

Tennessee Agritourism Today

An electronic newsletter dedicated to educating and informing agritourism industry partners



Volume 3, Issue 2

June 2008

Megan L. Bruch
Marketing Specialist
Center for Profitable Agriculture
P.O. Box 1819
Spring Hill, TN 37174

Phone
(931)486-2777

Fax
(931)486-0141

E-mail
mlbruch@utk.edu

Web Site
<http://cpa.utk.edu>



Exciting Educational Opportunities Announced

Two exciting educational opportunities for agritourism operators have been announced: 1) workshops will be held in three locations in August focused on farm safety, and 2) a multi-day bus tour for agritourism operators will be held in November.

The number of participants for each of these events is limited. Read on to learn more about how to take advantage of these opportunities.

Agritourism Safety Workshops
(Contributed by Pamela Bartholomew, Agritourism Coordinator, Tennessee Department of Agriculture)

The Tennessee Agritourism Association and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture are partnering to provide Agritourism Safety Workshops for agritourism operators across the state.

Nationally known Bernard Geschke, with the Progressive Farmer Farm Safety for Kids program, will discuss proper safety techniques, safety checks and how to develop a safety plan. Participants will also be certified by the American Red Cross in CPR and AED.

The workshops will be held:
August 5 in Jackson at the West Tennessee Research and Education Center

August 6 in Nashville at the Ellington Agriculture Center, Ed Jones Building

August 7 in Morristown at the Walters State Ag Pavilion

Participation in these Agritourism Safety Workshops, as with previous workshops and conferences, qualifies Tennessee agritourism operators for an increased percentage of reimbursement for projects approved as part of the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP). The program offers the Tennessee's agritourism farmers a 35 percent cost share up to \$10,000 for pre-approved projects; that percentage is increased to 50 percent up to \$15,000 for operators who attend the Agritourism Safety Workshop.

To register, call (615) 837-5160. Contact Pamela Bartholomew with questions at (615) 837-5348 or email Pamela.Bartholomew@state.tn.us.

Agritourism in Action Bus Tour

Tennessee agritourism entrepreneurs are invited to pack their bags and join a classroom on wheels.

"Visiting existing businesses and hearing from the owners is one of the best ways for entrepreneurs to learn how to improve their own businesses," says Megan Bruch, marketing specialist with the Center for Profitable Agriculture.

"Operators have asked us to develop an educational tour, and we are able to make it happen thanks to assistance from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture."

The Agritourism in Action Bus Tour will be held November 11-13, 2008 and will start and end in the Nashville area. The tour will make stops at various types

of agritourism operations in Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana.

The number of participants is limited so interested operators must submit an application. Only operators from existing Tennessee agritourism enterprises are eligible to apply, and applications will only be accepted for one person per enterprise.

"The application process will help us spread the benefits of the tour across as many enterprises as possible and match the needs of applicants with what we think the tour can provide them," says Bruch.

Applications can be found on-line at <http://cpa.utk.edu> or an application can be requested by contacting the Center for Profitable Agriculture at (931)486-2777.

Applications must be returned to the Center for Profitable Agriculture by August 4, 2008. Applicants will be notified of their selection and then must confirm their participation and remit a registration fee of \$200. The registration fee is an eligible expense for cost-share reimbursement under the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP) with an approved TAEP Producer Diversification Cost-Share Application.

To learn more about the tour, visit <http://cpa.utk.edu> or contact Megan Bruch with specific questions at mlbruch@utk.edu or (931)486-2777.

Contents

Exciting Education Opportunities Announced	1
Spotlight on Agritourism: Amazin' Acres of Fun	2
Resource Review	3
Cost-Share Program Deadline Approaching	3
Upcoming Events	3



Spotlight on Agritourism: Amazin' Acres of Fun

Karen and Jimmy McCulley Amazin' Acres of Fun – Country Fun on the Farm

White County

<http://www.amazinacres.com/>

What products, services or attractions do you offer?

Amazin' Acres is open two seasons of the year. From the end of April through the first part of June, the McCulley's offer three acres of pick-your-own and pre-picked strawberries. From the middle of September through the first of November, Amazin' Acres is a flurry of activity. The fall market is open with pumpkins, gourds, mums and other decorating items. School tours are provided during the week. Group tours are offered by appointment for church groups, civic clubs, etc. with 20 or more people. Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays are open to the public to enjoy five mazes including a haunted maze, animal exhibits, pig races, duck races, hillbilly slide, hay ride and other farm activities. The McCulleys also provide custom decorating during the fall for businesses.

How long have you been in business?

The McCulley's started their agritourism operation in 2000 with their first corn maze. In 2001, they began to offer strawberries.

Why did you get into agritourism?

Jimmy and Karen were operating a dairy and were looking for a way to increase revenue. They went to a workshop and saw an agritourism operator speak about his corn maze. Karen was inspired to develop a maze on their farm. She planned their first maze and incorporated questions from their Sunday school class to add an educational twist.

Karen said, "We have always

enjoyed sharing the farm. We had family and friends who would come and stay for weeks. We like to work together, and we thought it would be something we would all enjoy."

Jimmy and Karen no longer operate the dairy but do raise beef cattle and hay in addition to their agritourism activities. Jimmy also does some custom hay rolling and is a volunteer fireman. Karen works off the farm full-time with flexibility around farm activities as a lab manager at R & D Services testing insulation and various other materials according to ASTM Standards and Consumer Product Safety Commission Standards.

What is unique about the operation?

Amazin' Acres is a family operation on a 215 acre working farm that is now on the 4th generation. Jimmy and Karen run the operation with the help of their two sons, Daniel (20) and Tyler (17). They try to grow 100% of the farm products sold at the operation, when the weather cooperates of course. Karen says their operation is unique because customers get "to enjoy 17 farm fun ag-tivities and create unforgettable memories. They can also experience educational old-fashioned Pioneer Days (with a modern day twist), all in the beautiful rolling hills of Middle Tennessee."

To what do you attribute your success?

Karen attributes the success of Amazin' Acres to "hard-work, God's grace, steadfastness and a willingness to grow and learn." The McCulley's have grown the operation over time by adding more farm "ag-tivities" to enhance the trip to the farm and make it more memorable.

What have been your biggest challenges?

Karen reports one of their biggest challenges was "learning curves at the beginning," such as how to price products and services. Marketing was the next obstacle." Everything that we had ever sold off the farm was taken to market and we were given what they wanted to give us," says, Karen. Getting people to come to the farm, educating them about a new local business and being prepared to handle larger groups when they do arrive are also challenges. New corn mazes popping up in the area soon after the McCulley's started also put pressure on the business. Of course, circumstances such as drought, crop disease, school budgets, world events (such as September 11, 2001) and fuel prices are also challenges faced by this agritourism operation.

How do you market your operation?

Jimmy and Karen believe their Web site, brochures and word-of-mouth are their most effective marketing strategies. Brochures are hand delivered to schools and distributed at local businesses. The McCulley's utilize some newspaper advertising and have had many news articles printed about their operation as well. Radio advertising has been incorporated, too. Sponsorships for radio advertising have also been useful. They seek and accept publicity when available and have been featured on *Tennessee Crossroads*.

For strawberry season, the McCulley's collect customer addresses and send marketing materials direct through the mail. They hope to move to an

(Continued on page 3.)



Amazin' Acres (continued)

e-mail list and begin to collect addresses from their fall activity customers.

What advice do you have for other agritourism operators or farmers interested in agritourism?

Karen advises other operators or farmers interested in agritourism "learn all you can at the onset." Reducing the time it takes to go through those learning curves will increase your potential for success.

Resource Review: Tennessee History for Kids

Have you been looking for information on Tennessee history, civics or geography to incorporate into school tours, corn mazes, etc.? If so, then check out www.tnhistoryforkids.org.

The site provides a wealth of information including short biographies of 50 famous Tennesseans, interesting facts about every county and the major cities in the state, information on how the government works,

interactive quizzes and more. The site even provides information by grade. All the content is based on curriculum standards.

This site is made available through a not-for-profit organization called *Tennessee History for Kids*. The organization is formed through a public-private partnership to provide information to teachers, parents and others.

Cost-Share Program Deadline Approaching



Applications for the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP) Producer Diversification Cost-Share are being accepted now through August 1, 2008.

The purpose of TAEP is to increase farm income in Tennessee by encouraging farmers to expand and improve their operations. Applicants who have attended a workshop or conference focused on agritourism that was sponsored by TDA or the University of Tennessee, you

could be eligible for a reimbursement of 50% cost share, up to the maximum of \$15,000 per fiscal year. If you have not attended one of these events, you can apply for 35% cost share up to \$10,000 per fiscal year.

You can apply for cost share funding for marketing, infrastructure and educational opportunities.

A few examples of marketing activities may include brochure development, Web site design, and the new Agritourism Tourist Oriented Directional Signs from TDOT. Examples of infrastructure may include parking lots, restrooms or

retail buildings. Educational opportunities may include conferences such as Tennessee's annual agritourism conference and the North American Farmer's Direct Marketing Association Conference, which will be held in Georgia in early 2009. A new educational opportunity will be a multi-day, multi-state bus tour of agritourism enterprises being planned by the Center for Profitable Agriculture and sponsored by TDA.

To find out more about this program and other programs through TAEP go to www.picktnproducts.org or call toll free 800-3420-8206.

Upcoming Events

Agritourism Safety Workshops

August 5, 6, 7
To register, call (615) 837-5160

Contact Pamela Bartholomew for more information at Pamela.bartholomew@state.tn.us

Tennessee Agritourism Association Meeting

September 2, 2008; 11a.m.
Cumberland Mountain State Park, Crossville, TN
<http://state.tn.us/environment/parks/CumberlandMtn/>

Dutch Treat Lunch Buffet \$8
Contact Vera Ann Myers for more information at veraannm@comcast.net

Agritourism in Action Bus Tour

November 11-13, 2008
Visit <http://cpa.utk.edu> for more information.

2009 NAFDMA Conference

February 1-7, 2009
Savannah, Georgia
Visit www.nafdma.com for more information.

