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Left, Mark and Carrie Schnepf offer visitors a wide range of activities, including dinners in their peach orchard. For the children, they hold pig races and other entertainment.

Governor Janet Napolitano designated it an “Arizona Treasure.”) The farm, started 35 years ago by Mark’s father as a vegetable farm and peach orchard, began expanding into agritourism in 1995.

The Schnepfs attract around 250,000 visitors per year, but their success hasn’t come without cost. “We’re here seven days a week, working and making sure everyone is having a good time,” says Mark. “I grew up on a farm so I knew how much work the farm was during our seasons, but I never anticipated it would be this hard.”

To keep costs down and profits up, the Schnepfs don’t have any outside employees. Fortunately, the Schnepfs’ four kids love to help. “They’ve been working since they could walk,” says Mark. Of course, when you work at the Schnepfs, almost everything is fun to do. “It’s quite different from when I was growing up,” says Mark. “Farming wasn’t fun, but this is agriculture and entertainment, and it’s just a fun thing when they’re combined.”

Although 40 acres of the Schnepfs’ 300 are devoted to carnival rides and other entertainment, the couple has made an effort to ensure the farm sticks to its roots. The rides are kept in a separate section from the orchards and gardens. “We’ve hidden them away so the farm still feels like a farm,” says Carrie.

Since beginning their agritourism operation with a U-pick, the Schnepfs have added one new feature a year. But this year they’re focusing on the land—developing the fruit and vegetable gardens and U-pick sections. Getting back to the basics of farming is what Schnepf Farms is all about anyway, says Mark. “Farming will always be our foundation as we continue to add buildings, rides, etc. We will never forget that we are farmers. Our goal is to never forget that our foundation is farming and our future will also be in farming, but in an entertaining and educating way.”

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