

## **Raise a Pumpkin, Raise Funds for a Non-profit**

Not many know that, when they volunteer to grow a giant pumpkin for the Damariscotta Pumpkinfest & Regatta™, they also have the opportunity to raise funds for their favorite local non-profit through the “Pumpkin Pledge” program. Growers collect pledges from friends, neighbors, and supporters of a non-profit organization—a penny (or nickel, dime, etc.) a pound for the “guesstimated” weight of the pumpkin when it’s weighed during the volunteer weigh-off on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Or, supporters may simply donate a pledge of a certain amount. It’s that easy!

In 2014, Boothbay Harbor residents Don and Debbie Swan tried their luck at growing a giant pumpkin. “It was our first time growing a pumpkin and the first time we entered the Damariscotta Pumpkinfest,” said Debbie. “We had the best time growing Beatrice,” the name given to the pumpkin by the Swan’s daughter.

The Swan’s adopted two seedlings at last year’s Seedling Sunday in May. “Buzz Pinkham and his Pumpkin Expert Panelists gave us two seedlings and helped us with advice to get started,” noted Debbie. They also received a lot of help about how to grow giant pumpkins during the summer from the Pumpkinfest newsletters and web links. (This year’s Pumpkin Expert Panel of past State of Maine winners, includes Buzz Pinkham, Bill Clark, Tom Lishness, Charlie Lopresti of Channel 13 news, and Curt Crosby.)

“Don and I raised \$1,000 from our friends and made the Minnehaha Fireman’s Fund in Boothbay Harbor our beneficiary, along with Pumpkinfest” said Swan. She said that Fire Chief Nick Upham and Fire Fighter Nick Livingston went to their home with a forklift and pickup truck to take Beatrice to the volunteer weigh-in, where she tipped the scales at 415 pounds. “We finished third in the volunteer category, noted Swan.” Not at all bad for first-time giant pumpkin growers!

Hearing of the Swan’s success, Margaret Hoffman, Acting Executive Director of the Boothbay Railway Museum in Boothbay, has decided to try her hand at growing one of the giants this year. According to Hoffman, “the Museum’s collection includes farm implements and other agricultural technologies from the mid-eighteenth century, but has rarely had an opportunity to demonstrate agriculture in a hands-on way.” Growing a giant pumpkin will give them the opportunity to demonstrate those tools, and “also to raise much needed funds for the non-profit Railway Museum.” Hoffman plans to ask their visitors to make per pound pledges throughout the season. “We are inviting residents who don’t have room to grow their own giant pumpkin to help with the care and feeding of the Museum’s pumpkin,” said Hoffman. Interested volunteers should contact her at [Margaret@railwayvillage.org](mailto:Margaret@railwayvillage.org).

Mimi Reeves, Executive Director of Coastal Kids in Damariscotta, has committed to sponsor a Pinkham-grown pumpkin as a fund-raising activity for CKP. Coastal Kids is already involved in Pumpkinfest, as the children help harvest the seeds of the pumpkins after the weigh-off in October, while learning about growing the giants. “Watching a

pumpkin grow would be a good educational opportunity for our kids,” said Reeves, “and donations could support our program activities in the coming year.” Interested volunteers should contact Mimi at [mimi@coastalkidsme.org](mailto:mimi@coastalkidsme.org).

Matt Goetting, Development Director of Lincoln Academy, also has committed the school to sponsorship of a Buzz Pinkham-grown Atlantic Giant Pumpkin. “Lincoln Academy is thrilled to participate and become a sponsor!” said Goetting. Their pledge funds will be used to support Lincoln Academy’s student activities, as well as to produce Pumpkinfest. Matt invites LA supporters to pledge their penny-a-pound towards their school’s giant pumpkin which will be one of six grown at Pinkham’s Plantation. To support Lincoln Academy’s pumpkin, contact Matt at [goetting@lincolnacademy.org](mailto:goetting@lincolnacademy.org). Again this year, the Pinkham Patch will be monitored by the Maine Department of Agriculture’s “PumpkinCam”, which can be accessed from [www.damariscottapumpkinfest.com](http://www.damariscottapumpkinfest.com).

Volunteer growers can pick up a “Pumpkin Pledge” packet at Seedling Sunday, May 17, at Pinkham’s Plantation, 431 Biscay Road in Damariscotta. Teaming up with favorite area non-profit and raising a pumpkin while raising funds is a win-win situation. Pumpkinfest will provide tips to volunteer growers and non-profits throughout the growing season to help them raise both pumpkins and funds.

Pumpkinfest & Regatta™ is a 501(C)(3) organization whose mission is to promote education to citizens of all ages regarding the specific agricultural science required to grow giant pumpkins, and to provide local non-profit organizations with opportunities for dissemination of information on their activities and fundraising. For more information, visit [www.damariscottapumpkifest.com](http://www.damariscottapumpkifest.com) or follow us at [www.facebook.com/damariscottapumpkifest.com](http://www.facebook.com/damariscottapumpkifest.com), or [www.twitter.com/squashbuckler](http://www.twitter.com/squashbuckler). Pumpkinfest is grateful to have *Lincoln County News* as its official news organization sponsor for the 2015 festival.