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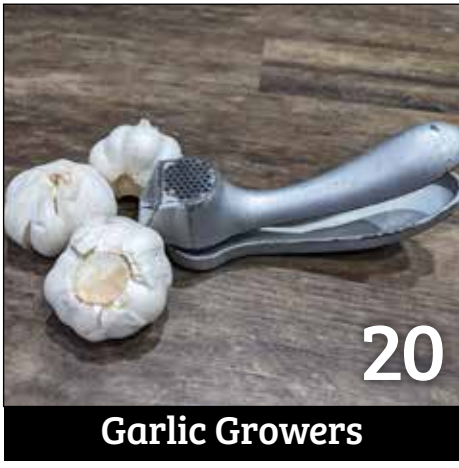
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## Did you know?

Did you know that potatoes were the first vegetable grown in space? Back here on Earth, potatoes are Ontario's largest fresh vegetable crop.

## Did you know?

Did you know that most of the green bell peppers sold in the grocery store are actually red bell peppers that were picked early and haven't fully ripened yet?

## Did you know?

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# Tri-Star Farm: Brant 4-H Leader raises Wagyu Cattle as a hobby



Ron Eadie at the Brant 4-H Rally Night in Paris



One of the Wagyu enjoying the pasture at Tri-Star Farm near Cainsville

Cainsville-area farmer Ron Eadie and his family enjoy raising beef cattle. They initially raised Herefords on Tri-Star Farm on Lynnden Road East. But during the pandemic, they sold their herd and switched to Wagyu cattle from start to finish.

He's glad that they did.

"They're easy to be around, they're not aggressive, not saucy," said Eadie, referring to one of the breed's unique characteristics.

Tri-Star Farm's Wagyu experience is new, the family having only purchased initial registered stock from an Ontario breeder in 2021. The herd remains small, consisting of 10 cows and one bull, with plans to keep the calves for expansion. Eadie said the family is sending their first Wagyu to the abattoir this year.

Eadie grew up in Brantford, where his family ran a produce business. He eventually settled into a full time job with a Brantford trucking firm, which he still has.

Tri-Star got its name because three branches of the Eadie family own it: parents Brian and Jo-Anne, Ron and his wife, Debbie; and Ron's sister, Carolyn Attilio and her husband, Notarandra. The family bought the farm in 1997, intending to keep race horses. Because the farm was previously vacant, the families installed fencing, paddocks and 48 acres of pasture on its sandy loam soil in addition to setting up their own residences.

But all three families worked full time off-farm, and "racing horses were a lot of work," said Eadie.

Therefore, they transitioned from raising horses to Herefords. Everyone pitches in, including Eadie's teen sons, Richard and William. Eadie's daughter, Kate, now studying at Queen's University, helps out when she's home.

Why did Eadie switch to Wagyu-- a Japanese breed that is cherished in Japan, but is still a boutique breed in Canada?

"I became more interested in quality, not quantity," he said.

Purebred Wagyu are valued for their natural intramuscular fat or marbling and tender cuts, which melt away to produce a buttery-tasting beef upon cooking. Their beef rankings start at Prime and go higher—the coveted cuts that restaurateurs and gourmets prefer.

“*I became more interested in quality, not quantity,*”

Proponents say that the breed's high fat content consists mainly of heart-healthy monounsaturated fat and high levels of Omega 3 and 6 fatty acids, which are crucial for many body processes. It also has more conjugated linoleic acid and lower cholesterol levels than most beef breeds, along with a low melting point.

Often dubbed the world's most expensive and exclusive beef, Wagyu beef sales are slowly becoming more commonplace in Canada.

It takes longer for Wagyu to develop the marbling and juicy fat content that gourmets crave.

Eadie said that he intends to finish off his abattoir-bound Wagyu between 1200 to 1300 pounds.

But this docile, easy-going breed doesn't grow as big as other cattle such as Angus. They consume less feed in the same time period, with the gain they do put on going directly to fat. Calving is generally easier, as Wagyu calves are smaller than other newborn bovines.

Tri-Star Farm practises rotational grazing, moving the herd weekly to greener pastures as each field gets grazed down. The family installed underground piping and water bowls in the fields. They purchase second-cut alfalfa as winter feed, which Eadie prefers because of its higher protein content.

This outdoor, grass-fed rotation suits the families' lifestyles, although Brian and Jo-Anne are now retired. Relatives from one of the three households fill in with the chores when another one must be away from the farm, said Eadie.

The arrangement enables Eadie to associate with the regional farm community, notably as a 4-H leader with the Brant 4-H Cattle and Tractor Clubs. He also hosted a Wagyu farm tour for the 4-H Clover Buds last summer.

"The kids have a lot of fun with them."

Tri-Star Farm exhibited their cattle at the Paris Fair during several summers, including two Wagyu in 2023. Their "veteran" show cow – Molly, a 13-year old Charolais-Hereford cross that Kate exhibited in her youth -- is still bred to the bull and hangs out with the herd and the resident donkey.

"I enjoy the Wagyu," said Eadie. "However, for me, it's not a business but a hobby." 🌿



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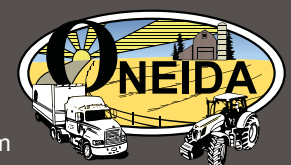


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# Chance foray into Brant 4-H Beef Club leads youth into a vibrant showmanship career

Ten years after showing his first Brant 4-H heifer, Jackson Corner, 19, of Edgewater Farm is so impassioned about cattle; he now professionally exhibits other farms' cattle in addition to his own.

The second-year Animal Science student at the University of Guelph manages purchased cattle of various breeds, from Simmental to Angus, including those from other farmers who want to show their stock. Corner and his bovines exhibit at many regional fairs and competitions, from local events such as the Paris, Caledonia, Ancaster and Binbrook Fairs to the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

"It's a vocation. I run the business myself. I manage the cattle and make all of the decisions and I crunch the numbers," said Corner. Tasks include maintaining pedigrees and managing a breeding program with artificial insemination and embryo transfers, ensuring that his cattle enter beef shows with 'good numbers.'

Because Corner is currently only home from Guelph on weekends and holidays, he relies upon his family's assistance on their Caledonia-area farm, located near the Brant-Haldimand border and Six Nations. His grandfather, Reeford Corner, nurtures the cattle on weekdays. Parents John and Kim, sisters Lauren and Brooke, and girlfriend Morgan McIntyre provide support



**Jackson Corner of Edgewater Farm has shown cattle across this region since age nine.**

while showing cattle under the Edgewater Farm name.

Corner's shop has a wall of banners to show his exhibition triumphs and cattle savvy.

These include his "biggest accomplishment in 2022", all of which involved the 100th Royal Agricultural Winter Fair with a black

**Please turn to page 7 →**



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and white Simmental-Angus heifer named TSF/DLS Miss Magnolia J41 or "Mags". She became the Champion Crossbred Heifer at the Master Feeds National Junior Beef Heifer Show. Mags then became the Grand Champion Percentage Female in the National Simmental Show, while Corner won the Reserve Intermediate Showmanship Award.

"Mags now resides at Edgewater Farm producing the next generation of show cattle for us. She already had her second calf," said Corner.

“  
 Corner's shop  
 has a wall of  
 banners to show  
 his exhibition  
 triumphs and  
 cattle savvy.



After becoming the Grand Champion Market Animal at the Rockton 4-H Finale Show & Sale in 2023, "Drake" sold for a record of \$11.25/lb.

With Corner and his sisters, Edgewater Farm has been in the family for six generations, but Corner said that his parents did not move to the site until 2018. The family did not raise cattle until 2015, beginning with two cows. The herd increased to 30 cow-calf

pairs by the time of Corner's departure to Guelph, upon which the family sold 15 cattle.

Corner said that the farm calved out eight cows this year to date; he currently manages approximately five cattle for other farmers or "partners", preparing them at Edgewater Farm, showing them and returning the cattle to the owners' herds after the expositions.

Edgewater Farm grows their hay on approximately 50 acres and rotate their cattle on

another 35 acres of pasture. They purchase additional feed for the show cattle purchased from a local farm supplier.

Corner's cattle-love emerged at age nine, when he and Brooke, then 11, explored potential clubs to join at the Brant 4-H Rally at the Paris Fairgrounds. Beef Club leader Ron Eadie, along with encouragement from his dad, enticed him to sign up.

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"I just said, 'Oh. Sure.'"

He got hooked with his first heifer at the Paris Fair. Mentoring him over the years were John and Tyler Nostadt of Maidstone, Ontario.

"I enjoy connecting and networking with others in the industry, making contacts with like-minded people. I enjoy educating the public at the fairs as there are people who are unaware of the whole beef industry."

Corner derives additional pleasure from the hands-on preparation of cattle for shows, both on the farm and at the show ring, especially the washing and grooming. "They really appreciate being rinsed on hot days!" he laughed.

This youth developed a routine "show season" with competitions occurring approximately one a month from early spring to the Royal, excepting a pause in May.

Corner's most recent win happened at the Spring 4Ward Junior Beef Event, held at the Ancaster Fairgrounds in March. Organized by six representatives from the Ontario beef industry, Corner said that approximately 200 cattle were shown this year.

His latest champion at Ancaster is Phyllis, officially known as REIB Phyllis 336, who became the Spring 4Ward's Champion Angus Female, Grand Champion Overall and the show's Supreme Animal.

The 4-H Finale Show and Sale at the Rockton World's Fair provides additional banners for Corner's wall. Last year's event, held during the Thanksgiving weekend, saw his steer, Drake win the Grand Champion Market; Drake sold for a record of \$11.25 per pound to the Burger Barn at Six Nations. "Our family



**This Black Angus heifer, nicknamed Phyllis, won three classes at the March, 2024 Spring 4Ward Junior Beef Show in Ancaster, including Supreme Animal of the Show.**

won over three consecutive years. I am grateful that Burger Barn purchases my winners."

"I am really, really passionate about this business now, of the showing and managing the cattle," said Corner. "My whole life revolves around showing cattle, compared with others my age who like sports such as hockey. You can say that cattle are my sport."

Corner gives back to this show circuit. Besides 4-H, he is involved in the Ontario Junior Angus Association, is president of the Ontario Young Canadian Simmental Association;

Youth Leader and a member of the Hamilton-Wentworth Beef Club; Junior Director on the Ancaster Agricultural Society board of directors; treasurer of the OAC Judging Team at the University of Guelph, and a member of the OAC Beef Science Club. He is also owner and practitioner at JC MagnaWave PEMF Therapy.

While he is unsure of how life will be like outside of beef, Corner intends to stay in this business in both his personal and working lives after graduating from Guelph. 🌱



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## Nominate an **agri-awesome business today** for the 2024 Salute to Brant business awards!

The County of Brant **Salute to Brant** business event honours local businesses who are leading the way in their industries. Nominations for the 2024 **Salute to Brant Business Awards** are now open and will close on May 31, 2024.

Join us in celebrating the agricultural sector in the County of Brant by nominating a local agriculture business or a business that directly supports the agriculture sector for the **Brant Farms for All Agricultural Award**.

Celebrate the business of growing by showing your support and taking the time to submit a nomination for a local Agri-awesome business! Self-nominations are also encouraged.

## Save the **Date!**

Mark your calendars for this year's Salute to Brant Business event, which brings together leaders within the local business community, elected officials, community influencers, and various industry experts to celebrate the progress and achievements of business in the County of Brant, and share industry insights.

**Date:** Thursday, September 26

**Time:** 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm

**Where:** TF Warren Group Cainsville Community Centre, 15 Ewart Avenue, Cainsville

Visit [brant.ca/Salute](https://brant.ca/Salute) to nominate a business today!

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## Awards

Our four other Salute to Brant award categories include:



### High Growth and Innovation

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### Good Times in Brant

Good Times in Brant Award: Recognizes a business or organization that is in the tourism industry, or directly supports visitation to the County of Brant while creating a positive impact on the environment and the community.

### Sustainability

Our Future Brant Sustainability Award: Recognizes a business in the County of Brant that has implemented sustainable practices into their day-to-day practices.

### NEW! Accessible Brant Award

New for 2024 is the Accessible Brant Award: Recognizes a business, organization, event, or program within the County of Brant business community that provides a positive contribution to preventing and removing physical barriers, providing exemplary customer service, or creating meaningful opportunities through the respectful integration of people with disabilities into the workforce.

For more information and to submit nominations, please visit [brant.ca/Salute](https://brant.ca/Salute)

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# Living the P and K's farming dream brings its share of hard-working rural reality

Living their farming dream contains a dose of hard-working rural reality for Ken Stock and Paula Martin.

"It's not easy," she smiled at their 13-acre East Oakland property. "You aren't sitting back, sipping wine and watching the sunset. There's dirty fingers, straw in your hair, sometimes you smell like a barn... and it's 365 days a year.

"But this is my dream job. And if you like what you're doing, it's not work."

CCR's 'Proud Mary' would offer appropriate musical accompaniment for the couple's decision to leave good jobs in the city, not only for dovetailing lyrics, but Stock's respect for a band turning out 100 hits in four years.

"That's a lot of work in a short period of time."

He and Martin have been similarly challenged since purchasing their farm in 2017, following an extensive two-year search. Having found that elusive rural opportunity, they found themselves challenged with just exactly what to do with it to make it pay.

"Paula's love of animals made me realize we wouldn't be growing carrots," smiled Stock.

Under her direction, the farm produces 'fantastic meat,' he says, the result of transparent, natural process. 'Everything outdoors, everything on grass, a high quality of life for



Paula Martin happily shows off a newborn lamb at P and K's Farm 'east Oakland' location.

the animals,' in a sustainable, family-owned and run operation.

"We try and keep it as natural as possible," says Martin.

P and Ks Farm (on Facebook and Instagram, email via PandKsFarm@gmail.com) began with chickens, their initial test flock an unqualified success.

"We thought if everything tastes half this good, we're going to be OK," said Stock.

Martin subsequently has extended the farm's poultry meat and egg options to include turkeys, ducks, geese and guinea hens, who are particularly secretive about nesting locations.

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"If you can find them and break through the shell, their eggs are delicious too," said Stock.

P and K goose eggs are also sourced by an area craftsman to create Pysanky eggs (also known as Ukrainian Easter eggs).

"They're the most ornate, amazing things you'll ever see."

The couple offers pork products including bacon and sausage as well as goat and lamb, a lineup which by intention fits into a niche no one else in the area was filling, avoiding for example, grass-fed beef.

"We're not trying to battle it out with our neighbours over sales," Stock explained. "Peasant farmers," he added with a smile. "We live off the land and barter if we have extra."

Offsetting the constant requirement to stay on top of things, enough feed, enough water, fencing that's working as it should, Martin has found learning to deal with animals on her own, animal husbandry and care, related fulfillment of her childhood dream to become a veterinarian.

"I get 90 per cent of it," she said. "It's the next best thing."

Their unique residential choice has been developing in conjunction with their agri-business. The property was chosen for an op-

portunity to ultimately construct an earthship, a radically-sustainable residential structure utilizing materials normally destined for a landfill.

In very basic terms, earthships use recycled tires pounded full of earth as exterior walls. Their solar potential is maximized by large banks of windows in their south-facing wall, energy retained through berming the rear wall, incorporating thermal mass into their interior and adequate insulation. Earthships absorb heat during the day, releasing it slowly during the evening hours, requiring very little additional heating during the winter months while also moderating summer temperatures.

Typically, they are off-the-grid solar or other renewably-powered structures which harvest and store rainwater, adding to their environmental and financial efficiency.

The brainchild of visionary architect Michael Reynolds, Martin and Stock's earthship construction was inspired by and is being overseen by earthship-dwelling Clear Creek resident Craig Cook with support from wife Connie, and a committed cadre of volunteers.



**Earthship construction is labour intensive, but Ken Stock hopes the capital cost of their radically-sustainable 1,800-square-foot residential structure will be in the \$100,000 range.**

An earthship's construction is labour-intensive, however they are far cheaper in terms of material costs and subsequent living expenses.

Stock estimates their 1,800-square-foot earthship's required capital expenditures in the neighbourhood of \$100,000, a far different number to pencil into an extended financial equation than a contemporary conventional unit.

"So if we are careful with our money and farm efficiently, we don't need million-dollar sales."

They do need to commit to a pile of work, not to mention the stress of combining construction of their earthship with development of their agri-business.

"But when you step back, things are great," said Stock. "As Paula says, 'There's no time to be sad, we're too busy.'"

Martin would also 'not change things.' Farming does include more than its share of days when she finishes tired, sore and worn out.

"But it's been a good day." 🌱

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# Moore Farms produces more than their landmark strawberry patch

For decades, locals around Ayr and Paris associated Moore Farms with strawberries. Their roadside strawberry field, located just off Pinehurst Road near the Pinehurst Conservation Area, became the go-to place for picked and pick-your-own (PYO) strawberries.

This seasonal crop remains a strong feature of the farm. But these berries only constitute a fraction of the farm's total production.

The current fourth and fifth generations of Moore – consisting of Nancy, husband Alan and son Ethan -- grow feed grain, hay and cash crop soybeans on 1000 acres of owned and rented land. They raise a small herd of Texas Longhorns and finish off locally-purchased Black Angus stock.



**Nancy Moore with top farm store employee, Daisy**



**The Longhorns stay at the home farm, while the Black Angus herd resides in another barn.**



Then, during the pandemic, Moore Farms opened a year-round farm store that is registered with Foodland Ontario.

Their annual crop list expanded to include sweet corn, shelling peas, beans, garlic, radish, zucchini squash and PYO pumpkins.

The family sources other, in-season vegetables from area farms, mainly from Norfolk County, as well as regional products such as meats, milk, eggs, milled flour, blueberries, baking, coffee, hazel nuts and gluten-free products.

The Moores divide the work load. Alan and Ethan handle the crops and livestock; Nancy, with a Scotland-area farm upbringing and 20 years of retail and management experience at Staples, tackles the marketing.

Their webpage states that Moore Farms – a Century Farm—has grown hay and feed grain since 1916. “We use the no-till farming method which we have adapted to our produce crops to help suppress weeds and keep our soil healthy,” it states.

This no-till adaption includes strip tillage between the vegetable rows, only tilling within a six to eight inch strip of soil between the seedbeds, said Ethan. “Vegetable seeds are not as vigorous as grain seeds. They require more optimal seed beds than grain crops.”

The retail expansion morphed from a “pandemic contact list” which Nancy created

in order to sell food boxes online when the pandemic froze on-farm sales. Demand increased by word of mouth, social media, and Moore’s location on Pinehurst Road, which is a primary Brantford-to-Kitchener commuter route.

The family poured a cement floor in 2020 to create an open-air sales shed, enclosing it in 2022. They continue to add product, including meal bundles that can be ordered online. And family members deliver to customers within a 30-kilometre radius.

Nancy rents a certified kitchen at a Paris church to create value-added products such as relishes, soups and prepared meals. Some recipes hail from Alan’s great-grandmother’s recipe box, since as “Marcella Moore’s Baked Beans.”

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**The Moores keep their Texas Longhorns herd near the farm store as an attraction**

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“People see the value,” said Nancy. “People are busy and these are prepared meals. They know that the ingredients come from here as much as possible; or else we use regional items, such as artisanal parmesan cheese. It’s not packaged foods that sat in a grocery chain warehouse.”

They have some staff, including a trained chef who assists in preparing the frozen meals, and use a social media professional in Ayr to handle publicity. While the family traditionally hires local, seasonal labour to weed and pick crops, they have begun to bring in two overseas workers to help out.

There is also the closer retailer-customer relations: Nancy broke off the conversation with Brant Farms several times to assist customers, all of whom she addressed by name. They are often greeted by the farm dog; Daisy, who she called “our most valued employee!”

James Robert Moore founded Moore Farms, immigrating by train from Michigan in 1916. (The family still has Moore’s original Detroit-Ayr trunk tag.) His son, Murray, married Marcella, whose recipe box remains in use.

Murray and Marcella’s son, Lloyd, began the strawberry production approximately 35 years ago; first by renting out the acreage to another grower; then taking over the roadside attraction two years later. Alan and then Ethan subsequently nurture this crop, which occupies six acres in rotation.

“That was 35 years ago,” said Ethan, 33. “The strawberries were always there for me.”

Ethan likes the convenience of their beef arrangement. By restricting the Black Angus



**Moore raises Texas Longhorns for their ultra-lean beef**

herd to only finishing stock, Ethan finds it easier to manage the two herds’ ration requirements, due to the more specific feed requirements of bred cows, who calve in the spring.

“Black Angus is a good quality meat that everybody eats,” said Ethan. But he appreciates the Texas Longhorns which he began with six head, including a bred cow, in 2020.

“It’s super easy for a Longhorn cow to drop a calf. In the past, our family had 300 stocker calves but no calving experience. Texas Long-

horns are easy calvers – they have a low birth weight and maintain good body health.”

Moore said that Longhorns evolved as a scrubland species that originated in Spain. They produce leaner meat whose lower saturated fat and calories are akin to those in bison. “It was something different to bring in.”

The Longhorns stay at the home farm, while the Black Angus herd resides in another barn. “Customers love to see the Longhorns,” said Nancy, grinning. 🌱

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# Van Laeken Family Farm of Falkland provides an at-home farm presence in downtown Paris

Michelle and Vince Van Laeken of Van Laeken Family Farm never planted their first crop until spring, 2020. But they quickly became one of the best-known faces for local agriculture in Paris.

The couple retail vegetables year-round at the Wincey Mills Marketplace, a trendy, 135-year old building in downtown Paris. Much of it comes from their own fields in Falkland, although they retail other food, prioritizing area producers. They willingly discuss the produce's origin and gardening tips with their customers, even sharing their experiences on on-line videos.

Market gardening is a new enterprise, but both know about farm routines.

Michelle's parents, Hilda and John Schwager, grew tobacco north of Delhi. Vince's Norwich Township family didn't farm, but his cousins did – mainly dairy – he laboured on them during his youth. "And of course, I worked in tobacco in the summers," he added.

After high school, Michelle obtained diplomas in business from Georgian College and then in Early Childhood Care from Mohawk College, settling into positions at YMCAs in Hamilton and Brantford. Vince studied Chemical Engineering Technology at Mohawk prior to landing his current job of 14 years at Petro Canada Lubricants in Mississauga.

Despite living within kilometers of each other, they met online, and were surprised to discover while dating that they attended identical community events during their youth. They married in 2015, intending to live out their values of country living and growing food.

But they initially settled in Paris, in 2016, "just before housing prices skyrocketed," said VanLaeken.

Their quest for an arable acreage led them to their 14-acre property in Falkland in autumn, 2019. It was a former equine

hobby farm with six or seven acres of pasture and fields, plus outbuildings and bush. Moreover, it was an hour's drive from Vince's job in Mississauga, where he rearranged his schedule to enable him to farm. He became the primary grower, while Michelle left the YMCA to handle sales.

With help from some farming neighbours and relatives the Van Laekens eagerly cultivated enough land to plant multiple vegetable varieties for their first crop in 2020.

That was one of their first mistakes, said Michelle. "In Year One, we did a bit of everything. We planted one of everything. It was a disaster --we didn't have enough experience, equipment and time."

"In the following year, we chose crops that required similar equipment. We learned, for example, that onions aren't our friends because they wouldn't root. We kept what grows well and what people want, like garlic and beans. We've decreased eggplant as it doesn't sell well."

The Van Laekens discontinued a sideline of raising chickens for retail, citing its labour and feed costs.

The couple sold their first harvest at a roadside stand, and at a trailer park in Gobles. Next, they attended farmers' markets in Ancaster, Ayr and the Sunday Outside Market at the Wincey Mills.

But market stands were not a long-term goal. Michelle found it cumbersome setting up tables, and hauling crates when Vince was in Mississauga. So when an opening came up for a year-round stall inside the Wincey Mills in 2022, the Van Laekens grabbed it.

"We had an established customer base. We received customer feedback about the lack of a farm market in Paris. At that point, we were only selling our own produce."

Four months later they expanded into a double stall that

“**But they initially settled in Paris, in 2016, “just before housing prices skyrocketed,” said VanLaeken.**”



Vince and Michelle Van Laeken appreciate their stand at the Wincey Mills.

included minor kitchen facilities; it enabled Michelle to add salads, cut veggies, salad dressings, and hummus made on site. They began selling other in-sea-

son produce, milk, jams, haskap juice, micro greens, honey and other items from local farms,

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Pictured, from left, Nieces Bryn, Ali and Carleigh Pasichnyk live the "Family" in Van Laeken Family Farm.

and the Ontario Food Terminal. They added some tropical fruit due to customer demand.

Van Laeken Family Farm grows food "as naturally as we can," said Vince. His research into "sustainable" or "regenerative farming" kept input costs down as much as possible. "There are organic products to control insect populations, but its' too expensive to spray."

Instead, Van Laeken uses methods such as companion planting. They eliminate crops

with known pests; for example, they purchase local leeks because the plant's specific pest, the leek moth, will migrate to garlic.

The farm utilizes drip lines sunk under plastic mulch for targeted watering, often at night to avoid root burn during heat waves.

Van Laeken Family farm upped garlic production this season: Vince planted 80,000 cloves, both in Falkand and on a relative's farm in Norwich Township. This includes

black garlic and varieties that the couple hopes to process into salts.

On farm fruit production may begin this spring with rhubarb from a recently-restored patch and berries from 100 raspberry canes gifted by Michelle's aunt. Also, Van Laeken custom plants specialty produce such as San Marzano tomatoes and hot peppers requested by area restaurateurs.

"We listen to what people are asking for and we are doing well. Sometimes we're scrambling around, especially Vincent," said Michelle.

The couple hired part time staff for the market, giving Michelle time to tend to the home, their dog, two cats and the increasing paperwork.

Their efforts pay off, as their crop sales rose significantly each season, independently of stand profits. "And we were over the moon in the first year when we had \$1,000!" said Michelle.

Still, Vince is keeping his day job for now.

The Van Laekens appreciate their sales venue. "We're not wholesaling our produce for cheap and we get full price for the food, although we buy wholesale from other farms," said Vince.

Van Laeken is seeking a commercial kitchen to add value-added meals. "It's part of our sustainability ethic. B-grade vegetables can be processed. We avoid food waste. If we buy a case of food and we only need half, we can compost the balance, but we can make stuff," said Michelle. "Besides, I love cooking and baking!" 🌱



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# Garlic Growers Association of Ontario hosting annual Field Day

*Event to offer inside look at Van Raay Farms Ltd., one of Ontario's largest garlic growing operations*

June 1 is an important date on the Garlic Growers Association of Ontario's calendar; that's when Field Day will take place.

The event is a key component in strengthening the province's garlic growing mettle in a world market that has a lot of opportunity for those who are willing to take on the challenge.

Joann Chechalk, president of the association, explained that Field Day is an opportunity for collaborative and hands-on learning.

Planning for Field Day actually starts a year in advance. That's because once a farm is confirmed to be the venue for the next installment of the event, staff from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) will plant a plot of garlic there.

"In that plot, we put in a number of varieties of garlic that we know are going to be popular with growers across Ontario," Chechalk said. The plot is tended through the subsequent year by staff and volunteers with OMAFRA.

Then, on the day of, OMAFRA staff will be on hand to show garlic growers – and those who are thinking of getting into it – the plot and the different varieties therein.

It's also a chance for guests to see how the host farm runs their operation, from field to post-harvest production.

This year, Van Raays Farms Ltd. just outside of Grand Bend will be hosting the event; it will be the second time in almost ten years.

Since Field Day happens on June 1, before the garlic starts getting harvested in July, "All of the growers get to look at, feel, see and touch the garlic equipment, because it's not (yet) in operation."

The day will also include presentations by industry experts, who are able to share their professional opinions on topics like virus resistance, clean seed, etc. based on their academically sponsored and backed research.

Chechalk noted that over the years, the topics have had to shift to keep up with the new challenges that growers are facing, "With global warming and all the rest of the stuff, you do have new issues that we didn't have 20 years ago."

Right now, a big focus for many is looking at how to extend the post harvest storage life of Ontario garlic.

Chechalk said this is particularly important as more and more processors look at incorporating Canadian garlic into their products, such as dill pickles, garlic butters, sauces, etc. There's also a growing demand from consumers who want to buy locally-grown garlic, rather than buying imports.

"It's becoming more and more important that we are able to extend the garlic season from one harvest to the next," she said.

"Even with the number of growers that we've increased over the past number of



**Dean Van Raay with Van Raay Farms Ltd. will be hosting the annual Field Day this year.**

years, there is still a market that we could fill, because the imported garlic ... does not compare to Ontario garlic."

Chechalk said demand for garlic is growing in Canada, particularly as more people immigrate here and interest in international cuisine – where garlic is ubiquitous – grows.

"Garlic is the number one product that you put in to enhance these meals," Chechalk said.

She noted that part of her work with the association includes looking at different recipes, and aside from things like dessert, "I have yet to find a recipe in the books that I have looked through that doesn't have garlic."

Besides being a popular flavour, research reports show that garlic may also offer some great health benefits, such as helping with lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

"I know my own grandmother used to eat a clove of garlic when she had a cold, and that was her way of fighting influenza. Is that a factor? I don't know, but she lived to be 90," Chechalk said.

She's also seen firsthand the popularity of garlic at her own Chausser's Farms farm

gate sales, where it's common to have customers order 100-pound bags of garlic.

While there is a lot of opportunity in the Canadian garlic growing market, Chechalk does offer some words of caution to those who are thinking of jumping in.

"It's not the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow; it's expensive to grow," she said. There's also a lot of hands-on work involved.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, she saw plenty of people decide to start growing garlic.

"Many of them spent a lot of money on equipment, but it became so overwhelming," that they had to quit soon after, Chechalk said.

That's why Field Day is a great opportunity for those who are looking at getting started in garlic growing; they can see and hear firsthand what's involved, and what some of the challenges are.

However, it's important to note that Field Day isn't an all-inclusive 'Learn how to grow garlic' event, Chechalk said; rather, it's more a way for existing growers to learn how they can improve their practices, better modify their equipment, etc.

Chechalk said for those who are looking for more of an instructional how-to grow



garlic day, the association, in concert with OMAFRA, does periodically offer one-day workshops. Participants go home with a workbook that gives them step-by-step instruction, key information, and tips on how to address some of the most common issues.

Besides fostering collaboration and information sharing between garlic growers through things like Field Day events, the association also offers its Clean Seed Program, in partnership with OMAFRA and the University of Guelph.

Through the program, garlic seeds are processed over the course of several years to make them more resilient to things like viruses and pathogens, so that in the end, they can proliferate into healthier, heartier crops.

"I can't overstate how important the ... Clean Seed Program is," to improving Ontario's garlic crops overall, Chechalk said. Demand for clean seeds through the program is always high, but the association makes sure that all of the members who want to get some are able to each year.

“Garlic is the number one product that you put in to enhance these meals,” Chechalk said.

Chechalk hopes that Field Day will once again serve as an inspiration and motivation for Ontario's garlic growers, and will help them do what they do best even better.

While there will always be challenges – with things like weather, labour, and market – she said it's ultimately worth it.

"(There's) a great opportunity for (Ontario farmers) to feed Canadians with Canadian products," in garlic, Chechalk said.

More and more, consumers are experiencing Ontario garlic for themselves, and discovering "the difference in flavour. You might use that whole bag (of offshore garlic) and not have nearly the flavour that one or two cloves of Ontario garlic would give you," Chechalk said.

Tickets for Field Day are available for purchase now. To register, or for more information about the association and/ or the Clean Seed Program, visit [garlicgrowersofontario.com](http://garlicgrowersofontario.com), or email [garlicgrowersofontario@gmail.com](mailto:garlicgrowersofontario@gmail.com)



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*How Brantview Apples & Cider Has Blossomed Over The Centuries*

If only Isaac Howell, an apple farmer by trade, could see his farm now. Awarded the land in return for his services in the war of 1812, Howell knew that the climate and soil would be ideal for apple production. Leap forward almost two centuries to the 1980s when seventh generation Jay, and his wife Linda, purchased the farm from Jay's grandparents which, at the time, was a mixture of cash crop, beef cattle, and apple production, and the farm so many love to visit today for U-pick, Hard Cider, and special events was born. In 1995, the pair made the decision to

focus solely on expanding the orchard while simultaneously beginning to venture into the retail world by attending GTA area farmers markets with the dream of expanding the home farm market. In 2007, the family opened the Apple U-pick, and, in 2010, a larger retail space was built. The joy of opening their farm to the public birthed bigger dreams: Although the farm had always



***Melissa became the venue coordinator, very much enjoying working with prospective couples to host their special moments.***



produced award winning Fresh Apple Cider (most recently winning the 2023 & 2024 title of "Ontario's Best Sweet Cider"), they have added sparkling Apple Juice, Apple Butter, Apple Butter Barbeque Sauce, English Style Apple Mustard, Apple Jelly, Apple Marmalade, and Apple Cider Vinegar to their market shelves.

Growth, both on the trees and for the business, was inevitable with Linda's retirement from teaching, as an on-farm bakery was added which treats visitors to Apple Cider Donuts, a variety of pies, galettes and butter



tarts, supplied with the very core ingredient by the farm's own 16,000 apple and pear trees.

As time went on, the 8th generation started to take a keen interest in the business. Melissa, Jen and Dan have always been involved on the farm, but when Jen completed her degree, she decided she wanted to make Hard Cider, taking courses and obtaining experience in the business before starting Howell Road Cider Company. The small batch cidery focusses on off-dry cider. Jen produces Flagship on a year-round basis and enjoys creating seasonals from fermenting various fruits with apples only from their orchards.

Customers, coming for the apples but staying for the beauty, were expressing interest in holding events at the farm, so, in Howell family style of staying abreast to customer needs, Brantview Events Pavilion was constructed in 2016. Melissa became the venue coordinator, very much enjoying working with prospective couples to host their special moments in their multi-purpose

events space which can host a maximum of 140 guests and operates from the end of May through Labour Day weekend.

Alongside completing his architecture journey, Dan created labels for the hard cider, developed the website, and created plans of the building of the events pavilion.

With three full time and twenty part-time employees, the need to find ways to stay sustainable is a focus for the Howell's. Both the alcoholic cider production and scratch bakery areas are growing, and plans have begun for the construction of greater spaces to continue expansion in these arenas.

From a farming standpoint, annual planting of the most popular as well as test varieties ensure customer preferences are maximized. Weather is always a major consideration on any farm, and Brantview is no exception: late frosts eliminated their entire crop in the spring of 2012, and an over or under abundance of rain has considerable effects on the taste and size of the produce.

***Please turn to page 19 →***







Staying on top of pest control is also a farming challenge, as new pests keep on finding themselves on Canadian soil. Since 1987, though, the farm has been involved with The Integrated Pest Management, a program that emphasizes best management practices in the orchard. This means that the crop input decisions are made using IPM endorsed products and rates that are regulated by the federal government, so that pest populations are monitored weekly ensuring that their apples are grown in an environmentally safe manner.

The Howell's report that finding trainable workers for their specific kind of hand labour intensive work tends to be an ongoing challenge, as does the rising fuel, equipment and labour input costs, but they forge ahead, planting over 1200 trees this spring with the anticipation of a busy fall.

The farm is open from September 1st through to October 31st every day, and remains open November 1- August 31 on Saturdays. Most Sundays during their apple season, Pints in the Pavillion features live music and

food on the farm, while the cider is pressed weekly year-round. During the off-season, between four and six varieties of apples are available at Guelph Farmers Market every Saturday all year long and at the Dundas Farmers Market mid-June until mid-October. They also annually attend St. George AppleFest, which is something to plan on attending the third weekend of September. They also host "Bark-Toberfest" at the farm the third Sunday of October. "With each special event," adds Linda, "the response from our community is overwhelming." "The support of locals is awesome" continues Linda. "Throughout the year our neighbours and locals from all of Brant County and the Greater Toronto Area support the store." When asked what has provided inspiration, the reply was a simple one: "Happy repeat customers". Educating the public about their trade, not surprisingly for a family with more than one teacher, has also been a source of joy. You can join the many who learn from and enjoy the plethora of items produced by this local farming family

by visiting their beautiful generational farm: [www.brantviewapples.ca](http://www.brantviewapples.ca).

**Howell Family Favourite Apple Recipe**

Apple Crisp

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees.

5 – 6 cups of sliced Brantview Farm apples – fill your 8x8 dish

In a bowl mix

2/3 cup sugar

1/3 cup flour

¼ - ½ - 1 teaspoon cinnamon – depending on personal taste

Blend in 1/3 cup butter or margarine – use a pastry cutter or hands to combine

Then add ¾ cup rolled oats. Mix and leave loose.

Cover the apples in the dish with the topping

Bake 45 minutes – 1 hour until apples are soft ( different variety of apples cook at different rates).

Do not hesitate to double the recipe and make a large dish. 🍏



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# Ontario Garlic Growers Pressing On

*Despite A Difficult Harvest & Storage Season, Demand For Ontario Garlic Increases*

Weather patterns did not cooperate for the Ontario garlic farmer in 2023. Rains came during harvest season and didn't come when needed during garlic sizing. Drying and curing had to be done expediently and climate and humidity controlled storage to maintain crop quality became invaluable. This is becoming the new normal for the Ontario garlic grower, who is having to switch from simply hanging their crop to dry, to more aggressive installation of fans for quicker drying to prevent pests from damaging their post-harvest yields.

Garlic being one of the more tricky crops overall, coupled with the challenges of the past year, has discouraged many small growers, but demand for the quality garlic

produced in Ontario continues to grow, so larger growers have expanded their acreage dramatically; some of the biggest are now growing 75 to 125 acres and many small growers have been increasing from half an acre to three or even five acres growing the bulbous plant.

Virtually all garlic grown in Ontario is also consumed in the province, and there is still room for more, because demand continues to rise as a direct result of consumers increasingly seeking out Ontario grown produce. Those considering getting into garlic production should know that growing more than a quarter acre will require equipment. It is also strongly recommended that those interested take the course OMAFRA offers

about growing garlic. Additionally, a membership with the Garlic Growers Association of Ontario (GGAO), the provincial organization which represents retail and wholesale garlic growers, affords members a number of meetings throughout the year with information sharing about new methods and news, and includes their annual field day where growers learn to do by doing on a garlic farm each June. "Hands on experience is your best friend" says GGAO President Joann Chechalk, "and having knowledgeable resources in the technical staff at OMAFRA. In addition to having an organization like GGAO which gets growers to the right people or people to the growers that deal with real research and experience are invaluable to all growers big or small."

For those not ready to grow your own, keep insisting on quality Ontario Grown garlic, as health benefits abound, and the industry is grateful. 🌱



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# Herbs, Agri-Tourism and Community Activism Grounds Heart's Content Organic Farm with Land and Community

Anyone interested in growing organic herbs or starting a "farmstay" should contact Richard Tunstall and Ella Haley of Heart's Content Organic Farm on Ronald Road (off Jerseyville Road). These income-generators form part of their community education on creating sustainable farm communities.

Straddling the Brant-Hamilton border, owners Ella Haley and Richard Tunstall, bought the farm from Haley's parents. They began farming it in 2006.

**“Guests can learn about poultry care, cultivating medical and edible plants, making salves and lip balm, and the farm's conservation practices.”**

Haley, who's an adjunct professor in Sociology of Environment and Health at Athabasca University, is a fourth-generation farmer in Langford and sixth generation in Brant – the original Haleys settled around Alberton and Cainsville during the 1840s.

The couple previously lived in Alberta, returning in 2005 when Haley's parents presented health issues. "Ella missed her parents, the farm and Brant County," said Tunstall. "Ella was able to teach online at a distance and we could help to care for her parents."

Tunstall, a retired naturopathic doctor, said that they started with a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), selling presold "shares."

"The CSA model is a convenient way to market produce," said Tunstall. "It reduces waste because the farmer only harvests what is already sold, and provides customers with fresh weekly produce. We ran the CSA for 14



**Ella Haley and Richard Tunstall built this shelter on the Brantford-Dundas Rail Trail which bisects their farm**

years, and then transitioned to growing and drying herbs and conservation –restoring wetlands, planting pollinators and creating shelter belts with native trees and shrubs."

They also sold vegetables at the Brantford, Dundas, Ancaster and Paris Farmers' Markets, the latter two of which Tunstall helped to create.

"Our farm is in an ideal location," said Haley. "It is agricultural, yet close to urban centres."

The land had been farmed conventionally farmed when they bought it. They transitioned it to organic by growing hay, with a nurse crop of oats. They grew hay to feed their Belgian work horses, which they used to cultivate the crops, and a few sheep and donkeys, selling the surplus bales.

Heart's Content herb inventory includes oregano, sage, thyme, lovage, calendula, lemon balm, anise hyssop and lavender. Wild crafted herbs on the farm include sunchokes, motherwort, and grape leaves which are dried naturally. They also grow berries, hazelnuts and walnuts for their own consumption.

"We sell our herbs to herbal companies such as St. Francis Herb Farm, and privately online including value added products such as salves and lip balms," said Haley.

The Dundas-Brantford Rail Trail bisects their farm, thereby complementing their agri-tourism vision. Tunstall and Haley offer two glamping huts and two camping sites with a common shelter and access to a solar hot water shower.

**Please turn to page 23 →**



**Richard Tunstall hanging lavender to dry.**



**Richard Tunstall with his electric tractor and cultivator bar**





**Heart's Content participates in the annual Environment Hamilton Farm Crawl**

"We also host farmstay accommodation for those wishing to experience a more sustainable way of living," said Haley. We offer medicinal and herbal plant walks to inform people about the value of some commonly found plants in our area. We participate in the Hamilton Farm Crawl annually."

Registered with airbnb, the farmstay evolved after the couple moved a second house onto the farm in 2007. They created several farmstay units in the original farmhouse; it also accommodates students and young adults interested in learning about organic farming.

Guests can learn about poultry care, cultivating medical and edible plants, making salves and lip balm, and the farm's conservation practices.

Tunstall delights in his tractor. "We're trying to make a conscious effort to reduce our carbon footprint. We loved working the land with our Belgian horses, but now that they've passed on, we switched to using a hand-built electric tractor for cultivating. We try to charge it from our solar panels, making it a solar tractor."

"We are off grid but still need to access hydro when our solar system can't provide enough electricity during cloudy periods. We salvage food waste for compost and chicken feed," added Tunstall. "Our farm is an ideal rest stop for trail users and those wanting to experience farm life."

County residents know Haley and Tunstall for their public education efforts about the importance of protecting farmland, working through Sustainable/Better Brant which they co-founded.

"We research and advocate for best practices to protect farmland, natural heritage and water in Brant County and throughout the Grand River Watershed," said Haley.

Concurrently, they co-founded a non-profit called the Langford Conservancy. Purchasing the former Langford Schoolhouse from Brant County, the conservancy serves as a community hub with a certified kitchen. The site hosts work-

shops on food preparation, land preservation and transitioning farmland.

Tunstall and Haley upgraded the schoolhouse to make it carbon neutral through the addition of solar panels and a heat pump with a back up electric furnace.

"We work to foster a welcoming, inclusive sustainable farming community, to protect migrant workers and also to help new farmers access land. We welcome bike donations which we get tuned up and distributed to migrant farm workers," said Haley.

There's a family history with land preservation, said Haley. Her mother, Margaret, put a conservation easement on the

back of her farm to preserve habitat for birds and native flowers prior to her death. The Ontario Farmland Trust did the legal legwork. 🌱

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# Building maple syrup-boiling stoves a barrel of fun for Brantford 'urban farmer'

Building entry-level maple syrup boiling stoves has provided Brantford's Ben Brown with a barrel of enjoyment.

"It's been a really cool experience," said the 'urban farming' resident of Eagle Place.

Brown came to stove construction ob- tuse, introduced to the concept of maple syrup making in 2023 by his brother's at the time, new girlfriend from Waterford. Visiting during Christmas celebrations, she inquired how much syrup Ben and spouse Kelly got off the massive maple tree in their side yard?

"She goes, 'You should tap that tree,'" Ben recalled.

His curiosity piqued, Ben discovered barrel stoves during subsequent online research.

"It seems like a really common practice."

Essentially speaking, 50-gallon steel barrels can be modified into maple syrup-boiling stoves with the addition of legs, a chimney on one end, door in the other and a pan or pans on top. A hobbyist who's also handy - Ben and Kelly are independent general and commercial contractors specializing in sign installation for large retail chains - Brown got to work. He ordered and then assembled the required parts, cutting openings with a grinder and adding twin top-mounted 20-by-12-inch commercial stainless steel steam trays.

He ended up with an operational unit boasting an estimated boiling capacity of three to four litres of sap per hour, a rate Brown's convinced could be elevated with the addition of fire brick and a blower.

"I'm sure you could take it to the next level."

The Browns have expanded their taps to 15, three on their home tree as well as an additional five in Brantford. Kelly's dad Brian Knott, who loves both boiling and eating syrup, imports sap from seven Norfolk County-based taps. They produce several litres annually under the Knotty-Brown Urban Farm label, good-natured homage to the nickname friends hung on them.

Avid outdoorspeople and fishers, Ben and Kelly have combined boiling syrup with cooking hot dogs and roasting marshmallows into an enjoyable family activity involving their son Owen and daughter Ashlyn.

"I think there is just that primal itch that is scratched by cooking over fire," said Ben, who is also an accomplished meat smoker.

Kelly first floated the idea of making additional barrel stoves and trying to sell them on Facebook Marketplace. Her theory was, if he was able to sell a few to other syrup

Please turn to page 25 →



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Kelly and Ben Brown stand behind a pair of wood-fired barrel stoves at their Eagle Place residence. Although designed primarily for maple syrup boiling, they are versatile units which have been put to multiple uses.



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Knotty-Brown Urban Farm maple syrup backdropped by the unit it was produced on, and a second sales stove.



boilers, Ben might be able to pay for his unit. Initially skeptical, he concedes the idea has taken off in a modest manner.

"A few dozen barrels later, we're kind of pleasantly surprised."

He's not alone in the barrel stove-making space, however is competitive. Brown considers the \$500 price point required to recoup expenses and account for a measure of his labour as 'a lot of money.' However, given many of his customers are farmers, he theorizes they're used to far greater levels of expense.

"It's the cost of doing business," Ben surmised.

Customers tend to view the barrel stoves as affordable, portable and fitting a syrup-boiling niche fitting in between purchasing even a small arch and boiling over a propane-powered turkey deep fryer.

"I've had people say they're sick of buying propane and decided they've got to burn wood," said Brown.

They also can be multi-taskers. Some replace the pans with a grill to barbecue on, Ben also understands they're good for corn or seafood boils.

"I've heard people say they reduce their tomato sauce on them. If you want to try and find another purpose for it, you can."

Customers tend to be like-minded individuals with shared values around respect for natural production.

"We've enjoyed getting to know some interesting people through the stoves," said Ben.

This year has been an interesting year for syrup producers of all sizes, early runs, A long



**Kelly and Ben Brown have found maple syrup making a rewarding outdoor hobby bridging the gap between hard (ice) and open-water fishing. Ben has also developed a modest business assembling and selling barrel stove units for others.**

pause and potentially, a late return to production. Ben hoped TO add to his running total of 30 hours of boiling, and production ultimately to be enjoyed by their family and friends.

Beyond its delicious flavour, finding enjoyment in producing their own has provided their family a good 'filler' for the period between their passion for hard (ice) and open-water

fishing. Laughing, they concede they're always looking for an opportunity 'to make busy lives more complicated.'

"We're all about hobbies," Kelly smiled.

"And being outside," Ben concluded, "we love being outside." 🍃

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# Stewart Grant joins David Douglas at Brant Farms

The look and feel of this issue of Brant Farms is much like previous editions of the publication. That's by design.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it," says Stewart Grant, new owner and publisher of Brant Farms newspaper.

Grant bought Brant Farms on January 2 from David Douglas, who founded the publication four years ago. Grant also purchased Douglas' Norfolk Farms publication, which began in 2017.

As Douglas eyed eventual retirement from the publishing industry that he has enjoyed for decades, he had put his farm newspaper business up for sale in late 2023 in the hopes of finding someone to carry on the enterprise.

Fortunately, in an industry that doesn't have many current buyers, he was able to find that someone in Stewart who is enthusiastic about continuing what David had started.

"What David has built over the past seven years with Norfolk Farms and Brant Farms is very impressive," said Stewart. "He shares the same philosophy that I do - that good readership is the success of a newspaper. And good readership comes from good content - focusing on truly local community stories that people can't get anywhere else, combined with useful information that is specific to the areas that you serve."

Over the past few years, Grant has been growing his newspaper business at a time when the industry itself has been shrinking. Although he began his career as a Chartered Accountant, he branched out into publishing in 2014 when he bought a small newspaper



**Stewart Grant**

in his hometown of St. Marys. Since then, he purchased the Tavistock Gazette in 2020 and since then has started community newspapers in New Hamburg, Stratford, Woodstock, and Goderich.

"The circumstances that led me to buying the Brant Farms newspaper are similar to when I purchased the Tavistock Gazette in 2020. Both are truly special local papers that would be dearly missed by their communities if they didn't find a new owner to carry on the tradition. In the case of Tavistock, their news-

paper had been around since 1895 and in the same family for 51 years. While Brant Farms has a much shorter history, David has similarly been able to establish a strong reputation for quality local news features."

"Having grown up on a farm, it's very exciting for me to step into publishing a farm newspaper, though I'll lean a lot on David's experience and the excellent reporting of his team of local writers. I'm glad that David has agreed to stay on because he's someone that I know I can learn a great deal from," Grant added.

Something that Stewart says he enjoys about the newspaper business is that each week is different and there's always something new to learn. Recently, he's been diving into industry events by attending the London Farm Show, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention, National Poultry Show, and the Canadian Potato Summit.

"Stewart just loved sharing random fun facts with the kids and I about things he learned from the Potato Summit," says his wife, Laurie. They began dating back in high school and this year, they'll be celebrating 25 years of marriage. "I know he really enjoys what he does and that's what matters."

Stewart says he's looking forward to meeting people in Brant County and continuing to tell the stories of local farm families and cover industry news and innovations through the pages of Brant Farms. If you have ideas for future articles or simply wish to get in touch, he can be reached at [stew@granthaven.com](mailto:stew@granthaven.com) or at 519-868-1290. 🌱



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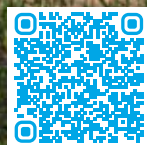
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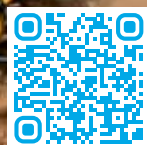
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# New mentorship opportunities for Canadian women in agriculture

Historically, agriculture in Canada has been a male-dominated industry, but women have always played very pivotal roles in farm businesses – just mostly behind the scenes or in a supportive rather than leading capacity.

This is now changing. Along with the general demographic shift in agriculture as older farmers are facing retirement and a new generation is taking over the management and ownership of farm businesses, there are also more women stepping into leadership roles in farms of all types and sizes.

I know first-hand that this is happening as I work with my father on our family farm near Green Valley in Eastern Ontario. As a Certified Crop Advisor, I also work as a crop input consultant with farmers in our area. But it's not just based on my own experiences.

The latest Canadian census numbers show that women represent a greater proportion of our farmers than in the past. About 30 per cent of Canada's farmers are women, and in 2021 we saw the first increase in the number of female farmers in Canada in 30 years.

According to Statistics Canada, this is due almost entirely to the fact that more women are now farming on their own. The numbers also illustrate that women are running larger farm businesses than in the past.

For young women in particular, it's not always easy to step into roles in this sector, whether it's part of a farm business or in a wide range of other jobs and careers, from agronomists and animal nutritionists to equipment operators and more.

Now there's a new agricultural mentorship program designed specifically for women that can help provide some additional support. AgriMentor offers individual, one-on-one mentorship coaching nationwide in English or French for women working in agriculture.

The program was first launched last year as a pilot project by the Agricultrices du Québec, Quebec's organization of farm women, through a program called Dimension E, which offers services to female entrepreneurs in the agriculture and forestry sectors. Funding for Dimension E is provided by the federal government through Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

The success of the Quebec pilot, combined with the identified need across the agriculture sector for more training opportunities for women led to the expansion of the program Canada-wide and the launch of the AgriMentor program for 2024.

It is led in Ontario by the Union des cultivateurs franco-ontariens (UCFO), with the support of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), where I serve as a member of the board of directors.

UCFO will match mentors and mentees who each must commit to at least one

monthly meeting whether virtual or in-person for a period of six months. The program is open to Canadian women who are both looking for a mentor and those who wish to serve as one. It is free for mentees; an honorarium of \$500 is offered to women who serve as mentors.


Mentorship is about sharing experience and knowledge and having someone you can use as a sounding board when you are in need of advice or different perspectives. Being able to have some outside feedback is so beneficial both mentally and emotionally, especially when it is delivered in a constructive and thoughtful way.

Knowing you're not alone and being able to draw on the experiences of someone who

has been in your shoes offers encouragement and empowerment. Having a mentor is also very motivating as it can help you increase your confidence in yourself, your business and your career.

Mentorship is something I couldn't access earlier in my career, and although I had colleagues in similar situations that I could lean on, we weren't able to give each other the type of guidance and insight a more experienced mentor can offer.

That's why I'm so passionate about this program and I would encourage any woman in agriculture to consider participating in this opportunity, whether as a mentee or someone who can fill that critical mentor role. 🌱




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# The Golden Horseshoe Beekeepers Association: Beekeeping Is Better Done With Friends

If you are thinking about going into beekeeping and you live in the Brant area, you should check out the Golden Horseshoe Beekeepers Association.

"We exist to educate and serve beekeepers and the public in the areas of Brant, Greater Hamilton and Halton," says Program Chair Roy Allemann.

Founded in 1980 with approximately 75 members today, the GHBA has an executive of 9 and holds meetings every third Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. from Jan. to Nov. on the 2nd floor of the Marriot Hall at the Ancaster Fairgrounds in Jerseyville.

Through monthly meetings with special speakers, to special events and peer-to-peer support, the group is committed to helping one another through the challenges of beekeeping.

"The GHBA is a great resource for beekeepers," says Director at Large Amanda Henderson. "It's a really good resource for people to come and talk to people in their area. We try to have a mix of meetings—we do bring in speakers but approximately 50% of the meetings are open meetings. We will have a focused discussion on something fitting for that time of the year and then people can talk about what they're doing, ask questions and get feedback. We also try to keep our members up to date on whatever is currently going on in the industry."

Yearly memberships are \$50.00 per household and if you are unsure about committing to a membership, you are welcome to a meeting or two before signing up.

For membership inquiries contact members@ghba.ca or check out GHBA's website: www.goldenhorseshoebeekeepers.wordpress.com.

## Spotlight on Beekeeper Amanda Henderson: A Member of GHBA Since She Was 14 Years Old

It is said that hell breaks loose on a regular basis in beekeeping. But for beekeeper Amanda Henderson of Henderson Apiaries in St. George, Ontario, she finds joy in beekeeping challenges.

"My most favourite thing about doing what I do is the problem solving aspect of it. I love to find a challenge," says Amanda.

It's this resourcefulness and "can-do" attitude that has caused Amanda to be a successful beekeeper. Fourteen years ago, Henderson Apiaries started with 5 hives and today has 100.

"I like to ask why are they doing that or how can I make this better? How can I fix this or what happens if I try to do this?" explains Amanda when she goes into a hive.

Besides running her own beekeeping business, Amanda also works full-time for another beekeeper in rural Hamilton



Amanda Henderson finds joy in beekeeping challenges.

where she specialises in queen bee breeding that focuses on the breeding of favourable traits that are suitable for our local environment.

### Supportive Influences

While working on her Bachelor of Science and Agriculture (major in Honours Agriculture) Amanda took an Introduction to Beekeeping course as part of her degree. It was Amanda's uncle, Jim Henderson of Jerseyville (a seasoned and experienced beekeeper) who sparked the interest of Amanda and her father Scott Henderson.

"It's where we got started," explains Amanda.

Be Realistic: "don't bite off more than you can chew" Amanda cautions.

Growing up on her family beef and crop farm in St. George—and where she contin-

ues to live today—Amanda's agricultural influences grow deep.

"People have to remember that they [bees] are managed livestock. You have to be realistic. They need space, they need to be split, etc. Bees may die over the winter," Amanda says.

Amanda recommends that budding beekeepers start small, be prepared, have intentional goals, and pick a direction. A direction for example could mean focusing on expanding your honey crop or focusing on the pollination market.

"There are a lot of aspects that people don't look at. You need to know what you are getting into before you make those kinds of investments—often it's more money than what people anticipate—there is also ongoing maintenance costs," Amanda warns.

A big challenge currently in the beekeeping world is the varroa destructor parasitic mite that feeds on bees hemolymphs. This mite transfers viruses bee to bee and from colony to colony. It is very destructive and difficult to manage.

But what counter weighs the risks, the costs, and the hard work is the positives.

"It can be very fun and very rewarding," enthuses Amanda.

Currently as a Director-at-Large for the GHBA, Amanda helps orchestrate helpful resources for members facing beekeeping challenges like the varroa parasite.

"The GHBA is a really good resource for people to come and talk," she says.

For more information on Amanda, check out Henderson Apiaries on Facebook.

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# BRANT REAL ESTATE

## There are bright spots on the horizon for farm prices

According to the Brantford Regional Real Estate Association, there were 17 farms sold in 2023, which was up slightly from 2022's 13. As of the end of March 2024, there were two farms sold.

The average farm price was \$1.4 million in 2023, down from \$2.295 million in 2022.

Teri Davidson, an agent specializing in farms in Brant, said the farms sold last year ranged from small hobby farms to large working farms.

"The farm sales were pretty much the same from 2022 to 2023," she said. "Our whole market was down starting in No-

vember of last year and running through until probably about a month ago, where things started to pick up again as consumer confidence increased as media wrote that banks are anticipating decreasing interest rates."

This is translating into typical increased business for farm real estate as winter winds down

"I am seeing a demand for farms especially in Brant County but not an increase in supply," she said. "The market is in an upswing because our winter months have passed and it's typical of a spring market."

That doesn't mean that interest rates aren't having an impact on farm operations and profitability.

"The cost of borrowing compared against the commodity pricing itself is leaving little room for profit," Davidson said.

Currently, there is a shortage of inventory for farms with large, workable acreages. But asked if demand is higher for hobby farms or large farms, she said, "I think they're pretty equal there are typically more buyers for hobby farms, but land is a commodity that we can't reproduce, so big farmers are looking to buy up any good arable soil close to their home farms that they can."

But the high price makes it hard for the younger farmers. "It is very difficult for young farmers, who don't have financial

stability or resources to become full-time farmers," Davidson said. "Typically now, the only young families that can become farmers are those who are already established in a farm family, are already working with parents or family on a family farm that they will move forward with. It's very difficult for young people to have the financial resource to become full-time farmers."

And she sees the increase in farmland prices not relenting. "Because good arable land is hard to find, and the large, large farmer can match in most cases what developers want to pay now for land, this will continue to see our prices on farmland rise especially if we see a big decrease in interest rates," she said. 🌱



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