

“Pumped-Up” Pumpkin at Owl’s Head Produces for Children’s Charity

By Alan Rosenberg



No, you couldn’t call her “petite.” But at 845 pounds, Henrietta the Pumpkin wasn’t as plump as her “cousin” Henry—last year’s hero at the annual Owl’s Head Charity Pumpkin Patch. (Henry, who had weighed in at 928.5 lbs. was unavailable for comment, having long-since gone to seed.)

“But she *was* prettier,” said Shelton Stone, the general manager for Owl’s Head, an 800-acre New Urbanist community in Freeport. “And, more important, Henrietta helped us raise even more money than last year. And that’s what the patch was all about.”

Proceeds from a Guess-the-Weight contest along with pumpkin sales raised \$1,522 for the Niceville-based Emerald Coast Children’s Advocacy Center. The organization helps child abuses victims and their families in Walton and Okaloosa counties.

“It’s wonderful for our community to see this grow into a major annual event at Owl’s Head,” said Wanda Pitts, a board member of the Advocacy Center. “I have nothing but kudos for Owl’s Head being such a good corporate citizen. It’s a great example of how a business can reach out and be part of the community.”

“The beauty of the event,” said Stone, “is how it so many people in the area chipped in to help. Sure, we provided the patch, but it wouldn’t have worked without help from our partner, the Kiwanis Club of Freeport, and Key Club volunteers from Freeport High School, as well as a number of other folks who pitched in.

For instance, professional photographer Kansas Pitts, from Santa Rosa Beach, who attended the event with her two young children, volunteered to kick in the profits from pictures she took at the patch.



“It’s a good cause and it was definitely a good photo opportunity,” says Pitts.

With children “fishing” for coins in a 10 x 10 “corn box,” slurping sodas and burying their faces in cotton candy, “this was just good clean all-American wholesome family fun,” says Stone. “For us at Owl’s Head, it gives us a good sense of the kind of community this is going to be for folks who call it home.”

Going all out to make the event special, Stone had sent Owl’s Head construction manager Dale Scott on a mission to the Midwest to bring back Henrietta.

“The idea was to show the folks here something they just aren’t going to see in all of Florida,” says Stone.

Scott flew to Pittsburgh where he rented a truck, drove to rural Ohio where he picked up the pumpkin, and then all the way back to the panhandle, said Stone. “Henrietta is a big gal, but she’s also well traveled.

Stone proudly acknowledged that Henrietta is “close kin” to a squash dubbed “King Pumpkin” recently at a Midwest festival. (The King was subsequently sold to an Ohio supermarket for \$1,700.)

“Pound for pound, she has a solid pedigree,” said Stone.

Pumpkin farmer Todd Skinner donated Henrietta for the cause, making only one request of Owl’s Head in exchange.

“Considering how valuable these giant pumpkins are,” said Stone, “Skinner insisted that the seeds be returned to him. And we will surely do so.” The rest of Henrietta will go to feed some local hungry horses.

Stone said he begs forgiveness from the public for getting “a bit carried away” when he advertised Henrietta as the “World’s Largest Pumpkin.”

“To set the record straight,” says Stone, “what we brought to Owl’s Head is really the World’s Largest Pumpkin named Henrietta.”

For the record, Glenn Key, the Postman who delivers mail to Owl’s Head, picked up the prize money by guessing Henrietta’s weight on the nose.

#####