

Family Friendly Harvest Fest Up And Running

BY SARAH WETZEL
For the Plain Talk

The month of October is a busy time for the Ufford family of Ufford Hills Pumpkin Patch and Corn Maze in an effort to provide family-friendly fun to the community.

Though the maze is open beginning in September, all the stops are pulled during the month of October for the annual Harvest Fest.

The festival will take place today through Monday, as well as next weekend.

Friday hours are 5-7 p.m., Saturday and Sunday hours are noon-7 p.m. and Monday hours are 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Guests enter the farm, one mile east of the Vermillion Golf Course, through the big double gates and park in the area south of the building.

On the way other activities can be seen.

"That second road will be the pumpkin pick up station," said Stephanie Ufford. "There will be an attendant there. All the pumpkins will be stacked on pallets there. You can go through and pick your pumpkin and then go on with all the other activities and not have to worry about carrying it with you, or loading them up in the car until the families are ready to leave."

The building and surrounding area will be the hub of much of the activity including non-food vendors, children's games, horse rides provided by Rich Braunschtein, Rali Sykes and Alexis Beckwith, a petting zoo, kiddie train, and farm equipment display.

"Kids can climb up in the cab, take a picture and honk the horn," Ufford said.

Ufford is expecting the petting zoo and other animals to be a big attraction again this year.

Animals to be petted will include ducks, chickens, rabbits, and possibly guinea pigs.

"We are farmers so we have animals," she said showing two calves in a pen. "He is a week and a half old calf. He still drinks milk so we'll be doing bottle feeding demonstrations twice a day, 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Kids can help feed him. That was a big hit last year. Everyone loved it."

The building, which used to be a garage, will house many children's activities, including face painting, pumpkin carving, games and a corn pit according to Ufford.

"Usborne Books are going to be here with tons of children's books for children to read and so we'll have story time," she said. "We're renting True Value's bouncy house here in town for both weekends. The bouncy house and the corn pit are free to guest/customers. So if families just want to come out and have their kids bounce in the bouncy house and play in the corn pit that's totally free."



Brayden, son of Alex and Stephanie Ufford is sitting on one of the pumpkins at the pumpkin patch open to the public this month.

COURTESY PHOTO

Guests are encouraged to bring an appetite to be satisfied by food vendors to be set up outside the corn maze in a temporary shed with picnic tables close by.

"We have Windstone Buffalo," Ufford said. "They are at the farmers market on Thursdays. They are going to come and make some burgers with their buffalo, then just basic hot dogs, apple cider and harvest festival-type things."

According to Ufford, Windstone Buffalo will be at Harvest Fest both weekends on Saturday and Sunday.

Latte Da will also be catering the second Saturday.

The corn maze aspect of the festival is the only part of the festival which opened for reservations in September.

Customers who bring the Harvest Fest's newspaper ad can get one dollar off admission to the maze according to Ufford.

"Truthfully it's more of a labyrinth definition-wise because there's only one way in and one way out," Ufford said. "Maze is more of a common term. With mazes there's many ways out and many ways in."

Ufford's husband, Alex, creates the corn maze by mowing over the corn in the maze pattern when it is about 15 inches tall.

"Generally what it is, is I go out and start driving in the field with a lawn mower," he said. "There's no plan to it. Nobody knows what it's going to look like. I don't even know what it's going to look like. We don't invest thousands of dollars to have a funky design put in."

According to Ufford, bigger mazes with designs and such are usually sponsored. The creation of a corn maze with a design gets

quite expensive with the needed GPS technology or special planters with computers to tell each row when to start and stop seeding.

According to Ufford, though the entrance to the maze is the same for them each year, the actual maze heads either north or south depending on the year due to crop rotation, this year being South.

"The corn maze goes all the way back halfway to the edge of the field," she said. "It's about eight acres."

The last two weeks in October, the maze will take on a more haunted tone according to Ufford.

"During the daytime you can come out and look at the decorations," she said. "Then at night till midnight it's actually haunted with hauntings in there. It's a fun for the high school and college kids too."

Adding an entertaining and educational aspect to the festival is the hayrack ride.

"Everybody will be getting a scenic tour of the Missouri River Bluff," Ufford said. "It will go right next to the fence so you can actually see where the Missouri River used to flow. This is the old Missouri River bluff. The Missouri River is only two miles that way, you can see the Nebraskan hills. On the hayrack ride you'll be getting a little bit of a history lesson as well. You can see where the channel used to be, so that's fun."

The ride will also pass a tower and gatehouse used in Live Action Role-Plays (LARP) and the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA).

"It all started with a bored dairy farmer and a couple friends," Ufford said. "What once

they're about is education. They educate how things were done historically like blacksmithing, sewing, arts and sciences.

Though these purposes will be discussed on the hayrack ride, no public demonstration of either will take place.

"It's a longer ride this year, Ufford said. "Last year I think it took 26 minutes and this year it's even longer. It's a very good deal for the price I think and we try to keep it as educational as possible."

New at the festival this year is an outdoor vendor area north of the building.

"Last year we had the vendors inside but it was tight," Ufford said. "So this year we're just having everybody outside and expanding. Last year I had four vendors total. This year we have about 20 so far. That's something new too because the parents will have something to look at."

Vendors will include God Green Earth by the Wrights, Thirty One Gifts by Stephanie Ufford, Scarves and more by Kristine Dusing, Perfectly Posh by Sandra Albaugh, Beach Body by Sophia Nehlich-Aroba, LuLaRoe by Audrey Ingram and Lisa Twiller, Young Living Essentials by Jen DeBoer Davoux, Usborne Books by Maxine Smith, Younique by Tammy Dee, Pampered Chef, Avon, Jamberry by Samantha Schlaffman, Plexus by LeighAnn Dunn, Scenty by Tom Ingram and Twist Ty the Balloon Guy.

Also available will be harvest-type products such as popcorn balls, muffins, painted pumpkins and a small amount of Hebda's products out of Yankton.

In addition to the Harvest Fest and Corn Maze, the Uffords are holding a People's Choice chili cook off Monday from 5-7 p.m.

For more information, visit the Ufford Hills Pumpkin Patch and Corn Maze facebook page.

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Senscio Systems Expansion To Open Offices In Vermillion

The Market Street Incubator is back and Senscio is growing.

The Vermillion Area Chamber and Development VCDC is excited to announce that Senscio Systems will be moving into the Market Street Office Building in Downtown Vermillion this October. This is the office that the VCDC has called home for more than 5 years. The VCDC and Welcome Center will temporarily move out to the newly constructed Vermillion Technology Center at 1012 Princeton.

"We're so excited for this win-win for the VCDC and Senscio Systems!" Says Nate Welch, Executive Director of the VCDC. "Senscio Systems has shown commitment in expanding their Midwest operations right here in Vermillion and we can help them with a great office space to get up and running."

"This kind of partnership and commitment to our growth is why Senscio Systems chose expansion in Vermillion, South Dakota. Because of the ease and willingness to make it work, by the VCDC and its board of directors, we are able to begin hiring and growing right away," remarked Bill Anderson, Director of Client Services with Senscio Systems. "Plus, with our hopes and plans to expand in downtown Vermillion, this arrangement makes it one step closer."

The Market Street Building was originally intended to serve as an incubator for small and growing businesses in Vermillion. VCDC Board President Jim Brady says, "The VCDC has certainly had some curve balls thrown in the last couple years, but the ability to react and pivot to allow us to still fulfill our missions and goals of helping businesses grow and expand in the Vermillion area for economic development is a testament to the

Leadership and vision of the VCDC Board of Directors and staff".

The move to the VTC will be temporary, as the VCDC continues to negotiate with interested tenants in the newly constructed 32,000 square foot office complex.

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