

ChampionCountry

The fruits of their labour

Andrews Scenic Acres continues to thrive

By Robin Downton-Poirier
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

While building a thriving, award-winning business on his love of growing plants of any kind, Bert Andrews discovered a secret that the rest of society is just catching on to — farm-fresh produce is trendy.

The owner of Andrews Scenic Acres and Scotch Block Winery on No. 10 Sideroad is truly enjoying — literally — the fruits of his labour.

"I have always enjoyed growing plants and producing fruit of any sort and I seem to be ahead of the game," quipped Andrews.

"With the population concerned about living healthier lifestyles, farm-fresh produce is now very 'trendy'. I've known this all along."

Nearly three decades after its humbling beginnings — on a then rundown 100-acre stretch of land straddling Milton — Andrews Scenic Acres now employs more than 100 people to help produce nearly 30 different crops farmed on about 650 acres.



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Bert and Lauraine Andrews annually supply the fruit for the Milton District Hospital Auxiliary's Strawberry Fair.

The crops include everything from strawberries and blueberries to pumpkins and sweet corn — and a whole lot more.

Andrews stressed that for a farming business to grow and prosper it needs to be located close to a high population of people, like he is in Halton.

In 1999, Andrews decided to take his berries one step further and opened Scotch Block Winery.

"Almost

without exception, we grow the crop of berries or fruit to produce all of the wines. Many of the crops are planted solely for that purpose alone," he said.

By varying the styles and tastes of the wine, Andrews has created some unique flavours, sever-

al that have won awards.

And business doesn't stop at the gates of Andrews Scenic Acres and Scotch Block Winery.

Andrews sells his produce at farmers' markets throughout the GTA and recently participated in a wine tasting event with several other wineries at Queen's Park. Selected fruit wines will be sold at restaurants in the Queen's Park area.

Andrews Scenic Acres is very much a family-oriented destination, said Andrews, with a creative playground, farm animals and wagon rides (throughout strawberry season). It also offers educational programs to teach 15,000 students annually about agriculture. He believes that if kids are hooked on something, the parents will follow.

Above all, though, Andrews said the focus has always been to have a 'natural farm,' not being strongly geared toward

entertainment farming or agri-tourism.

"Many people enjoy coming here to be on a farm and often to come back to their roots," he said.

"We sometimes have visitors from other countries such as Mexico and Poland, who grew up on farms and they feel like they are coming home. Seeing them happy makes me happy and that has always been our focus."

Andrews said that he takes the business year-by-year, seeing how he's feeling, and toys with the idea of retiring. When that time comes and someone else takes over, he hopes that Andrews Scenic Acres and Scotch Block Winery will live on.

"There is a lot of potential here and I hope that someone else will come in, put their own signature on it, make some changes to what suits them, and keep the farm thriving," he said with a smile.

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