

18th annual Dufferin Farm Tour drew record crowds this past weekend

By Jasen Obermeyer

The 18th annual Dufferin Farm Tour saw a record-breaking attendance of people visiting farms throughout the County to get a better understanding of the area's largest economic contributor.

The tour took place last Saturday (Sept. 29) and saw 1400 people take a self-guided tour through six farms in Mono, Amaranth, and the Shelburne area. The farms were diverse, from produce and crop, to goat dairy, sheep, and beef cattle. Admission was a donation to the local food banks, which raised \$782 and 2915 pounds of food.

"It was very successful," said Trevor Pugh, chair of the farm tour. "We had a good year."

Each year a different section of the county is chosen and the tour takes visitors to several different farms, making each tour a totally unique experience. Visitors get to see animals, infrastructure, machinery, and the daily life on a farm. There were also farm-related activities including tractor rides, and fresh local produce was available for purchase.

"It allows people who live in town or don't have the opportunity to visit farms, to get to know agriculture in their own backyard," explained Mr. Pugh.

Dufferin is home to over 520 farms, covering 50 per cent of the land in the County. Agriculture is the largest economic contributor in Dufferin. In 2013, the County farms produced \$25.6 million of beef, \$16.9 million in dairy, and \$15.4 worth of potatoes, among many other products.

"It's about learning, learning about agriculture, what's growing in Dufferin County, and making those connections, the farmers to the consumers," added Mr. Pugh.

He said visitors gain appreciation for the work that goes into farming, and how food is grown, harvested and marketed. "It's one thing to watch a video on farming, but it's another to experience it first-hand."

He also thanks the host farms, funding from the County and local businesses, and everyone involved in organizing the tour. "It takes an amazing team of volunteers and committee members."