rural community gets help establishing a cooperative mill, which becomes a hub for marketing new agricultural businesses. A farmer staring down flood damage finds help through disaster relief funds. A roundtable discussion among growers, distributors and educational leaders yields a new initiative to bring local food into school cafeterias.

Central to all of these stories is Cissy Bowman, founder of Hoosier Organic Marketing Education (HOME). The nonprofit organization, incorporated 20 years ago, has a mission of education and advocacy around the certified organic label. But HOME’s work is much broader than just that. Its practice is all about making connections — connecting farmers to consumers, linking farms to funding and relaying information about organic foods’ importance to the public.

“I consider organic to be very holistic,” says Bowman, explaining why her mission extends far beyond those farms that are certified organic. Here in HOME’s Clayton office, surrounded by Willie Nelson posters and Farm Aid memorabilia, she sits behind a large desk. At her right hand is a gray travel mug inscribed, “I can fix anything. Where’s the duct tape?”

“It’s like the organs in your body,” she explains. “They all have to work together to create a healthy whole. So organic isn’t just about the Code of Federal Regulations 205, how you farm out there — it’s about how information about the public. It’s all about how important organic foods are to the public.”

Through her Hoosier Organic Marketing Education organization, Cissy Bowman helps farmers in need.
we develop community. How do we develop local? How do we develop education?

Teasing out the strands in Bowman’s life that led her to this point can be tricky; it’s been a breezy evolution of its own. It seems that her long association with farming has been a course of study — sometimes in the most head-pounding participation of the profession. It’s an education she’s had to put in service by teaching others.

A central figure in the organic movement since before such a movement existed, Bowman operated Center Valley Organic Farm for many years, selling produce to CSA customers, at farmers markets and directly to check and health food stores. But her initial foray into food production was actually quite humble.

“I didn’t want to be a farmer,” she says. On this chilly day she has the space heater cranked up high. Nest door to the cozy kitchen that serves as the nonprofit’s office, the home she shares with her husband, Bruce, is her sanctuary. A Tibetan prayer flag bobs the picture window. A few steps away is the kitchen with a refrigerated full of kimchis and fermented vegetables she made herself. Unspools the story.

“I wouldn’t want a horsefarm,” she says. “I wasn’t immersed in farming at all.” But when her children were born, she became aware of health threats. Her threat was as simple as the number of pesticides used on a farmer’s field. “Her research? It was simply in need of help.” Bowman remembers. “She handed me a magazine. It was the 1962 Organic Gardening magazine.”

Soon, Bowman was subscribing to Organic Gardening herself, as she tells the story. She took a job as a certifier in 1975. She married in 1982. “A happy ending,” she says. “I married a farmer.”

“Then it was like it just never stopped.” She wouldn’t have imagined that 20 years later her winter calendar would be filled with speaking engagements, some close to home like the Indiana Small Farm Conferences, some as far away as the Minnesota Organic Ag Conference. As Bowman settled into this new role, a small group of volunteers worked with her on educating the public about organic food and farming, starting around 1992. “We just started doing it because we realized that there was a need,” she says. “It’s very fulfilling work.”

But what eventually drove GEM to those first unclouded beginnings was a grant from the office of the Indiana Commissioner of Agriculture, which had been referring inquiries to the self-described “crazy organic” front of information in Clay County. Bowman recalls, “They said, ‘We have this grant program. If we were to give you money, what would you do with it?’” She jumped at the chance to create a nonprofit. “With that startup money, in 1994 she was able to fork into the work she was most passionate about — advocating for organic farming and community development.

Fittingly for a start-up from a grant, GEM has now graduated to facilitate farmers’ projects. Bowman and her five-member, all-volunteer board will walk a grower through the application process, provide letters of support and serve as liaisons with government officials. GEM also serves as a “pass through” allowing people to donate to projects like the Carthage Mill, a sustainable agricul-
tural processing site in Rush County. The mill is located in a historic lumber mill and is poised to become a hub of ag-related business. GEM’s involvement helped co-founder Anna Welch create an LLC and business plan to carry the windrow forward. “Those willing to put in seed money received a tax write-off.” Welch explains, “And that seed money encouraged action on the part of the Rush County Economic Development Board.” After the paper mill closed, she says, Carthage seemed like another “dying rural town.” But with Carthage Mill and its commercial kitchen serving as business incubators, things are looking up. Two local men are employed already in construction, and Welch says, “They’re really buying into what the poten-
tial is. We can employ so many people.”

Welch and her husband, Keith, along with another partner, Judith Avery, started the farm venture Fields of Appy almost 20 years ago. They grow organic corn, beans and other crops on a small scale in Rush County. Without the cooperative mill, they likely would have had no need to stop off-farm value-added products like cornmeal and flour and focus solely on the organic grains, seed and bean market.

“Cissy plays. She understands how hard it is, and she’s run the gamut of organic projects. She knows what’s possible. She knows a person’s intent. If she knows your work ethic and if you’ve got a serious in-
tent, she’s had a way.”

Another piece of GEM’s mission is economic sustainability. Through Farm Aid, the organization helps bring relief to farms in crisis. When Indiana farmers call 9100 FARM-AID, they are given Bowman’s mother. Maybe a family member’s health status has triggered a financial crisis. Maybe the problem stems from a drought or flood. Maybe the thin thread that keeps a farmer’s debt load manageable has snapped under the weight of rising oper-
ating costs. Regardless of the hardship’s extent, Bowman will help like the paperwork for Farm Aid approval. She knows how difficult it can be for...
Bowman drives a role as part of a 24-by-48-foot-high tunnel construction project on the Hoosier office property.

**For More Information:**
To reach Hoosier Organic Marketing Education, contact Bowman at (317) 553-7593 or CVOF@earthlink.net.
For more information on organic standards, visit www.ams.usda.gov/nop.

Janice, a small dairy producer in Hendricks County, was one of those who called Farm Aid in desperation and ended up talking with Bowman. "I honestly didn't know of anybody who could answer the phone," she remembers. "Let alone (offer) any assistance out there. I didn't even know Farm Aid was real. I was just at my wit's end … and somebody answered the phone." 

"It's the fact that somebody cares," she says. "The fact that every aspect of her work all the way through to tell the USDA to go back to the drawing board. Those kinds of things, the amount of the grant from Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Hoosier's educational mission runs the gamut from "where can I find available tunnel grants from Natural Resources other funding possibilities, such as high acknowledgments. That's when she introduces "someone I can talk to," Bowman says. "It's the fact that somebody cares, I think the majority of our citizens feel disempowered," she says. "There's no reason to feel that way. And I absolutely dislike it when people tell me they're never going to make a difference, because I've worked as a group of people, (all) over the country and the world, change the face of agriculture."   *

"It's the fact that everybody cares, everybody can talk to," Bowman acknowledges. When she introduces other funding possibilities, such as high tunnel grants from Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Hoosier's educational mission runs the gamut from "where can I find available tunnel grants from Natural Resources other funding possibilities, such as high acknowledgments. That's when she introduces "someone I can talk to," Bowman says. "It's the fact that somebody cares, I think the majority of our citizens feel disempowered," she says. "There's no reason to feel that way. And I absolutely dislike it when people tell me they're never going to make a difference, because I've worked as a group of people, (all) over the country and the world, change the face of agriculture."   *

Today I discovered I am a chef.

**Low-Fat Bread Pudding**

Ingredients:
- 1 1/2 cups uncooked rice
- 2 large eggs, uncooked and chopped
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 4 eggs, beaten or substitute egg
- 2 tsp low fat milk

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Mix brown rice with half and half and place in a 9-inch baking dish.
3. Add sugar, eggs, milk, vanilla, cinnamon, and salt. Blend until smooth and well incorporated.
4. Pour mixture into prepared dish. Bake until pudding is set and puffy, about 15-20 minutes.
5. Serve cold and enjoy. Can be prepared ahead of time and refrigerated for several days.

We're proud to sell 100% All-American made fuels.

877.435.3230

Premier Energy
A Division of Premier Products

CountryMark
The Nation's Choice in Agriculture

Conservation Education, contact Bowman at (317) 553-7593 or CVOF@earthlink.net.
For more information on organic standards, visit www.ams.usda.gov/nop.

Janice, a small dairy producer in Hendricks County, was one of those who called Farm Aid in desperation and ended up talking with Bowman. "I honestly didn't know of anybody who could answer the phone," she remembers. "Let alone (offer) any assistance out there. I didn't even know Farm Aid was real. I was just at my wit's end … and somebody answered the phone." 

"It's the fact that somebody cares," she says. "The fact that every aspect of her work all the way through to tell the USDA to go back to the drawing board. Those kinds of things, the amount of the grant from Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Hoosier's educational mission runs the gamut from "where can I find available tunnel grants from Natural Resources other funding possibilities, such as high acknowledgments. That's when she introduces "someone I can talk to," Bowman says. "It's the fact that somebody cares, I think the majority of our citizens feel disempowered," she says. "There's no reason to feel that way. And I absolutely dislike it when people tell me they're never going to make a difference, because I've worked as a group of people, (all) over the country and the world, change the face of agriculture."   *

Today I discovered I am a chef.

**Low-Fat Bread Pudding**

Ingredients:
- 1 1/2 cups uncooked rice
- 2 large eggs, uncooked and chopped
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 4 eggs, beaten or substitute egg
- 2 tsp low fat milk

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Mix brown rice with half and half and place in a 9-inch baking dish.
3. Add sugar, eggs, milk, vanilla, cinnamon, and salt. Blend until smooth and well incorporated.
4. Pour mixture into prepared dish. Bake until pudding is set and puffy, about 15-20 minutes.
5. Serve cold and enjoy. Can be prepared ahead of time and refrigerated for several days.

We're proud to sell 100% All-American made fuels.

877.435.3230

Premier Energy
A Division of Premier Products

CountryMark
The Nation's Choice in Agriculture

Conservation Education, contact Bowman at (317) 553-7593 or CVOF@earthlink.net.
For more information on organic standards, visit www.ams.usda.gov/nop.

Janice, a small dairy producer in Hendricks County, was one of those who called Farm Aid in desperation and ended up talking with Bowman. "I honestly didn't know of anybody who could answer the phone," she remembers. "Let alone (offer) any assistance out there. I didn't even know Farm Aid was real. I was just at my wit's end … and somebody answered the phone." 

"It's the fact that somebody cares," she says. "The fact that every aspect of her work all the way through to tell the USDA to go back to the drawing board. Those kinds of things, the amount of the grant from Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Hoosier's educational mission runs the gamut from "where can I find available tunnel grants from Natural Resources other funding possibilities, such as high acknowledgments. That's when she introduces "someone I can talk to," Bowman says. "It's the fact that somebody cares, I think the majority of our citizens feel disempowered," she says. "There's no reason to feel that way. And I absolutely dislike it when people tell me they're never going to make a difference, because I've worked as a group of people, (all) over the country and the world, change the face of agriculture."   *

Today I discovered I am a chef.

**Low-Fat Bread Pudding**

Ingredients:
- 1 1/2 cups uncooked rice
- 2 large eggs, uncooked and chopped
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 4 eggs, beaten or substitute egg
- 2 tsp low fat milk

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Mix brown rice with half and half and place in a 9-inch baking dish.
3. Add sugar, eggs, milk, vanilla, cinnamon, and salt. Blend until smooth and well incorporated.
4. Pour mixture into prepared dish. Bake until pudding is set and puffy, about 15-20 minutes.
5. Serve cold and enjoy. Can be prepared ahead of time and refrigerated for several days.

We're proud to sell 100% All-American made fuels.

877.435.3230

Premier Energy
A Division of Premier Products

CountryMark
The Nation's Choice in Agriculture

Conservation Education, contact Bowman at (317) 553-7593 or CVOF@earthlink.net.
For more information on organic standards, visit www.ams.usda.gov/nop.

Janice, a small dairy producer in Hendricks County, was one of those who calls Farm Aid in desperation and ended up talking with Bowman. "I honestly didn't know of anybody who could answer the phone," she remembers. "Let alone (offer) any assistance out there. I didn't even know Farm Aid was real. I was just at my wit's end … and somebody answered the phone." 

"It's the fact that somebody cares," she says. "The fact that every aspect of her work all the way through to tell the USDA to go back to the drawing board. Those kinds of things, the amount of the grant from Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Hoosier's educational mission runs the gamut from "where can I find available tunnel grants from Natural Resources other funding possibilities, such as high acknowledgments. That's when she introduces "someone I can talk to," Bowman says. "It's the fact that somebody cares, I think the majority of our citizens feel disempowered," she says. "There's no reason to feel that way. And I absolutely dislike it when people tell me they're never going to make a difference, because I've worked as a group of people, (all) over the country and the world, change the face of agriculture."   *

Today I discovered I am a chef.

**Low-Fat Bread Pudding**

Ingredients:
- 1 1/2 cups uncooked rice
- 2 large eggs, uncooked and chopped
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 4 eggs, beaten or substitute egg
- 2 tsp low fat milk

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Mix brown rice with half and half and place in a 9-inch baking dish.
3. Add sugar, eggs, milk, vanilla, cinnamon, and salt. Blend until smooth and well incorporated.
4. Pour mixture into prepared dish. Bake until pudding is set and puffy, about 15-20 minutes.
5. Serve cold and enjoy. Can be prepared ahead of time and refrigerated for several days.

We're proud to sell 100% All-American made fuels.

877.435.3230

Premier Energy
A Division of Premier Products

CountryMark
The Nation's Choice in Agriculture

Conservation Education, contact Bowman at (317) 553-7593 or CVOF@earthlink.net.
For more information on organic standards, visit www.ams.usda.gov/nop.

Janice, a small dairy producer in Hendricks County, was one of those who called Farm Aid in desperation and ended up talking with Bowman. "I honestly didn't know of anybody who could answer the phone," she remembers. "Let alone (offer) any assistance out there. I didn't even know Farm Aid was real. I was just at my wit's end … and somebody answered the phone." 

"It's the fact that somebody cares," she says. "The fact that every aspect of her work all the way through to tell the USDA to go back to the drawing board. Those kinds of things, the amount of the grant from Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Hoosier's educational mission runs the gamut from "where can I find available tunnel grants from Natural Resources other funding possibilities, such as high acknowledgments. That's when she introduces "someone I can talk to," Bowman says. "It's the fact that somebody cares, I think the majority of our citizens feel disempowered," she says. "There's no reason to feel that way. And I absolutely dislike it when people tell me they're never going to make a difference, because I've worked as a group of people, (all) over the country and the world, change the face of agriculture."   *

Today I discovered I am a chef.

**Low-Fat Bread Pudding**

Ingredients:
- 1 1/2 cups uncooked rice
- 2 large eggs, uncooked and chopped
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 4 eggs, beaten or substitute egg
- 2 tsp low fat milk

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Mix brown rice with half and half and place in a 9-inch baking dish.
3. Add sugar, eggs, milk, vanilla, cinnamon, and salt. Blend until smooth and well incorporated.
4. Pour mixture into prepared dish. Bake until pudding is set and puffy, about 15-20 minutes.
5. Serve cold and enjoy. Can be prepared ahead of time and refrigerated for several days.