



# featured

## LUNGREN GIRLS' FARM: A-MAIZE-

*Mae Smith*

Sarah Lungren and Kim Lungren are the “Lungren Girls.” No, not sisters but sisters-in-law.

Their husbands are Clint and Vance Jr., who run the family farm, along with their parents, near Worland.

Working with family members can be hard but fortunately Sarah and Kim get along great. Since they've been on the farm and live just down the road from each other, they've had plenty of time to brainstorm ideas for additional farm income, ways to involve the family, and things that will enrich the community.



### **Pumpkin Beginnings**

It all started in 2009 when a neighbor with a pumpkin patch decided to stop growing pumpkins. Well, someone in the community needed to have a pumpkin patch, so Sarah and Kim decided to claim a small piece of the farm. They planted 2 acres of pumpkins so the community wouldn't be without high-quality, home-grown Jack-O-Lanterns and fresh pumpkin pie. Both Lungrens have families and thought the kids could make the sales for a little income.

### **Stomp and Spray**

The pumpkin patch was successful, but the Lungrens believed they could expand and include more family activities.

The corn maze was born.

How does one go about making a corn maze? Sarah sat down with an Excel spreadsheet and blocked out squares in the design of an old-fashioned tractor. The 2.5-acres of corn were planted just like normal in their flood-irrigated field. This is where the story gets interesting: when the corn was knee high, Sarah and Kim (and whoever else they could convince) took their printed spreadsheet and, using three steps per cell, stomped the corn in the blacked-out cells. After stomping the entire field in the design, the stomped corn was sprayed to kill it. The non-stomped

corn continued to grow throughout the season until time for the corn maze. Ideally, corn for corn mazes is cross-planted so rows are harder to see, but this wasn't possible with the flood irrigation.

Their corn maze expanded to 4 acres and finally they asked their husbands if they could use the nearly 17-acre corner the pivot didn't irrigate

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“It's just a family adventure.”

— Sarah

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Because it is a corner, the corn maze is more like a 7-acre square, and the pumpkin patch occupies some of the other area. And yes, they were still stomping and spraying that whole corn maze area without the aid of a GPS. As a progressive farming operation, they do have GPS-guided tractors; however, they are not fine enough scale for this extremely detail oriented task – there is too much lag time. In 2014, they took the leap and joined Maize Quest, a company that designs the corn maze then brings a GPS-guided tractor to mow the corn in the predetermined design.

### **More than just Maize**

As the Lungren Girls' Farm corn maze expanded, so did the other activities. Their humble beginnings

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## ING FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY



*The Lungren Girls' Farm corn maze, made in the USA.*

started with a couple-acre pumpkin patch, and now they have 8 acres of pumpkins (nine different varieties), decorative gourds, and Indian corn. The gourds are hand planted, and the pumpkins are planted with a small planter. They also have 6 acres of sweet corn the community can “pick-it-yourself.” The corn that isn’t sold is picked, processed, and frozen to feed the Lungren families.

Other family friendly activities include: a corn box – like a sand box

with corn, hay bale slide, hay bale maze, picture boards, a train for the kids to play on, and fire pits. Families are sure to work up an appetite, so there are concessions available. And yes, these delectable treats, including caramel apples, chili, nachos, and baked goods, are homemade by the Lungren family.

### **Limiting Liability**

With fun in the outdoors comes the risk of being injured. Lungren

Girls' Farm is a separate business, and they lease the ground from the family farm. They also have a liability insurance policy to protect themselves and their customers. Limiting risk is good, but the insurance provider has limited some of the activities that they'd like to offer. In the future, they'd like to offer Punkin Chunkin', a ground bounce, and a hay pyramid climb. They are always thinking of new and fun ideas and adjusting what they have done in the past.



Top row left to right, Clint, Sarah, Paige, Vance Jr, Kim. Bottom row: Owen, Kaden, Lilly, Tristen

### Family Affair

From mid-September until Halloween, you know where you'll find the Lungren girls. They are open Thursday through Sunday. (Note: they are closed this year but back in 2017!) They have school groups visit throughout the week, and each student goes home with a pumpkin.

Lungren Girls' Farm requires at least two people at all times while open – one person at the concession and ticket sales and the other helps with the corn maze. Lilly, Kim's daughter, often fills one of these roles in the evening or on the weekend. They'd love to keep this a family affair as much as possible and avoid hiring help. Their kids are busy in sports and activities, so sometimes it can be interesting scheduling, but they always make it work with the help of family.

Clint and Vance Jr. are very supportive of the business that Sarah and Kim have built. They are busy with

sugar beet harvest in the fall but help how they can with planting, irrigating, and harvesting. It takes the whole family to harvest pumpkins if there is an



Turning a stack of hay bales into fall fun.

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“Sarah comes up with these crazy ideas, and I just go with it.”

—Kim

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early frost forecast. In this case, all the pumpkins are picked, congregated, and covered. Pumpkins are chosen from this pile through the rest of the fall.

### Lungren Girls Expand

Lungren Girls' Farm is taking a break this year. The newest Lungren girl was added to the Clint and Sarah Lungren family, and the other Lungren girls will be busy with her health and growth. This year off is well-timed because soil and crop health depends on crop rotations. A corn maze in the same place every year would lead to disease and fertility issues. This year, the corn maze area rotated to a barley field. The pumpkin patch only takes up half its designated area so is swapped with oats and pasture grass as its rotation.

Lungren Girls' Farm will be back in action next year with a fun corn maze design, pumpkins of every shape and size, and fun for the whole community.

Can we say she's "A-Mae-zing"? **Mae Smith** is a University of Wyoming Extension educator based in Big Horn County and serving northern Wyoming. She can be reached at (307) 765-2868.