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**Bus Tour Supplement
to Newsletter #210**



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**Sunday, November 6
to
Wednesday, November 9**

Join Farm Fresh on it's 22nd annual Bus Tour - This year it's Michigan!



This is your invitation to join your peers for an incredible learning opportunity. Four days you won't soon forget and so many ideas you won't know where to pack them in your luggage on the way home.

Gary and I had a whirlwind tour at the end of June discovering the farm markets in Michigan. The itinerary that has been developed is a collection of the cream of the crop markets plus a few extras. Many web sites are included in this supplement. Feel free to take a 'virtual' tour of the various operations. Here are some examples of what's in store for you.

Springridge - www.springridgefarm.com

Laura, John and Tom Hughes along with Jesse Lauzon have been dedicated participants on the OFFMA Bus Tour. Now it's their turn to be hosts.

Springridge is definitely a leader in direct farm marketing. John's parents purchased the farm in 1960 and started with about 50 acres of sour cherries that were sold wholesale. When John and Laura got married and moved to the farm the future didn't look bright for the growing and selling of wholesale sour cherries. John decided to take a job with the Ministry of Agriculture.

In 1974 and 1975, Sarah and Amy were born and Laura left her career in social work to care for the babies. As a summer project, she thought she would try and sell some sour cherries by allowing people to pick their own. People came and picked but mostly wanted to see inside the barn. Laura listened to those comments and responded and the people kept coming. Now some thirty years later they are still listening to their customers. The barn has been renovated to display two floors of gift and home decor item as well as a cafe that provides light lunches. Crops include PYO strawberries and children are entertained and educated with the giant sand box, wagon rides and farm tours.

A great beginning to our 2005 tour.

McCully's Hill Farm

www.mccullys.ca

Dave Pullen has grown McCully's Hill Farm into a destination attraction. The property was originally settled by the McCully family in 1847. Today, McCully's Hill Farm specializes in the production of maple products, natural meats, home-made baking and preserves, and garden fresh produce such as sweet corn, pumpkins and other vegetables. The farm market is the retail outlet for these products and is also the Visitors' Centre for individual and group tours.

Several generations of McCully's have been and are involved in teaching as well as conducting agricultural and botanical research. Dave and his family are proud to be continuing the McCully teaching tradition in the form of agricultural and environmental programs at the farm, as well as Dave's latest project

Uncle John's Cider Mill

www.ujcidermill.com

Uncle John's farm has been in the Beck Family for over 120 years. The orchard was established by Frank Beck five generations ago. Current owners, John & Carolyn Beck purchased the farm from John's parents. It got its place on the map as a "pick your own" operation.

Carolyn used to sell apples off her front porch step. As business continued to grow, they kept thinking of ways to add value to the farm.

Many customers over the years requested apple cider, so it got John & Carolyn thinking that maybe they should start making cider. Carolyn remembers talking to her father-in-law about turning the barn into a Cider Mill, his response was, "that is the biggest pipe dream I have ever heard!" However, John & Carolyn stuck with their dream and in 1972 opened the Cider Mill.



Last December, Uncle John's was the "State First Place Winner" for the best cider in Michigan at the 8th annual cider contest held at the Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo in Grand Rapids Michigan.

The latest addition at the farm, is the Fruit House Winery. Be sure to check out the decor. There are lots of great ideas on what to do with those old bikes you have hanging around.

Uncle John's Cider Mill attracts approximately a quarter of a million people to their farm each autumn. Come and learn how they handle the crowds.

Robinette's Apple Haus & Gift Barn

www.robinettes.com

The story of Robinette Orchards demonstrates the spirit of innovation and mirrors American farming history. In 1870, Harvey O. Braman moved to Michigan from Elyris, Ohio and chose this land to grow peaches. Harvey cleared the land of an oak forest in an era without power tools. In 1881, he build the barn that is now the Gift Barn. Braman wholesaled his fruit all over the Midwest. In the late 1880's this was not easy. In order to prevent the peaches from bruising, he hired men to sweep the gravel road before the wagon went down it. Although excessive, this made the rough roads as smooth as possible for the peaches and kept them unblemished.

After much hard work by 1911, Braman had a successful fruit farm, a good reputation and was ready to retire. At the same time, B.A. Robinette was visiting Grand Rapids, found the orchard was for sale, took a gamble and purchased it. His grandson, James Robinette and his wife,

Bethel, continued the wholesale operation until 1971 when they built the cider mill. At this point retail sales rose and the people of



western Michigan demanded donuts and a place to eat them. The Apple Haus was added in 1973 and Bethel started the bakery. In order to meet consumer demands, the Gift Barn was added in 1985. In the mid-1990s, James 'retired' and his sons and their families embraced the responsibilities of the family orchard. In order to have year round appeal, Robinette's also offer mountain bike rentals and cross-country skiing & rentals. Through their hard work, Robinette's farm market has become a West Michigan attraction and tradition.

Klackle Orchards

www.klackleorchards.com

Both Gary and I went WOW, when we pulled into the parking lot of Klackle Orchards. The most predominant building being the brand new 'Pavilion'. It's a 24,000 sq. foot sports and events center that opened late last year. Much research and thought has gone into creating exactly what they felt they needed and could make the best use of.

The surrounding grounds were well kept and getting ready for the many activities that are offered at Klackle Orchards. Things like Enchanted Pumpkin Rides, Elephant Rides, and an Apple Pie Contest. Klackle's host approximately 360 schools each fall. Touring 3,500 students through the farm in a 6 week



period. On a sunny October Saturday, there can be as many as 10,000 people on the farm. This is one of the



many stops where, there's sure to be lots of great ideas you can take home and implement on your farm.

Anderson & Girls Orchards/Gifts

www.andersonandgirls.com



Anderson & Girls is owned and operated by Terry and Gwen Anderson. The farm was established in 1978, shortly after their first daughter, Amy, was born. The Andersons now have three daughters: Amy, Jennifer and Carmen.

Their farm includes:

Farm Market - a large selection of in season homegrown fruits & vegetables.

Country Gift Loft - wide variety of gift themed according to Victorian, Lodge, Garden & Christmas.

Cider Mill - operates twice a week.

Barnyard Animals - reindeer, llamas, camels, and peacocks just to name a few. Pig races are a highlight.

A slightly smaller scale operation that offers lots of ideas on layout and giftware display.

"It's all under the tree at Anderson & Girls".

Pride and Country Village

www.prideandcountry.com

Although this is not a farm market, the products and layout of this 'village' was so inviting we knew we had to share it with the bus tour.

The Pride & Country "roots" took hold in 1989, when Barb followed her dream and opened Pride & Country in her basement. There she made all of the craft items she sold, and the 'heart' of Pride & Country was established: the Wood Shop.

The Wood Shop continues to be the heart of the business. The 'old' homestead located at 'that' corner where you travelled to on plank roads, is now the sight of Pride & Country Village. The village offers 40,000 sq. ft. of shopping experience.

The dream will continue as plans unfold for a caboose, country inn, log cabins and lots of other unique shops true to the Village concept.

Wolcott Mill Metropark - Farm Learning Center

The Wolcott Mill Farm Learning Center provides an opportunity for park visitors to experience first-hand the sights, sounds, smells and the feel of "life on the modern farm". The farm features a variety of domestic animals including chickens, ducks, turkeys, sheep, pigs, donkeys, beef cattle, dairy cows and draft horses. Environmentally sound farming practices are followed at the Farm Learning Center where demonstrations of modern farming techniques can be seen. Field crops and farm equipment are also on display.

Blake's Orchard & Cider Mill www.blakesorchard.com



Blake's Orchard and Cider Mill has been a family owned and operated farm since 1946. They now operate 3 separate locations in the Armada area consisting of approximately 500 acres of orchards and farmland. Over the years, they have developed their cider mill and surrounding acreage to accommodate families and large groups and provide a relaxing and entertaining day in the country.

Blake's also specialize in custom designed company picnics which are hassle free for the client. Blake's

facilities and recreational areas have expanded to accommodate parties as large as 2000 plus people.

Frankenmuth - "Michigan's Little Bavaria"



Frankenmuth was founded in 1845 by a group of fifteen German-Lutheran missionaries who came to this area for the purpose of teaching Christianity to the Chippewa Indians. Today, Frankenmuth is a thriving community of 4,900 residents who take great pride in preserving the German heritage. Bronner's CHRISTmas Wonderland, the world's largest Christmas store, is located in Frankenmuth. Bronner's building is the size of 5.5 football fields.

Cheese and sausage factories, woolen mills, an operating flour mill, leather shops, fudge and candy kitchens, an art gallery and museums, all combine with over 100 quaint village gift shops and attractions to make Frankenmuth the most visited spot in Michigan with over 3 million visitors each year.

Frankenmuth could be a bus tour on it's own. We're booked in for an afternoon of exploring.

Mystery Guest Speaker

Well known in the farm marketing and ag-tourism circle, Dorene Collins is working on two possible guest speakers to present to the tour participants. Keep your fingers crossed...maybe we'll be able to get both of them.

A registration form has been included with this supplement. For further information, contact:

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