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“Keep Our Farmers Farming Campaign” to Support the Horticultural Research Station

Traverse City, Michigan – For the past 27 years, the Leelanau Peninsula has been home to a first-class horticultural research facility that has helped make the Grand Traverse area the “Cherry Capital of the World.” Now, the foundation that had the vision to start the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Station is announcing a fundraising campaign to assure it remains in the area for the foreseeable future.

“It is in the best interest of the entire community, not just farmers, to support the work of the station,” said Rick Sayler, president of the Northwest Horticultural Research Foundation. “The cutting-edge research distributed by the Station to our growers enables them to compete in the global market. There is a direct connection between our growers having the best research available and a viable fruit industry in northwest Michigan. The number one land use issue is protecting farmland and open space and having profitable farms in an area is the best farmland preservation program out there.”

Sayler points to the example of the PESTNET program developed by researchers at the Station. PESTNET is a weather and crop management tool that saves farmers money and helps them make environmentally conscious decisions. Agricultural economists estimate that PESTNET could save one pesticide spray per year, a savings of 3.25 pounds per acre. One less spray would equal a savings of about \$19.00 per acre, per year.

The Research Station is owned by the Foundation and operated by the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station and MSU Extension. The Foundation has been able to maintain and improve the buildings at the site through appropriations from the Michigan legislature. Given the uncertainty over future state funding and the important contribution the Station makes for the local economy, the board of directors at the Foundation felt the general public would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Station.

The “Keep our Farmers Farming” campaign has two components. The Foundation encourages individuals to become Friends of the Foundation. Friends make annual contributions to support research at the Station and in return receive a bi-annual newsletter and an invitation to attend an annual luncheon at the Station. The other piece of the campaign is to build a 1 million dollar endowment fund for the station, primarily by encouraging farmers to consider making a gift of their farm or part of their farm to the Foundation either outright or through their estate.

The Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) organization whose purpose is to support cutting-edge research on cherries and other fruits and to disseminate state of the art information to the Michigan fruit industry and the public.

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