conference) to mid-autumn in the midst of the harvest. To celebrate 20 years as an organization we re-imagined the MOC to an event that would capture the main goal of the board for 2012 which was to ask the difficult questions of how best we could serve our organic community. "Bridging the Gap – A Conversation, A Collaboration, and A Celebration" was born! Flint was chosen as a new venue site for a host of meaningful reasons, we enlisted the assistance of Stephen Arellano to coordinate the event, and with the gracious and totally necessary

partnership with all in the Flint area food community a new event was born! Great ideas, constructive (and at moments contentious—which is at times necessary and understandable) dialogue, new relationships, work groups, music, laughter as well as a sumptuous feast were the result! Although attendance was not what we had hoped for with all the new variables we definitely consider the day a success.

MOFFA last year through a series of circumstantial acts lost our domain name moffa.org. Sparing the details, this accidental lapse caused a great deal of consternation and was a huge issue especially because of the timing just weeks prior to our Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> celebration. To reiterate we are now [www.moffa.net](http://www.moffa.net) and can be reached at [moffaorganic@gmail.com](mailto:moffaorganic@gmail.com) or 248-262-6826. Work is underway to reacquire the .org

MOFFA continues to remain attuned to our Mission Statement:

***Promoting organic agriculture and the development and support of food systems that revitalize and sustain local communities.***

We strive to educate, question, listen, and learn from one another to grow not only as an organization but as individuals. MOFFA sponsors, partners with and exhibits at many conferences and events each year to bring awareness to and a presence of organic agriculture. In 2012,

- MIFFS Family Farms Conference
- Northern Michigan Small Farms Conference
- Everybody Eats, Cultivating Food Democracy
- The Organic Reporting Sessions
- MIFMA Farm Market Conference
- Healthy Trade Network Conference
- Southwest Michigan Harvest Fest
- Bioneers, Traverse City
- Bioneers, Detroit
- Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo (GLEXPO)

as well as our own event were all participatory venues.

In the board's efforts to chart a course for the ensuing months a prime area of focus is the beginning farmer and realistic access to farm land. A wide brush is necessary to cover all the many facets of this work. Beginning farmer is an all inclusive category which speaks to the young and old alike, gender, urban and rural, ethnic diversity, field production and ½ acre hoop house growing, etc. One exciting project involves collaboration between The Student Organic Farm, the Michigan State Federal Credit Union and MOFFA to establish a loan program for incoming students to be able to

attend the intensive, nationally recognized organic teaching program at the SOF. We have been thoughtfully and prudently formulating this program over the last number of months. We will report in future issues of the Organic Connection our progress

As a six member Board of Directors in 2012, all involved in pursuing a livelihood and living the dream with family and friends as well as dedicating considerable time to MOFFA – our plates have been very full! Now with the addition of three new board members and a very competent, very part-time administrative assistant, we are tremendously energized for 2013. Please contact us with thoughts or concerns or helpful information. Our website has tabs for employment opportunities, land for sale, equipment, announcements of all variety of organic agriculture topics, potential collaborations and much more.

We need your support both in the spirit and as members. You will also find on our website an application to renew your membership or join MOFFA for the first time. Every penny goes toward creating a better planet through organic agriculture and the myriad systems of life benefiting thereof.

Ah Spring! Enjoy, John H.