

Pumpkins a-plenty at fest

by **GLENN COOK**
Saint City News

Thrill seekers from all over gathered just north of Bon Accord this weekend, looking to scare up a little fun.

This was the first weekend of the Haunted Pumpkin Festival at Prairie Gardens and Greenhouses, which combines some of the sights, sounds and flavours of the season with a little bit of ghoulish good fun for Halloween.

Prairie Gardens and Greenhouses owner Tam Andersen said this is the 13th year for the festival, so they're hoping for a little luck.

"This is our 13th season, so it's a very lucky year for us," she said. "We get bigger and better every year."

One of the big attractions is the dragon-themed corn maze, which, at 5,000 metres, is the longest in Canada, Andersen said. This goes along with three other mazes on the property, including a

smaller kids' corn maze and a straw bale maze.

Also back this year is another crowd favourite, the Pumpkin Cannon, which can fire its gourd projectiles up to 300 metres and is a fundraiser for the Youth Emergency Shelter Society in Edmonton. Anyone who hits the pirate ship on the cannon range will be entered to win pizza for a year from the Glenora Boston Pizza.

In fact, local celebrities — including Ronald McDonald,

Edmonton Garrison commander Lt.-Col. Gary Blenkinsop, and Westlock-St. Paul federal election candidates Brian Storseth (Conservative) and Aden Murphy (Green) — were out on Sunday for a pumpkin shootout at high noon.

But there are also some new additions, including a puppet show called *The Dragon Who Got Lost*, live music and concession stands.

"We've got live entertainment every weekend," she said.

The festival also features some old favourites like a petting zoo, a scarecrow-stuffing station, face painting, pumpkin painting, a haunted house, and plenty of games and prizes.

"It's very family-oriented, though; there's no gore," Andersen said.

People come from miles around for the festival, even from across the province.

"We do have people who drive up every year from Lethbridge; they were asking me where they could camp," Andersen said, laughing. "We



PHOTO BY GLENN COOK, SAINT CITY NEWS

Sophia van Leeuwen, 2, makes her way through a straw bale maze.

do have people from all over the province now coming out for this. It's certainly very well-attended and loved by the folks in St. Albert; we've appreciated their support over the years."

Andersen was more than pleased with the turnout on opening weekend, and they have lofty goals for the rest of the festival.

"We are expecting [between] 25,000 and 35,000 people over the course of

the month of October," Andersen said.

The Haunted Pumpkin Festival runs at Prairie Gardens and Greenhouses, two kilometres north of Bon Accord on Lily Lake Road, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays and Thanksgiving Monday until Oct. 26.

For more information, including admission prices, check out <http://www.prairiegardens.org>.



PHOTO BY GLENN COOK, SAINT CITY NEWS

Staff at Prairie Gardens fire off one of their more popular attractions, the Pumpkin Cannon.

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