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Hubbard's Farm rooted in tradition

By Danielle Ray

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PRINCETON/STERLING — Hubbard's Farm is in full bloom, including the family farm in Princeton that was founded nearly 100 years ago and the greenhouse and farmstand in Sterling they opened last year.

Farming is truly a family affair for the Hubbard clan, and the farm is currently being run by third, fourth, and fifth generation Hubbards. Hubbard's Farm LLC is owned by Nancy Hubbard and her son Andrew Hubbard. Andrew's wife Annie

Hubbard manages the greenhouse and works at the 163 Houghton Road, Princeton, farm, and Nancy's daughter Heather Cheney "helps out wherever is needed and is our much beloved, irreplaceable accountant," Annie said.

The Hubbard family has been farming in Princeton since the mid 1700s. Hubbard's Farm was founded in 1924 and operated as a dairy farm until 2000. Hubbard's Farm LLC was founded in 2005, when the family started to see the need for diversification and began selling compost; they then went into bark mulch and wood pellets in

addition to farm fresh produce.

When asked what prompted a second location at 311 Princeton Road, Sterling, and to opening their farmstand and greenhouse there, Annie said, "The family wanted to expand their operations by having more involvement and outreach within the community."

"Inspired by the legacies of other family-owned small businesses, the Hubbards embraced their passion for horticulture and embarked on a new journey in the spring of 2022," she shared.



STERLING - Andrew Hubbard stands in Hubbard's Farm's greenhouse in Sterling. Submitted photo

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Andrew runs the farm, and is in charge of the crops and hay, maintaining the land, and "keeping us all straight at the farm in Princeton," Annie said. "Nancy keeps the farmstand in tip-top condition and works at the Princeton location farm with pellets, bark mulch, etc."

Andrew and Annie's daughters Kaitlyn and Dixie Hubbard help at the farmers market, greenhouse, and farm stand and are also in charge of labor and delivery with the calves, lambs, and goats. Their son Steven Hubbard and Heather's sons Brady and Brandon Cheney are on livestock duty and help maintain the grounds.

"No one can run a weedwhacker or lawn mower like this trio!" Annie said of the boys.

While produce is grown at both locations, it is primarily grown in Sterling on 10 acres. They house livestock and harvest hay in Princeton.

"The Sterling location is unique because of its rich farming history and prized soil," Annie said. "We have the deed to the farm dating back to 1869. A brook runs alongside the farmland, which provides moisture and nutrients for fertile soil."

The Sterling location is also "a location that is very convenient for our customers," she added.

"We are on the main state Route 62 and are very close to the neighboring towns, including Princeton, West Boylston, Clinton and Lancaster," Annie said. "We enjoy the changing seasons and the variety of products our farm has to offer at different times of the year. It is very rewarding to see a plant the size of a thimble thriving in a neighbor's yard, or a family enjoying our sweet corn or meat for a special birthday."

The farm is coming into its busy season. They are currently growing and selling sweet corn, tomatoes, zucchini, summer squash, eggplant, Swiss chard, kale, beans, carrots, cabbage, green peppers, hot peppers, delicata squash, butternut and more.

"We are also growing our own mum crop, which will be available in the fall along with pumpkins, gourds, cornstalks and Indian corn," Annie said. "We will be offering poinsettias around the holidays, and in February we will start planting flowers for the (Sterling) greenhouse, which will open again the first Friday of

May 2024 and close when we sell out."

The farmstand in Sterling is open year-round. Customers can shop their own fresh produce in season and produce from regional and local farms, as well as their farm-raised meats and local goods including apples, cider, peaches, berries, eggs, Smith's country cheese, bread, milk, ice cream, jams, pasta, frozen meals and more.

This year saw the debut of Hubbard's Farm Corn Club. Each customer receives a membership card, and for each half dozen ears of corn you purchase, you get a stamp. After you buy eight half-dozens, your ninth is free.

Annie said they are thrilled to be in Sterling, and that the response has been nothing short of positive.

"The community is pleased to see a long tradition continue in Sterling. We have been welcomed with open arms," she said. "The farmstand, previously Thompson Gardens, hasn't been open for approximately seven years. Many customers share memories of coming to the stand with their parents to buy the 'famous sweet corn,' tomatoes, pumpkins, mums, etc., and now they are bringing their own children and grandchildren."

Like many other modern-day farmers, the Hubbard family faces challenges unique to farming in New England.

"Weather is a challenge for all types of agriculture," Annie shared. "Last year we had a severe drought and lost most of our crops. This year's weather, with the over-abundance of rain, has proven to be extremely challenging in making hay, which is key to feeding our livestock."

The family said they look forward to seeing their current and new customers this season and celebrating the farm's 100th anniversary next year. They are grateful for the support they feel now and have been feeling for generations.

"Thank you to the community for their continued support of our family farm," Annie said. "As a family farm, every customer is valued and appreciated. We feel farming is vital to our country and want to help preserve farmland and the rural lifestyle. We want to continue to keep Massachusetts-grown food available for our neighbors."

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