

# New COACT Board Declares Health Care a Right

“The right to health care for all Minnesotans” was the first declaration of the newly-elected COACT Board at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Membership meeting December 7. “Just as voting, public education, and police protection are rights, so should universal health be one,” said new Board member Mary Lou Hill of Minneapolis.

After discussing individual responsibility for one’s health, the Board members decided that accident and disease, which are beyond personal control, create the need for universal health care.

“My diet is organic whenever possible, I live in the country away from pollution, I’m physically active, yet I had an incapacitating auto accident years ago and I needed long term, quality health care but my HMO refused treatment” said Board President June Varner of Royalton. “It was only because of my auto insurance that I was able to get care. This shows the current health insurance system isn’t working.”

“No matter how much personal responsibility we take maintaining our health, there’s always the chance of accident or disease. If and when that happens, more of us will be left without adequate care because health insurance has become unaffordable. Therefore, the only solution is universal health care,” she said.

## Big numbers define the crisis

Forty-one (41) million Americans don’t have health insurance, including 410,000 (9%) Minnesotans. **Eight (8) out of 10 are in working families.** They are blue collar and office workers, business owners, farmers, and professionals.

Over half of the 1.4 million Americans who lost their health coverage in 2001 are in households with over \$75,000 annual income, according to a *New York Times* story in the Nov. 25 *St. Paul Pioneer Press*.

It further reported November 17<sup>th</sup> that health insurance premiums for Minnesota employers and employees will rise 20% this year which is the 5<sup>th</sup> straight year of double-digit inflation.

Last January 8, the *Star Tribune* published a federal Health and Human Services report stating health spending shot up 6.9%, mostly due to prescription drug and hospital costs.

US health spending is \$4,637 per person, highest in the world; yet our health system ranks 37<sup>th</sup> on overall health, efficiency, and distribution of care, according to the World Health Organization.

“Look to our ancestors for good health” says Sr. Ruth Lentner. Good health is found in the nourishing traditions of our ancestors, says Sally Fallon, a nutritionist with the Weston A. Price Foundation. How did our ancestors stay healthy and avoid the crippling, destructive diseases of our time? By the food they ate. It was food from well-tended earth and animals. Animals were allowed to be nourished freely by the earth and by grazing, foraging, and exercising freely.

There were no additives in their food, no low-grade antibiotic use in their animals, no herbicides applied to the soils and plants. Our overuse of white sugar and flour products in our daily diets were not present in our ancestors’ diets.

“The high percent of people who lived **healthily** into their 80s and 90s was phenomenal at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a much higher amount than today” says Sr. Ruth Lentner. “People who need prescriptions to stay alive are not healthy.”

## Board Member Profile

Board Secretary Sr. Ruth Lentner is the Convent Gardner for the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls. She is responsible for two acres of garden and orchards. Her duties include overall consultation of the convent grounds and flower beds. She is also chair of the Sustainable Farming Association of Central Minnesota which promotes the use of sustainable and organic methods in farming.

“Get life-essential nutrients without going to the hospital” by Elizabeth Trutwin, RN (See COACT Board Member profile other side) Will you be my patient in the I.C.U.? Health insurance alone does not insure good health.

Did you know that the first thing we do on admission to the hospital is to draw blood and check nutrient levels? As a last-ditch, life-saving measure, I will give sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, and chloride in the I.V. fluids. Do you think you should wait until your hospital admission to get these life-essential nutrients?

Everyday, the human body requires 70+ mineral, 16 vitamins, 3 fatty acids, and 12 amino acids to survive. Does your food have them? A deficiency of any nutrient can lead to disease.

Factory farming for the past 70 years has only replaced nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium back into the soil (NPK fertilizer). Long ago, the original nutrients in the soil were depleted. NPK crops became infested with pests designed to eat dying unhealthy plants; widespread pesticide use has been the norm for 50 years. This nutrient-poor, chemically-sprayed food is then highly processed. Are you eating de-natured, contaminated, irradiated, nutrient-poor food? If so, come see me in the I.C.U. where a nurse will put the nutrient back in through your veins.

# Fair Consumer-Farmer Milk Prices Goal of Dairymen's Federation

## COACT serves as consumer advocate in landmark farmer coalition

As a long-time advocate of fair milk prices for both consumers and dairy farmers, Minnesota COACT joined farm organizations from throughout the nation Dec. 13-14 in Chicago to help organize a national federation for price reform.

"As a consumer and farm organization, COACT has the unique opportunity of representing both constituencies in the ground-breaking coalition which was named the **American Dairymen's Federation**," said COACT board member Ken Christianson of Royalton. "One of its chief goals is sustainable prices for farmers and affordable prices for consumers."

"Consumers and dairy farmers are both victims of the same processor milk price and market manipulation," Christianson said

"The farm organization representatives established that consolidation of dairy operations is rapidly accelerating while consumer prices for dairy products remain high," said Xavier Avila, President of the California Dairy Campaign.

## Processor price-fixing nothing new

COACT's membership in the Federation is an extension of its role as facilitator of the Minnesota Dairy Producers Board which has farmers and consumers working together against milk price-fixing of which several processors were found guilty in 1996 by the state's Attorney General. COACT earlier led the effort for labeling milk from cows injected with synthetic bovine growth hormone (rBGH) and is part of Safe Food Link, a consumer and environmental coalition for safe food production.

## Milk Protein Concentrate is latest debasement of food quality

Processors are profiteering at both the consumers and farmers expense by importing a protein substitute called Milk Protein Concentrate (MPC) which is replacing milk in cheese manufacturing and, in turn, depressing the farmers' milk price. MPC allows higher moisture content in cheese to increase processor profits while lowering protein and food quality.

The farmers identified Kraft as one of the major MPC importers and the manufacturer of "Pasteurized Process Cheese Food" which uses MPC that is not an FDA-approved ingredient. The Dairymen's Federation unites the resources of the nation's farm organizations to counter these anti-consumer and anti-farmer practices.

## Consumer-farmer price gap unfair

"When the farmers' milk price drops way below their cost of production, as it has now, the consumer price doesn't fall likewise at the stores," said Christianson who represents the Minnesota Senior Federation as one of the consumer groups on the Minnesota Dairy Producers Board. "As consumers pay more, farmers aren't paid enough to stay in business, and **three dairy farms per day are lost in Minnesota.**"

## Farmers need price, not more cows

To make up for low prices, processor-oriented agriculture economists and officials have been telling farmers for decades to expand their herds to produce more milk. However, the farmers agreed in Chicago that they need cost-of-production price, not continued expansion. Production without supply management gives processors cheap milk at a price below the farmers' production costs. This leads to independent family farms being replaced by factory feedlots.

"Factory feedlots damage the environment and produce unsafe meat and milk," said COACT Board Member Sister Ruth Lentner who is Chairperson of the Sustainable Farmers Association of Central Minnesota. "We need today's independent family farms as the base for tomorrow's sustainable farms and safe food."

More than 11,000 of the nation's 75,000 dairy farmers were represented at the Chicago meeting by the following farm organizations: National Farmers Union, National Farmers Organization, Family Dairies USA, National Family Farm Coalition, Farm Bureau, California Dairy Campaign, Western States Association, Family Farm Defenders, ARMPPA, Minnesota MILK POWER, and Minnesota COACT. The Federation's goal is to represent at least 50% of the nation's dairy farmers. The farmers voted to prohibit membership of processors in the Federation.

## COACT Board Member Profile

Elizabeth Trutwin has been a registered nurse for 10 years in Central Minnesota hospitals. She has worked in the Critical Care Unit with cardiac patients, but has also worked in Oncology, Infectious Disease, the Surgical I.C.U., the Burn Unit, Solid Organ Transplant, Pediatric I.C.U., ER, and Surgery. She is currently an adjunct instructor of nursing students at St. Cloud Technical College. She lives in Royalton, north of St. Cloud, with her husband and three children. Her hobbies include organic gardening.