

Rural Ramble receives national award

by JOHN CAMPBELL
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Rural Ramble has earned a Canadian Agri-Food Award of Excellence for Agricultural Awareness and Education for having opened up Northumberland County's family farms to visits by the public.

Cathy McCann, the former coordinator of Rural Ramble, and her husband Howard accepted the award on behalf of the organization at the Royal Winter Fair Nov. 9 in Toronto

Recognized as one of the largest agricultural tours in Ontario, Rural Ramble was the brainchild of the McCanns and four other farm couples - Gaye and Gail Hoskin, of Grafton; Joe and Donna Banbury, of Brighton; Marvin and Shirley McComb, of Morganston; and Paul and Anne Burnham, of Cobourg - who wanted to educate urban residents about food production and the economic importance of agriculture to rural communities. Sponsored by the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture, the two-day self-guided tour drew 2,000 its first year, in 1999.

By last summer, the



Howard and Cathy McCann of Codrington accept the Canadian Agri-Food Award of Excellence for Agriculture and Education on behalf of Rural Ramble from Royal Agricultural Winter Fair president Michael Belcourt, right, and MP Paul Steckle.

number had grown to more than 4,000, with the help of 2,500 volunteers and the cooperation of close to 30 farm families, agricultural businesses, commodity groups and rural organizations.

In announcing receipt of the award, Janette Oliver-Rodgers, Rural Ramble's new co-ordinator, thanked everyone involved in staging the annual event for their "continued support, hard work and dedication."

They also received a pat on the back from Ms McCann. "It's a pretty big

deal for our little group," she said Monday. "I'm just pleased and honoured because the award is on behalf of the farmers of Northumberland and all the volunteers who have participated over the years. We've had tremendous support, especially from the local press."

Rural Ramble was one of five organizations to be recognized at the fourth annual Canadian Agri-Food Awards of Excellence ceremony. Awards were also presented for environmental stewardship, innovation,

voluntarism and exports.

"These outstanding Canadians truly exemplify why Canada is a world leader in the agriculture and agri-food industry," Huron-Bruce MP Paul Steckle said, on behalf of Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Andy Mitchell. "They are making tremendous contributions to the growth of the sector."

