

~ Female Fare

Recipe for Change: Women in Agriculture Invited to “Go Run” Leadership Training Sept. 10-12 in Duluth

by Lisa Kivirist

You probably stand buried in summer abundance as you read this. Between the zucchini pile-up on your kitchen counter and peak summer farm chore demands, this season ushers in a super-size serving of the passion we all share for agriculture: that direct connection to the land and healthy food sources for ourselves and our community. As women in agriculture, we stand well-seasoned in two things: balancing multiple hats, and an appreciation for diversity. You probably harvested several tomato varieties this morning, not just one. You typically plant a few new seeds in the garden every season to keep things new, fresh, healthy and interesting.

In this spirit, consider planting a pack of “leadership” seeds this September by attending the “Go Run” training in Duluth, MN, September 10-12, 2010. Sponsored by the White House Project, a national non-partisan organization dedicated to supporting women to take on leadership roles, this intense weekend leadership training initiative will offer a special focus on rural women and those with a commitment to agriculture and food system change. WFAN and the Rural Women’s Project, a venture of the [Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service \(MOSES\)](#), will partner with [The White House Project](#) to help facilitate this connection at the September training, with women like myself and Leigh Adcock, WFAN Executive Director, attending.

“Whether you want to take on a leadership role in your local community or possibly run for public office someday, the ‘Go Run’ weekend provides an amazing, intense opportunity to create new allies and networks of women from

throughout the Midwest sharing similar values and missions,” explains Liz Johnson, Midwest Regional Director for The White House Project. “Whatever your situation, whatever cause you’re passionate about, this training will help you take your leadership skills and influence up several notches, as well as provide fertile ground for new ideas and collaborations to unfold.”

While women remain underrepresented nationally in elected positions of influence, this gap is particularly noticeable in regard to women in agriculture. Women currently make up only 17 percent of Congress. On a global scale, the U.S. ranks 71st out of 189 countries in terms of proportion of women in their national legislatures. We trail behind the United Kingdom, Japan, France, Canada and Australia, as well as Afghanistan, Cuba, United Arab Emirates and Pakistan.

Of the women currently in Congress, none came to elected office from an active farming background. Three were raised on farms or ranches, but unfortunately, none brings a current hands-on understanding of the current face of women in agriculture.

However, women are increasingly taking on senior leadership roles within the political structure that can potentially support women in agriculture. Arkansas Senator Blanche Lampert Lincoln serves as the first woman chair of the powerful U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, setting policy and funding direction for America’s farms. Kathleen Merrigan, a champion of sustainable and organic agriculture, serves as the USDA Deputy Secretary, second in command at the largest federal agency. This upcoming

“Go Run” training aims to foster further advancement of women in agriculture into a variety of leadership roles, from influencing food options in your local school cafeterias to strengthening the role of women in agriculture on a national platform.

“Connecting to new groups of inspiring women is particularly important to rural women like myself, who can easily sometimes feel isolated and alone because of our geography,” adds Nevada Littlewolf, Rural Leadership Field Organizer for The White House Project, and the only woman currently elected to the city council in rural Virginia, MN.

This upcoming “Go Run” will be held at the Holiday Inn in Duluth, MN, and run the evening of Friday, Sept. 10, through the morning of Sunday, Sept. 12. Topics will include: communications and public speaking, fundraising, coalition-building, networking opportunities, and campaign strategy.

In addition, a special “Leadership Cohort” session dedicated to women in agriculture will help spur specific next steps among attendees on ways we can increase the leadership role of women dedicated to food system change.

Scholarships opportunities are available; please register by August 1. Visit the White House Project online for more info and to apply. See you in Duluth!



Lisa Kivirist directs the Rural Women’s Project, a venture of the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) and is the co-author of ECOpreneur and Rural Renaissance. She and her

family run Inn Serendipity Farm and B&B in Brountown, WI, completely powered by the wind and the sun.