

All Aboard For Paradise

Locomotive Stops At Cherry-Crest Farm

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PARADISE (Lancaster Co.)** —

Jack and Donna Coleman have a little piece of paradise in Lancaster County and they aim to keep it that way.

"This township has some of the best land in the county," said Coleman, who spearheaded a movement to have 5,000 acres in his township designated for an ag security area only to have township supervisors reject the proposal.

"We have got to stick up for our way of life," Coleman tells farmers. "What happened in New Jersey can happen here. People move in from the city and bring their city ideas with them. They come up with ordinances against smells and noise."

Coleman isn't merely reciting information that he read about. He's lived it. He knows how it feels to be "legislated" off the family farm. He was a New Jersey crop farmer.

"Twenty-five years ago when my wife and I bought 130 acres, we thought we'd be there forever. But things change fast," Coleman said of the land they needed to sell because new ordinances prevented them from farming.

"People don't know it, but New Jersey had some of the best land around for farming. Now, that's all in development. The township supervisors think that can't happen here, but it can," Coleman said.

The Colemans have come up with a novel idea to save their farmland. They have built a maze that they hope will attract thousands to their farm.

That sounds a bit too commercial for someone who wants to keep farm land in agriculture, but when Coleman explains it, the concept makes sense.

The Coleman's use a 10-acre plot on which a corn puzzle maze in the shape of a locomotive was cut. Two miles of mind-bending paths have been cut through 10-foot high corn. Players riding this corn-fusing rail must find their way to the center of the boiler on the front of the engine. As players wind their way through the rails, they pick up clues.

The trails are also embellished with an assortment of theatrical devices such as two-way communications, lookout towers, secret color clues, bridges, railroad-themed quizzes and symphonic music to help maze-fans take the right turns and left twists through the pedestrian puzzle.

Interspersed among the theatrics, kernels of knowledge about agriculture are thrown out: Did you know that there are 3,500 different uses for corn? That corn is used in windshield washer fluid? That plastic utensils are made from them? Samples of corn candy are also available.

A display table reveals many of these uses. Especially important to Coleman is information about



Cherry-Crest Dairy Farm in Paradise is gaining national recognition for its corn maze, but long before that the Colemans have been running a successful dairy farm operation and won state and national awards for corn production. From left are herdsman Fred Ranck, Jack and Donna Coleman with son Jared, and daughter Sherri Groff with daughter Shelby.

ethanol.

"People need to be educated about its use. Corn is a renewable resource and a logical use for ethanol," said Coleman, who is frustrated that chemical companies fight its use.

People bombard the Colemans and 20 employees with questions.

"How did you grow your corn so tall?" one visitor asked.

"It's all natural," Donna responds. "Cow manure and great soil!"

Through conversations like these, visitors learn why farmers

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The Colemans added an addition to their home so that daughter Sherri married to Brian Groff can live on the farm and help out with milking duties.

HOMESTEAD NOTES

Visitors can catch a ride on the Strasburg Railroad to spend the day on the Road to Paradise-Lost at the Amazing Malze Maze which borders the tracks.



Although only 21 months old, Jared is an uncle to Shelby who is 2 years old. Both enjoy the calves raised on the farm.

