

Rock Garden Farms celebrates 30 years



Written By **SCOTT TAYLOR**

It has always been very much a family affair when it comes to Rock Garden Farms in Caledon East, says Margaret Galati, the second generation to carry on the Iuglio clan tradition.

?My mom started it in 1988 when she had too much corn for our other store, which my dad had been running for 20 years, so my dad decided to set her up with corn and a wagon on the end of the road here. So she started selling corn out of a wagon.?

The problem was standing on the side of the road with vehicles hurtling back and forth wasn't the safest way to sell corn, so it was decided to move her out of harm's way to the upper part of the hill.

?So she was selling corn and the people would ask for a little bit of this and a little bit of that so she started selling a little bit of this and a little bit of that.?

Soon after, the family opened up their strawberry field to allow people to pick their own and that evolved into flowers and pies and a wider variety of produce, including pumpkins in the fall.

?We're here from April to November, seven days a week,? Galati said. My dad has always worked in the food industry. He was a produce manager and had his own store for 20 years and we've been here this long as a family. Now it's my husband and I and my three boys and so we all work here together. I've been here full time for 25, 30 years, while raising the kids. Our family just takes great pride in bringing in the freshest stuff and we go as local as possible.?

Part of the enjoyment of visiting Rock Garden Farms is strolling the grounds and wandering through the store where a rainbow of flowers combine to produce a heavenly scent in a sea of colour.

?The colours, the smells, the scents and the flavours make a difference,? Galati said. ?People say they can taste a difference because it's so fresh. My husband and my dad go to the market at 1:30 a.m. and they're usually back here by 7:30. It's a one-place stop for all the farmers to do their buying. We buy as we go along so that's why it stays fresher instead of sitting in a warehouse like some other places.?

With strawberry season beckoning,

?This year we're doing a fundraiser for Family Transition Place in Orangeville. Some of the proceeds from the strawberry picking

will go there so we're trying to encourage people to come out with their families, pick some strawberries, have a good day and then our family will donate. This being our 30th year, we picked three charities and we are donating to each of them during each season.

?Flower season was Hospice House, strawberry season will be Family Transition House, and pumpkin season will be the Community Services. Our Family wants to give back because we've been blessed.?

And while the farm does keep regular business hours, Galati laughed when reciting them.

?You know what? If you see the gate open, come on in.?