



Farmer of the Month

Ed and Kitty Land of Chattooga Belle Farm are Farmers of the Month for October at Wilbanks Middle School. They feel that it is a great opportunity to be a farm to school farmer, provide healthy food to children and educate them about the benefits of locally grown food. "This year we'll be supplying apples and muscadines for Wilbanks Middle School students to enjoy. In the future, I think it would be great to incorporate some of the more exotic fruits like the Fuyu persimmons or Asian pears to educate students on different foods that they may not see on a regular basis," exclaims Kitty.

Chattooga Belle farm sits on 138 rolling acres in Long Creek, South Carolina only thirty minutes from the school. Thirty-five farm acres is for cattle production, 10 acres for fruit production, and the rest is for hay. The variety of fruit grown by the Lands is almost unimaginable: table grapes, wine grapes, peaches, nectarines, apricots, apples, muscadines, scuppernongs, blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, goji berries, jujube, pawpaws, persimmons, Asian pears, plum and figs. They have just planted mayhaws, mulberries, almonds, English walnuts and pecans. Ed has always had a dream and passion for agriculture. "We need food to sustain ourselves and our community and being able to provide that is an honor" says Kitty.

There is no "typical" day on the farm. One thing is for sure the Chattooga Belle farmers are always busy. In addition to the farming tasks of planting, pruning,

thinning, picking fruit, weed control, cutting hay, caring for the cattle and manicuring the lawn to create an aesthetically pleasing view, they grow in other areas. Their farm store, which is open seven days a week, houses an event venue, a canning and commercial kitchen, and lunch is served there daily. “We often rent our venue for events like weddings, so there is the time and labor involved with that, which is a lot of fun” Kitty says with a smile. Chattooga Belle also produces their own line of wine. Presently they offer six types of wine with two more being developed for future sales. Ed explains “I also love to build, so I am always creating something new or building something functional like a cattle coral, equipment barn, playground, deck, etc. There is always something on my to do list.”

Chattooga Belle is a u-pick farm where people come and pick the fruit they want. To avoid waste, the farmers pick and use the extra, which they sell in the farm store. The farm also participates in two Internet-based farmers markets and one local community farmers market on Saturday mornings.

Kitty and Ed invite everyone to visit the farm. “We are open seven days a week for the people to enjoy the fruit and the beautiful views. Even when the store is closed, we have a gate for foot traffic, as the farm is a favorite place for enjoying the sunset or night stargazing. Chattooga Belle Farm is located just “up the road” at 454 Damascus Church Road, Long Creek, SC 29658.

Farmer of the Month is a Farm to School program that applauds the local farmers who are growing fresh nutritious produce for students of Wilbanks Middle School. Paige Holland, Nutrition Director for Habersham County Schools, says, “Our goal is to help students understand how their food travels from the farm to their finger tips. We strive to honor and celebrate local farmers and connect children with the people at the front line of their food supply.”

Habersham Farm to School October Events

October 8th – Farm to School Harvest Celebration: Family Fun, Food and Farm Recognition. 6:00 - 8:00 PM. Wilbanks Middle School.

October 28th - Students will meet farmer Ed Land from Chattooga Belle Farm, taste their produce and vote with their taste buds. 11:00 AM -1:00 PM Wilbanks Middle School cafeteria.