

Featured Farm: Pondeuce Farms

If you're looking for an energetic and busy family, be sure to attend the PCTGA Summer Meeting and meet the Swiderskis.

Parents Walter and Carol own and operate the Pondeuce farm outside Elysburg, along with their children, Donna Schu, Chrissy Ramos and Mike Swiderski, and their spouses. The family owns four farms, the largest of which is the Christmas tree farm, with more than 100 acres of Douglas Fir and a few of Fraser Fir.

Take a deep breath and read all they do: Farm market (all goods produced on their farm or nearby), restaurant, catering hall, wholesale and retail Christmas trees and wreaths, retail shop and pay fishing on two ponds.



"Well, the summer meeting committee said they want to focus on how to diversify your business, so I guess that's why they wanted to come here," Donna said.

The family also knows how to be creative to get the most out of what they have. Mike, whose nickname is "Mikey McGiver," spends his days as an HVAC technician and evenings inventing



new ways to work the farm. At the summer meeting he will demonstrate one of his inventions: a mini-manure spreader that fits between rows of trees and uses chicken fertilizer purchased from a neighboring farm.

Walter makes 98 percent of the 7,000 wreaths each year for the Christmas shop, while Chrissy runs the restaurant and catering business. The catering hall holds 150 people, and they also have a picnic area for outdoor events. The farm also provides wreaths, swags and centerpieces for local groups' fundraisers.

A third generation has begun, but the oldest, Donna's eight-year-old son, is not quite ready to take over the business yet.

The name of the farm means "two ponds" (pond-duce).

Until the mid-1980s, the family grew only veggies and grains, but decided to add wreaths and Christmas trees for additional revenue. They joined PCTGA in the mid-90s.

"I really enjoy getting to hear what other growers are doing, and

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learn from their mistakes and successes,” Donna said. “It gives us a wider perspective. I don’t get off the farm much, but my brother and dad go to the meetings.” Hosting the summer meeting will be a great opportunity for her to meet new people, she said.

With all of this already going on, what could the future hold?

“Right now we’re just trying to polish up what we have here,” Donna said. “We really need more manpower.”

In the next breath, however, she adds that they’re working with the county tourism agency to offer agri-tours, a corn maze, pumpkins and pick-your-own veggie fields. Apparently, sleeping is not in the plan.



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