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Farmers and Environmentalists Select Thundering Hooves for Good Stewardship Award

Nash's Organic Produce is runner up, BelleWood Acres and Mother Flight Farm finalists

Seattle, WA – Farming & the Environment announced today that Thundering Hooves ranch of Walla Walla has been selected as this year's winner of the annual Vim Wright Stewardship Award. The 4th generation family farm owned and operated by the Huesby family was chosen for their outstanding stewardship of the land, air and water, as well as their tireless leadership in educating the public about why those practices are important.

The unique award was created by the non-profit group Farming & the Environment (F&E) in honor of one of their founders, the late Vim Wright, a well known conservation leader who strongly believed farmers, ranchers and environmentalists should set aside their differences and work together to protect the environment and family farms. Now in its second year, the award program seeks out and rewards farmers and ranchers who are taking responsibility to ensure the health of the land and high quality of food for the long-term.

Read Smith, a wheat farmer from the Palouse and F&E board member said, "Thundering Hooves is the epitome of what we were looking for in a winner. The Huesby's are blazing a trail to a new way of ranching that not only respects the land, water and animals but is also strengthening ties between urban and rural communities in Washington through savvy marketing and heartfelt public education activities."

Conventional wheat and commodity crop growers until 1994, the Huesby's have transformed their operation into a successful livestock farm using only natural production methods to raise grass-fed beef, free range chickens, turkey, lamb, pork, and meat goats. The farm consists of 399 irrigated acres, 225 are owned and 174 are leased from the PCC Farmland Trust. All livestock at Thundering Hooves is pasture ranged (no feedlots), leading to more contented animals and healthful meats. The Huesby's use no hormones, avoid antibiotics, and pasture their animals on certified organic land that has been chemical-free since 1995. The Huesby farm uses a well-managed, high intensity rotational grazing system and establishes perennial grasses and alfalfa to out-compete the weeds.

Thundering Hooves is also breeding and incubating the only known strain of Wishard's Unimproved Standard Bronze turkeys, a unique old breed of turkey that had been genetically isolated by Wishard Poultry for 50 years and still carries many of the natural characteristics of its wild cousins, the kind of turkey consumed by the pilgrims and Native Americans at the "first thanksgiving". The Huesby's saved the Wishard strain from extinction three years ago now, but believe that propagating these turkeys remains a vital task as a form of animal stewardship that should not be overlooked or taken for granted.

"We are grateful and humbled by this award and accept it as a validation of our efforts thus far, and the efforts of other sustainable farmers like us; all of whom are striving to renew our natural resources, to create a greater sunlight-based economy, and to educate and unite our rural and urban neighbors about healthy, long term stewardship practices," stated Joel Huesby.

Thundering Hooves sells most of their meat at Seattle-area farmers markets, and by filling custom orders online (www.thunderinghooves.net) and via telephone (1-866-350-9400), delivering direct to customers at drop-off points in Seattle and Bellevue. Several of the finest restaurants in the increasingly popular wine-touring destination of Walla Walla serve their meats, including the Whitehouse-Crawford, Creektown Café, Grapefields, 26 Brix, and The Marc.

Nash's Organic Produce of Sequim, WA was chosen as runner up for the Vim Wright Stewardship award this year, and recognized for their efforts to preserve farmland as well as their good stewardship practices. BelleWood Acres orchard of Lynden and Mother Flight Farm of Conway, were named finalists.

Jeff Voltz, executive director for Farming & the Environment commented, "My visits to these farms to see what was being accomplished on the ground demonstrated clearly the high level leadership and commitment to the land, the well-being of people, wildlife, and livestock shared by these farmers . I congratulate the winners and look forward to working with them to support and expand the growing stewardship ethic taking hold across our state."

Farming & the Environment will celebrate the winners of this year's award at a dinner on the Central Washington University campus in Ellensburg on Sunday, October 2.

PHOTOS AVAILABLE: Photos of Thundering Hooves, Nash's Organic Produce BelleWood Acres, and Mother Flight Farm available in electronic format. To obtain photos, or for more information on the award, or to attend the dinner, please contact Jeff Voltz at Farming & the Environment, 206-622-1340 or Jen Lamson at Good Food Strategies, 206-985-7481.

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