

## Pumpkins And Train Make Perfect Pair

Take a train ride and get a pumpkin. That's what visitors get who head out to Butch and Sherry Schappacher's farm near Lebanon, Ohio.

What started 17 years ago as a field trip for preschoolers has grown into farm tours, hay rides, a corn maze, a pumpkin giveaway, and other farm-related activities for up to 3,000 students each fall.

From late September to the end of October, the Schappachers' 30 by 40-ft. shop becomes a rural store filled with apples, pumpkins, homemade jellies and jams, and snacks. For the past several years, visitors have had the option of traveling to the farm by train.

Each Saturday and Sunday in October, a 1950 locomotive pulls four 1930's train cars and a gondola about six miles to the farm. It's called the Pumpkin Patch Express. As part of the train ticket cost, each passenger receives a free pumpkin and can go through the corn maze, petting zoo, and check out the goods for sale in the farm shop.

The train makes three trips each day, al-

lowing about 1 1/2 hours for the round trip and about an hour at the farm.

"We're a working farm; that's what people like about it," Schappacher says. "That time of year people want to get outside in the open."

Some people enjoy just sitting on a hay bale under an awning, while others wander around the 15 acres the Schappachers plant with 30 varieties of pumpkins, squash and gourds.

With as many as 300 people on each train, and many more who drive to the farm, the place bustles on weekends.

"It's been good for both of us. It gives the train a destination. The train does advertising for us," Schappacher says. The L&MM rail line pays the Schappachers a percentage of the train ticket fee.

"It's not high maintenance for either of us," Schappacher says. To accommodate big crowds, he rents four portable restrooms and several members of the family are on hand to work.

Carolyn Abbott, marketing and customer service manager for LM&M, says the pumpkin patch trips are popular with visitors.



Visitors who head out to Butch and Sherry Schappacher's farm have the option of traveling to the farm on the Pumpkin Patch Express.

"Last year, we had people scalping tickets," she says, as well as requests to be put on waiting lists.

LM&M serves about 50,000 visitors a year with a variety of theme rides including: Tea Party Mystery Train, Civil War Train and Clifford's Big Red Train Ride, for example.

More information is available at [www.lebanonrr.com/history.htm](http://www.lebanonrr.com/history.htm).

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Butch and Sherry Schappacher, 3829 S. U.S. 42, Lebanon, Ohio 45036 (ph 513 398-0904; [sschappach@aol.com](mailto:sschappach@aol.com)).

## Gunite Shores Up Barn Foundation

The same technique used to form swimming pool walls can be used to restore old barn foundations at a fraction of the cost of other restoration methods. Gunite (sometimes called shotcrete) is the process of using pneumatic pressure to force dry concrete sand and Portland cement through a hose, with water injected just before application.

"I had a barn with an old stone foundation that was starting to fall in," says Carl Egolf Jr., of Lincoln Highway Farms in Shellsburg, Penn. He wanted something to hold the barn up and wasn't concerned about preserving the look of the stone foundation. He hired Bill Miller of Gunite Solutions to completely cover the barn's 60 by 125-ft. foundation. He filled a fertilizer tank with water and purchased the sand and concrete; Miller brought his equipment.

"The advantages are you don't have to jack up the barn to rebuild the foundation," Miller explains, adding that Gunite penetrates into cracks and leaves a nice finish.

Egolf says it cost \$3,500 to treat his barn foundation, a lot less than the \$20,000 or

more that it would have cost to do the job conventionally. Plus the job would have taken weeks instead of just one day.

"That was the impressive part. I expected them to take longer," Egolf says. "If somebody has a barn wall falling down, I'd definitely recommend it."

The foundation was fixed a year and a half ago, and Egolf expects he'll have Miller treat another barn foundation in the future.

Miller has more than 20 years experience with Gunite, mostly doing large boiler and bridgework. "We recently repaired three barn foundations and the owners have been extremely pleased with the results," Julie says.

Besides barns, Gunite works well to repoint mortar and to fix concrete silos and culverts. Miller has repaired culverts as small as 36-in. dia.

For most applications, he just does a nozzle finish. "You can also trowel it to give a poured look," he adds for surfaces such as dairy barns that need to be cleaned.

Based in Bedford, Penn., the Millers travel all over the East Coast and welcome inquiries about their services. For other parts of the



Pneumatic pressure is used to force dry concrete, sand, and Portland cement through a hose, with water injected just before application.

country, Miller suggests contacting local people who offer similar services.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Gunite

Solutions, 586 Business Rt. 220, Bedford, Penn. 15522 (816 623-7935; [juliemiller@gunitesolutions.com](mailto:juliemiller@gunitesolutions.com)).

## Trailer "Blast Cools" Mushrooms

When wild mushroom hunters came looking for a specialized trailer to process their finds, Silverline Trailer Sales, Klamath, Oregon, sent them to Nathan Strubhar. Starting with a standard 22-ft. enclosed trailer, he built a combo unit that dries and then blast-cools the high value mushrooms.

"The total cost ran around \$32,000 but they told me they could pay for it in a couple of good weekends gathering and processing wild mushrooms," says Strubhar.

The trailer opens from the rear with a drop down ramp door for easy access. Interior surfaces are washable fiberglass panels that meet USDA specifications. The trailer is divided, with the rear 14 ft. devoted to preparation and drying. The front 8 ft. of the trailer is a walk-in blast cooler designed to quickly freeze the mushrooms and hold them at that temperature.

"I used all off-the-shelf components, so any refrigeration technician can repair it if

needed," says Strubhar. "It's not a wimpy system. I dropped it to 0°F during testing. With a few changes in valves and other components, it could drop the temperature to 20° below zero."

The dryer and the cooling system use 220-volt electric power. Strubhar says a less powerful cooler could be built using 110-volt, or the entire unit could be powered by propane.

"There would be a lot of different options for a smaller trailer," he notes. "If someone just wanted a trailer to take food to market, it wouldn't have to be so big or cost so much. Cooling food down is one thing. Keeping it cool is something else and doesn't take as much power."

It was the first food-processing trailer built by Strubhar's company, Western Innovation Technological Solutions, but not his first modified trailer. He also builds fire protection trailers with a 525-gal. water tank, high-pressure water pump, foaming kit and 200 ft. of fire hose.



Nathan Strubhar uses a 22-ft. enclosed trailer to dry and then blast-cool high-value mushrooms.

"We're also building portable units that include a water pump with a foaming kit," he says. "The fire protection trailers vary in price from \$20,000 to \$24,000."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, West-

ern Innovation Technological Solutions, P.O. Box 1210, Flora Vista, New Mexico 87415 (ph 505 402-7898; [info@westerninnovation.net](mailto:info@westerninnovation.net); [www.westerninnovation.net](http://www.westerninnovation.net)).