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**national farmers union**  
*In Union Is Strength*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**KATHLEEN SKINNER WINS INAUGRAL PAUL BEINGESSNER AWARD**

**Saskatoon, Saskatchewan** – The National Farmers Union (NFU) is pleased to announce that Kathleen Skinner of Listowel, Ontario is the winner of the inaugural Paul Beingessner Award. The Beingessner Award is part of the NFU Youth's Campaign for New Farmers, and is given to the author (age 21 years or under) of the best 500-1000 word essay on agriculture and food issues in Canada. The value of the award is \$1,000. This year's theme was *The Importance of Family Farms in Canada*. The Beingessner Award is named after Paul Beingessner, who was a very prominent and effective writer and activist on issues concerning prairie farmers. Paul Beingessner passed away in the spring of -2009 in a tragic farm accident.

Kathleen Skinner's essay emphasized that family farms are important for protecting the environment, supporting the local economy, and enhancing knowledge about food. Kathleen lives with her parents and two brothers on their family farm, called Stonaleen Farm, just outside of Listowel, Ontario. She attends Listowel District Secondary School in Grade 11, and besides farming she has interests in music and science. This is Kathleen's first ever entry into a writing contest. The accompanying picture shows Kathleen being presented the Beingessner Award by George Stevers, Perth/Oxford Local president.

The runners-up and honourable mentions went to Charly Allan of Wolfe Island, Ontario; Rebecca Mills of St. Mary's, Ontario; Amelia Haines of Peel, New Brunswick; Jessica Lohmann of Bluffton, Alberta; and, Nikaela Lange of Dalmeny, Saskatchewan.

Beingessner was born on April 26, 1954, and grew up on the family farm at Truax, Saskatchewan. After obtaining his BA (Hon) in Psychology in 1976 and working with youth in Regina for a few years, Beingessner returned to the farm, where he raised grain, cattle, chickens, and turkeys with his father. Described as the "god-father of modern shortline railways" by former NFU President Stewart Wells, Beingessner was instrumental in the founding of Saskatchewan's first shortline railway, Southern Rails Co-operative, and served as general manager from 1991 to 1997. When he left Southern Rails, he stayed on as a board member, and worked with the Ministry of Highways Short Line Advisory Unit supporting other efforts of farmers to start shortline railways. Since 1991, Beingessner wrote a weekly column on farming and transportation issues with a social justice focus featured in papers across Western Canada. After leaving the government in 1999, his expertise on transportation issues resulted in consulting work across Western Canada and the United States. Beingessner also served as a Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Delegate from 1996 to 1998, and was an ardent supporter of the CWB and ran for the position of director in 2008.

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