

**New Mexico Department of Agriculture**

## NEW MEXICO ORGANIC FARMING CONFERENCE ANNOUNCES 2019 AWARD RECIPIENTS

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### **New Mexico Organic Farming Conference announces 2019 award recipients**

(Albuquerque, New Mexico) – Eight individuals and one organization were recognized at the 2019 New Mexico Organic Farming Conference (NMOFC) last month. The Southwest’s largest organic agricultural gathering, the conference provided the opportunity for 550 attendees to gain valuable knowledge on topics including water conservation, seed saving and variety development, wholesale markets, organic farming, soil health and more. The conference was Feb. 15-16 in Albuquerque.

Following is a list of award recipients:

The Organic Young Farmer Award, Lisa Anderson and Jim Benson

Lisa Anderson and Jim Benson began growing a mixed garden of seasonal fruits, vegetables and fruit trees on their small farm in Abiquiu in 2013. Selling under the name Malandro Farm, their primary sales outlet is the Santa Fe Farmers’ Market, though they recently expanded their operation to include the Taos Farmers Market. Anderson and Benson focus on providing their customers with the freshest food possible while striving to ensure that the land is continually improving its soil health and biological diversity through the use of cover crops, green manure, compost and crop rotation. This award is sponsored by the New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau–Chad Smith and Farm Bureau Financial Services–Fred Porter.

### Educator of the Year Award, Mary Lucero and Jasmine and Zach Cecelic

Mary Lucero is a New Mexico native who received her doctorate in molecular biology and toxicology from New Mexico State University in 1997. As a scientist, she conducted research in chile, native range and medicinal plants, and the discovery and characterization of plant microbiomes. She recognizes that science in the absence of public input has contributed to a failing food system that is impacting public health and disabling the rural economies that produce our food. In 2013, she left her career with USDA and opened End-O-Fite Enterprises LLC in order to rebuild food systems by changing the way we think about microbes, dirt, food, health and the economics that drive our communities. Through End-O-Fite, Lucero educates growers, consumers and health care providers through on-site workshops and online classes that tackle soil health and human nutrition.

Jasmine and Zach Cecelic are the owners of Wildhood Farm located in Truchas, a small community in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. They host workshops and events aimed to help people understand their role as farmers and land stewards. They concentrate on rediscovering ancient farming methods and use native plants and seeds on their high elevation arid farm. Holistic beekeeping, wildlife habitat creation, water conservation and sustainable self-sufficiency are all in the scope of what they hope to share with others.

### Friend of Organic Agriculture Award, New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau and Stacy Gerk

For over 100 years, the New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau has been a voice of agriculture in New Mexico, advocating for farm and ranch families, rural communities, and those interested in protecting private property rights. Crop and livestock improvement, taxation and legislation, and irrigation and grazing rights issues have remained its focus. Food producers recognize the value in an organization working on their behalf and acting as an influential voice, both on the state and national level. As they surpass 19,000-member families, the New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau strives to support and advocate for agriculture as it provides for families now and in the future.

Current New Mexico Department of Agriculture Organic Program supervisor Stacy Gerk has been a longtime member of the NMOFC Planning Committee and is dedicated to the success of organic farmers in New Mexico. He initially began working for NMDA as a part-time survey field aide and later a fruit and vegetable inspector. He began working as a full-time fruit and vegetable inspector in 1994 and became the supervisor for the fruit and vegetable inspection program in 2004. He became the organic program supervisor in 2011.

### Good Earth Steward Award, Heather Harrell

This award is presented to an organic farmer who exemplifies caring stewardship of the land and has a deep understanding of the principles of organic agriculture. Heather Harrell has been farming organically since she was a teenager. She began by growing cut flowers, moved on to mixed vegetables and eventually focused her business on growing medicinal herbs and raising honeybees. Throughout her career, Harrell has raised a wide variety of animals for meat and dairy and has maintained beehives for pollination. She has worked with Partners

for the Americas Farmer to Farmer program to share knowledge with farmers in Jamaica, worked with Western SARE to develop her farm into a pollinator forage demonstration site and has written a book on Topbar beekeeping with Les Crowder. Harrell has also designed and built a straw bale solar thermal home with the help of permaculture teachers and students. She spent years marketing her products at the Santa Fe Farmers' Market, and served as the president of the Santa Fe Farmers' Market board for a year and a half.

Organic Farmer of the Year Award, Greg Nussbaum

Greg Nussbaum is the business and farm director of Camino de Paz School & Farm, located in Santa Cruz. The private Montessori middle school serves grades 7-12, and delivers a hands-on approach to education. Students are given the opportunity to aid in operating a goat dairy and produce farm, supplying products to grocery stores and farmers markets in Albuquerque. Students also act as the farm's bookkeepers, accountants, salespeople, marketers and purchasers. The pre-collegiate Montessori program is based on an Erdkinder, or 'Earth school' approach, which encourages the idea that children thrive on land-based learning. The school is one of the first of its kind to open and serve as a model of this basis of learning.

Alongside conference facilitator Sage Faulkner, the conference was organized through a collaboration between the NMDA's Organic Program, the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service, the New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau and Walking Trout Farm.

The keynote speaker for the conference was Ron Rosmann of Rosmann Family Farms. The Rosmann family has been dedicated to organic farming for 30 years and received the 2018 Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Services Organic Farmer of the Year Award.

For more information about the New Mexico Organic Farming Conference, email [sagefaulkner@yahoo.com](mailto:sagefaulkner@yahoo.com), call 505-490-2822 or visit [www.nmofc.org](http://www.nmofc.org). - NMDA -

*New Mexico Department of Agriculture Organic Program Supervisor Stacy Gerk (third from left) and the New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau (NMFLB) received the Friend of Organic Agriculture Award at the 2019 New Mexico Organic Farming Conference Feb. 15-16 in Albuquerque. NMFLB CEO Chad Smith (second from left) accepted the award on behalf of NMFLB. Pictured left to right are Theresa Widner, Chad Smith, Stacy Gerk, Valerie Huerta, Francisco Hatay and Joseph Marcoline. (Photo by Erin Roy)*

New Mexico  
Department  
of  
Agriculture  
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Program

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Supervisor  
Stacy Gerk  
(left) and  
Walking  
Trout Farm's  
Joseph  
Marcoline  
(right)  
presented  
one of two  
Organic  
Farming  
Conference  
Educator of  
the Year  
Awards to  
Mary Lucero  
(center) at  
the 2019  
New Mexico  
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. (Photo by  
Erin Roy)

*New Mexico Department of Agriculture Organic Program supervisor Stacy Gerk (left) and Walking Trout Farm's Joseph Marcoline (right) presented one of two Organic Farming Conference Educator of the Year Awards to Zach and Jasmine Cecelic (center) at the 2019 New Mexico Organic Farming Conference Feb. 15-16 in Albuquerque. (Photo by Erin Roy)*