



Courtesy of Kady Fugere
Kay Koch polishes pumpkins in anticipation of an upcoming field trip. Koch Family Farm is in large part a U-pick operation.

Family farm moves back to its roots

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**
 For the Capital Press

Not long after his 1928 move to St. Paul, Ore., Sam Koch realized his neighbor, the Willamette River, had a nasty habit of flooding his farm.

In 1938 he and wife, Ruby, moved their operation to Tualatin, where, over the years, it went from a small, diverse family farm, to a Grade A dairy, to a large field crop enterprise with owned or leased property all over the area.

As the decades passed, Sam's son, Lloyd, took charge, and the Kochs began feeling the squeeze of a rising tide of the surrounding cities seeping in from all directions. In 2008, Lloyd took his family back to St. Paul, purchasing a farm just a mile from where his grandparents began.

Now the farm is run by Lloyd's son, Ron Koch, and his wife, Kay.

"We took a step back when we moved to St. Paul," Kay Koch said. "We have 120 acres, about 85 that's farmable. We're pretty much down to the home property now."

Not long ago they were talking about retiring, but their 31-year-old son Sam decided to leave accounting for the farm and his 4-year-old son loves it there, too. Grandpa Lloyd, 89, still helps.

Today, Koch Family Farm caters mostly to U-pickers. Between that and their farmstand, no produce goes to waste.

The farm provides a rare opportunity for U-pickers to pick many different crops through the season beyond the typical strawberries and tomatoes. The Kochs grow several types of veg-

etables, including sweet and Indian corn, green beans, pumpkins, tomatoes and winter squash, along with strawberries, raspberries, Marionberries, boysenberries, red clover and hay.

"That is a niche we have, especially the corn," Koch said. "We really try to cater to our U-pickers and make them happy. We have a regular clientele and they do a good job of picking us out."

Koch Family Farm sells berries at the Newberg and Sherwood Saturday markets, but it's a lot of effort and not nearly as much fun.

The farm had a great year, which Kay attributes to an improved social media presence. Daughter Kady Fugere takes pictures and reaches out through Facebook, Instagram and their new website.

"She talked me into stop being so cheap and pay for a better hosting company," Koch said. "She does a really good job with that stuff."

"Last October we had so many more field trips than usual — I think that's Facebook," Koch said. "We have a certain following because we're mellower, a real farm, and we've been here a while."

"We'll probably never do zip lines or pumpkin rockets or apple cannons because we're really just farmers but we get baby farm animals in and offer a hay ride in the pumpkin patch.

"There's just something about a farm; my kids love it," she said. "There's something about being outside, the freedom. Maybe it's the satisfaction of earning your way. There's just something about that even though it's a lot of work."



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