

Talk with farmers, learn about agriculture at upcoming Dufferin Farm Tour

By Paula Brown

Dufferin County residents and tourists have the opportunity to learn about and see first-hand the day-to-day operations of select local farms.

The Dufferin Farm Tour is set to return for its 26th annual event on September 27 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

"We are very proud to keep this wonderful community event happening for 26 years," said Marci Lipman, a Dufferin Farm Tour committee member. "Every year people get more and more interested in understanding where their food comes from. Having this experience up close and personal with the farmers is really a tribute to our local agriculture."

The Dufferin Farm Tour was established in 1998 by a group of dedicated farmers who wanted to bridge the gap between rural and urban communities by bringing them together on working farms to hear firsthand the challenges of providing safe, nutritious food and the importance of local agriculture.

According to the Dufferin Federation of Agriculture (DFA), agriculture is one of the most significant economic contributors in Dufferin County, with over 700 farms in the community. The top five farm commodities in Dufferin County include cattle, dairy, potatoes, soybeans, and corn.

With more than 700 farms in the community, the connection between how food goes from farm to table can be lost. The goal of the Dufferin Farm Tour is to close the gap between the two by fostering dialogue and providing a look at modern farming practices.

"When people understand how their food is grown and raised, they are more likely to support local farmers and contribute to the local economy," said the Dufferin Farm Tour.

Each year, for one day in the fall, a different group of farmers in Dufferin County opens their doors to the public to showcase their farm, allowing families to talk with the farmers, experience the animals up close, ask questions, and watch demonstrations.

During the 26th annual Dufferin Farm Tour, visitors will have the chance to experience a homestead in Mono with beef cattle and chickens grazing on pastures, see robotic milking at a high-tech 35,000 square foot Holstein dairy barn, horse around at a school of horsemanship, go for a side of veggies at a market garden and hydroponic greenhouse operation, and jump early into the winter festive spirit with a wagon ride through a Christmas Tree Farm.

The Dufferin Farm Tour is a self-guided tour that begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m. on September 27. Families can follow the provided route on their own time while trying food and refreshments, along with added attractions along the way.

"Bring the whole family, from your littlest kids to grandparents, because the whole family is going to enjoy this tour," said Lipman.

Donations to local food banks are being collected and can be made at the time of registration or at farms during the tour day.

Last year, the Dufferin Farm Tour raised over \$3,000 for local food banks and, in its history, has raised well over \$13,000, as well as thousands of pounds of food to support residents facing food insecurity.

Those interested in touring the farms can register by visiting the Dufferin Farm Tour website at www.dufferinfarmtour.com. Spaces may be limited.