

Saunders Farm: Bringing Ottawa's Community Together in the Fall



By Addison Fallis

October 11, 2024

For many families in Ottawa, fall simply isn't complete without a visit to Saunders Farm. Nestled just outside the city, located in the town of Munster, Saunders Farm has grown from a small local attraction into a bustling destination with a number of autumn activities. Owned by the Saunders family, the farm is more than just a venue for seasonal fun—it's a community within itself, where families and friends return year after year to make new memories and reconnect.

PumpkinFest is a family-friendly event that is the centrepiece of Saunders Farm's fall season, drawing guests from all across Ottawa. Families visit to select the ideal pumpkins, solve a number of

entertaining hedge mazes, and take in the views of fall foliage. A large number of the guests return year after year, making their stay a cherished tradition. There are events catered to all age groups such as the Fright Fest for older teens, and corn mazes for younger kids, making this a family friendly activity.

This year will be the 33rd Haunting Season and Fright Fest. Owner of Saunders Farm, Mark Saunders, claims that there has been a lot of evolution over the past 33 years, “We started with friends and family coming to help out, now we have over 300 staff who create experiences for tens of thousands of people.” Saunders Farm has maintained a friendly atmosphere for visitors of all ages, drawing them back year after year. Mark notes, “The authenticity, the culture, the feeling of being at the farm and being a part of something sets it apart from other fall activities.”

In 2021, Saunders Farm established their Cider House, selling alcoholic and non-alcoholic ciders made by Saunders Cider Co. This became another one of countless things setting the farm apart from other common fall attractions. Mark touches on the fact that it is another way visitors can share their farm experiences, “I thought it would be great to have a product that people could take away and share their Saunders Farm memories in a different way.” About 70 000 litres of cider are made each year.

History is another distinctive feature of Saunders Farm as a community, “Our first year was 1992 and it kind of just took off.” Mark goes on to explain that in 2010, he and his wife bought the farm from his parents and took it in a much bigger direction. Since then, the farm has been home to more than 1.3 million visitors, as of 2021. It truly is an experience that families can continue to pass on to each generation. This idea is emphasized by Mark, “We are thrilled to be a generational experience, it’s pretty cool to think that it now spans multiple generations and people are excited to bring their kids and recreate those same memories.”

Amy Biegler, a former Saunders Farm employee, fondly recalls the welcoming and supportive atmosphere she experienced while working there. She shares, "Working with the Saunders family was great; they made everyone feel welcomed." Despite the professional nature of the job, Amy emphasized

the personal connection created by the family. "When they introduced themselves to me, it felt like I already knew them—like I was part of the family," she added, reflecting on the genuine warmth that made her time at the farm feel like more than just a job.

Saunders Farm is all about bringing people together, from its family-friendly PumpkinFest to the spookier thrills of FrightFest. For those visiting Ottawa this fall, Saunders Farm is more than just a fun outing—it's a seasonal tradition and a community that welcomes everyone. Whether you're on the hunt for the perfect pumpkin, looking for some family fun, or seeking a frightful night out with friends, Saunders Farm is ready to welcome you into its fall wonderland.