

Small apple orchard keeps owners busy

By **HEATHER SMITH THOMAS**
For the Capital Press

Fourteen years ago David and Shannon Anderson took a Sunday drive, saw this orchard in bloom and bought it because it was so beautiful.

"We wanted a place to build our house and decided to leave the trees there. It's a small orchard, but still plenty of work for us," Shannon says.

"The apples are harvested U-pick. People come with their families for picnics, and pick their own apples. Everything is very casual," she says.

"One reason we bought the orchard was our kids were young at that time and we thought it would be a good way to teach our kids how to work. Dave and I learned how to work, ourselves!" she says.

Now their oldest, Mitchell, is in college, Rachel is starting college this fall and Tes-



Heather Thomas/For the Capital Press
Customers come to David and Shannon Anderson's 5-acre apple ranch for family picnics and to pick their own apples.

sa is a high school freshman. "Dave and I do most of the orchard work now, but our kids still enjoy the orchard.

Anderson Apple Ranch

Owners: David and Shannon Anderson

Location: Emmett, Idaho

In business: Since 2001

Acreage: 5 acres

Apples: 319 Oregon Red Delicious, Golden Delicious

The ones who are still home run the irrigation all summer, moving sprinkler pipes every 24 hours. They also mow around the trees. I prune, and my husband sprays. We each have our jobs," Shannon says.

"Our Red Delicious are Oregon Red, which are a little different than what you find in a store."

"We let people taste the apples before they decide which ones to pick, and they

can eat as many as they want, while they are here."

They can pick the ones they prefer. Various trees' apples taste different even if they are the same kind.

The orchard is open to the public late September through October for about 6 weeks while the apples are ripe," Shannon says.

The trees were planted in 1988. Blossoms are beautiful in April, and many people come to take pictures.

The 5 acres was part of a 20-acre orchard that was split.

"The original owners kept about 13 acres and sold a couple pieces. So I have a neigh-

bor with a small orchard, but the people who sold these smaller pieces took all their trees out. We got their customers. Fall is a super busy time for us, but a lot of fun," she says.

Customers hear about the orchard by word of mouth, the website www.andersonappleranch.com and the Facebook page. The orchard is also advertised on Craigslist.

"We don't maintain a store. Our garage becomes the store, for 6 weeks. My husband is a real estate agent, so last year he sent post cards to everybody on his mailing list and they got a discount if

they brought their postcard when they came to pick apples."

"We also do field trips. Classes of school kids come and we talk about apples. This is my favorite part of the whole season," Shannon says.

Last year the Andersons experienced the biggest crop they'd ever had.

"We gave nearly 3 tons of apples to food banks around the area. This is usually what we do when we have more apples than our customers can pick. But the year before last, the blossoms froze and we had only 20 apples in the entire orchard!" she says.

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