

## **SUMMIT 2009 SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES**

### **BONNIE WITCHNER-ZOIA: COMMUNICATION**

#### **Alcona County Michigan State Extension (MSU) Director**

With MSU Extension, Bonnie has been the Director of the Ogemaw County Economic Development Corporation and currently is the Alcona County MSU Extension Director. She has extensive experience in developing, maintaining and implementing economic and community development programs. Bonnie is the author or co-author of a number of publications and community workshops including Developing Community Leadership, How to Form a Grant Writing Team, Business 101, Business Basics, Business Planning for Success, Facilitation Excellence, Strategic Visioning and Building Community Capacity.

### **JASON RUSSELL AND BOB STOVALL: BROADBAND**

#### **Merit Incorporated**

Merit Network Inc. is a nonprofit, member-owned organization formed in 1966 to design and implement a computer network between public universities in Michigan. After 40 years of innovation, Merit continues to provide high-performance networking and services to the research and education communities in Michigan and beyond. For more information on the mission, goals and history of Merit see their website at [www.merit.edu](http://www.merit.edu).

Jason Russell is the Member Relations Director and oversees the Member Support and Member Relations staff for Merit.

Bob Stovall is Vice President of Network Operations and Engineering at Merit. Currently, Bob provides operational responsibility and strategic leadership with Merit's Operations, Engineering, and Network Operations Center departments. Bob and his team have engineering and operations responsibility for Merit's backbone network and member access circuits.

### **CHRIS SAFFRON: RENEWABLE ENERGY**

#### **Michigan State University**

Chris Saffron is Assistant Professor for the Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering and the Department of Forestry at Michigan State University. He holds a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering and Material Science and a B. S. in Chemical Engineering. Courses currently taught include Engineering Analysis of Biological Systems and Thermodynamics for Biological Engineering. Mr. Saffron formerly held a position with Michigan Biotechnology Institute where he served as Engineer and Project Manager.

**PATTY CANTRELL: ENTREPRENEURIAL AGRICULTURE**

**Michigan Land Use Institute, Program Director**

Patty Cantrell serves as Program Director at the Michigan Land Use Institute (MLUI), a statewide public interest advocacy organization based in northwest Lower Michigan's Traverse City. Under her leadership, MLUI's Entrepreneurial Agriculture program has fostered the emergence of a new local food economy in northwest Michigan. This Taste the Local Difference campaign (LocalDifference.org) has grown, since its start in 2004, to include 250 farms, nearly 150 food retailers, dozens of school cafeterias, and 90 community-based sponsors. As a 2008-2009 national Food and Society Policy Fellow, Patty is also focused on communicating with local and state leaders about investing in community-based food and farm enterprises as a regional economic development strategy.

**LEE LUTES: VITICULTURE**

**Michigan Department of Agriculture**

Lee Lutes has served as Director for Winery Operations of Black Star Farms since its inception 10 years ago. This position entails overseeing winemaking, marketing and sales of wines and wine related products for two wineries and 3 tasting rooms. Additionally, as Master Distiller for Black Star Farms he oversees the production of approximately 3,000 cases of distillation related products annually – mostly as fortified dessert wines.

Currently, he sits on the Research Committee for the Michigan Grape and Wine Industry Council. This body serves as an advisory board to the council for research projects that will help drive the wine and grape industry forward.

He also serves on the board of the Leelanau Horticulture Society and is personally involved with land preservation issues that are supported by value-added agriculture.