

Daniel S. Sullivan
Commissioner
550 W. 7th Ave., Ste 1400
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-269-8431



Public Information Center
550 W. 7th Ave., Ste. 1260
Anchorage, AK 99501
www.dnr.alaska.gov
907-269-8400

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 15, 2013

CONTACT:

Division of Agriculture, Amy Pettit, Development Specialist, 907-761-3864,
Amy.Pettit@alaska.gov

2013 Alaska State Fair Farm Family of the Year Announced

(Palmer, AK) – Vern Stockwell and Becky Gardner of the Stockwell Farm in Palmer have been selected by the Alaska agricultural community as the 2013 Farm Family of the Year. Vern and Becky will be honored at the Alaska State Fair on Thursday, August 22.

Stockwell Farm sells its produce at multiple different farmers markets in Anchorage and is notable for its eight different varieties of carrots, 18 different varieties of potatoes, sweet onions, colored cauliflower, cabbage, tomatoes, strawberries and more. Becky's dandelion jelly, ginger-rhubarb jam and other prepared food products are famous amongst her friends.

Vern and Becky partner with Colony Next Step – part of a school district program in the Mat-Su that serves young adult students with disabilities – to provide vocational training on their farm. Students participate in a variety of tasks and particularly enjoy washing and bundling carrots for market.

Vern grew up on a 600-acre farm in South Dakota and has been a member of the Mat-Su Chapter of the Farm Bureau for many years, most recently serving as treasurer of the organization. In 2001, Vern, Becky and their three sons moved from their home in Anchorage – where they used their entire yard for personal vegetable production – to a seven-acre farm in Palmer.

The Farm Family of the Year award, sponsored by the Matanuska Valley Federal Credit Union, was established by the Alaska State Fair in 2000 to honor an Alaska farming family and show appreciation for all the hard-working Alaskans committed to agriculture. "We're pleased to recognize a local farm family who has done so much for our community of Palmer," said Ray Ritari, the fair's general manager.

After reviewing nominations, an awards committee chaired by the Alaska Division of Agriculture selects the winning family based on production of quality Alaska Grown products, community and agricultural organization involvement, and overall image.

“I am pleased to recognize the Stockwell Farm as the 2013 Farm Family of the Year. They were nominated by the agriculture community for not only their passion for agriculture but also their commitment to sharing that passion with young adults with disabilities. This farm family not only feeds Alaskans it also nurtures self esteem and personal growth,” said Agriculture Division Director Franci Havemeister.

Previous Farm Family winners include the Pyrah Family (2010), the Baker Family (2011) and the Martin Family (2012). A full list of the past thirteen years of winners can be seen at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Marketing/PR2013.pdf>.

For more information please visit www.alaskastatefair.org or contact Dean Phipps at dean@alaskastatefair.org or 907-746-7153.

###