

Paul Youngstrom — Illinois' Featured NRCS Employee

Employee Job Title: Area Resource Conservationist

Location: Morris, Illinois

Date: May, 2008



Paul Youngstrom
Area Resource Conservationist

“My dad grew up here, and he would’ve been pleased...”

Meet Paul Youngstrom

Paul Youngstrom, NRCS Resource Conservationist for Illinois Area 3 has been outstanding in his ability to provide outreach to individuals in need. During his 32 year NRCS career Paul has taken advantage of many opportunities to serve those less fortunate. In Paul’s words, *“I’ve been able to get involved with some outreach opportunities that not only help some non-traditional customers, but also help people that have not had the blessings or good fortune I’ve had in my life.”*

Paul became involved with the Foods Resource Bank (FRB) as a result of LaSalle County SWCD sponsorship in 2004. Off the clock, Paul became a volunteer and promoter of FRB programs, which raise money for people in starving countries overseas by improving food production skills. These projects often involve improving water supplies for drinking and irrigation, building ponds and small dams, increasing livestock production, planting trees and grass for soil conservation, and more. Funds are raised by an odd set of partners; Farmers donate from 1 to 5 acres of corn or soybeans from their own harvest. Their production costs on these acres are paid by concerned people from urban and rural communities, and are usually coordinated by churches or service clubs. There are now five FRB projects in LaSalle County, and more than 200 nationwide.

Paul has also supported the Growing Home's Les Brown Memorial Farm, an organic-certified farm where the primary focus is job training. Vegetable production and sales of more than 20 different vegetables, herbs, and berries, along with honey and eggs provide job training for individuals whose lives may have included jail time, drug and alcohol abuse, and homelessness. Growing Home is expanding its 10-acre farm site to include two small urban farms Chicago’s south side in tough neighborhoods where agriculture is a curiosity, and where a farm can become a safe place for people to gather, learn, as well as, grow nutritious food. *“My dad grew up here, and he would’ve been pleased to see this neighborhood revived,”* says Paul.