

# The Brooks family secret **Knights will give back to Uxbridge**

by *Shelagh Damus*

"We're a destination," says Paul Brooks of Brooks Farms, who were just honoured by the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association (OFFMA) with the Outstanding Farm Market of the Year 2013 award. "If you don't head out the door saying we are going to Brooks Farms today, then you aren't likely going to end up here."

The farm market has had to be creative in their approach in order to get people on the road to the farm. "We aren't as fortunate as some markets that are on major highways and get massive traffic just passing by," says Brooks.

It is this creative approach, and the success they have had with bringing people out to the farm, that helped in gaining the respect of the Ontario Farm Fresh community and was in part responsible for them getting the award. Creative approaches to signage and promotional campaigns have been instrumental in pushing the business forward. Brooks credits his wife, Kelly, with the much of this creative effort on their website and on Facebook. Their ability to get 'social' has had a big impact.

"Our Facebook page now outperforms our website by about 10 to 1," says Brooks. They get about 60,000 impressions on Facebook a month compared to a similar number of hits on their website for the year. "In the last year we have gone from 1400 likes to 2800 likes on Facebook."

Brooks also attributes the success to the farm's expanding work year calendar. Over the past few years the farm has been expanding what they produce and what they do. They added apple

trees about five years ago and that has extended the business into September.

"We just started tapping for maple syrup this year," says Brooks. "It is in production now, and we will be open to the public for the next six weekends." This has backed up their calendar by a couple of months. "We are now open for about 8 months of the year," and there are plans to sell Christmas trees which will add again to the number of days open. It is this expansion and the farm's ability to generate increased income by adding to the products and services provided that gained them the recognition.

The Ontario Farm Fresh group has been around for almost 40 years. The 350 members list are a who's who of Ontario Farms. And for Brooks it is a community that works well together. "If I need help we can call," says Brooks of a few of the farms on the list. "We are on a first name basis and the group provides easy access to good information."

Brooks fielded a call from a farm in Milton this week, needing info on acquiring a particular piece of equipment for their playground. While many of these farms are the competition, there seems to be a real camaraderie among them.

In addition to the Maple Syrup Festival weekends, Brooks Farms will be hosting Easterfest on Easter weekend. Details are available on their website ([www.brooks farms.com](http://www.brooks farms.com)). To get regular updates on the goings on at the Farm you can always like them on Facebook.

by *Nancy Melcher*

They come from all walks of life, ranging in age from the mid 30s to mid 80s. They are husbands, single men, fathers and even ordained men, all with a common desire to live in service to others while living out their faith. Uxbridge's newest service group is Sacred Heart Parish's Knights of Columbus. Taking their name from that very famous explorer, the 30+ men signed up to start the local council, to have a way to give back to their community and show their dedication to God.

"Founded in 1882 as a way to help individuals who were helpless with great needs, the Knights of Columbus Order is focussed on Christian ideals of charity, service, family, virtue and the sanctity of life," explains Daniel Torchia, a member of the local council. "We exist to serve the needs of our members and their families, the needs of our parish and the needs of our community."

Father John Duffy, pastor at Sacred Heart, proposed the idea to start up a council in his Uxbridge parish six months ago. Aided by Knights of Columbus District Deputy David Morris and Deacon Bill Letterio, these leaders presented the idea to the men of the parish, answering all their questions and helping to recruit members.

As Torchia continued, "Joining requires a commitment to service, spiritual growth and to working at improving one's character, parenting skills, spousal skills, etc! Signing up men to an order like this is a tall order. We'd wanted to start one in the past but did not [succeed]. This time it worked!"

Council members are drawn from every walk of life, from all fields of business and industry, professional services to manufacturing, local businessmen to downtown Toronto commuters. Any Catholic men over the age of 18 can become members.

The main service programs of the Knights of Columbus are the local "Coats for Kids" and "Food for Families", along with international

partnerships with Special Olympics, the Global Wheelchair Mission, and Habitat for Humanity. They would also like to work with local youth and the elderly, as well as helping their own parish family, such as their recent renovations to the Parish Hall.

These initiatives will be funded in a variety of ways. Breakfasts and dinners will be one way Uxbridge area residents can assist the Knights. They will also be holding golf tournaments and car draws. In addition, donations from the community are always welcome. Meetings are held at Sacred Heart Parish Hall.

This organization was founded to help widows. It has grown in numbers and scope to become the world's largest Catholic family fraternal service organization. During the last decade, the Knights of Columbus has donated \$1.406 billion to charity, and provided more than 653 million hours of volunteer service in support of their charitable initiatives.

The Knights are "devoted to the growth of men and their transformation into selfless givers."

Interested individuals who feel drawn to the Order should contact Father Duffy at Sacred Heart Church.



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