

ORCHARD | Ayres takes 14 crates of apples, 8 crates of peaches

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1
with visitors, he says the Farmers Market is the main source of income.

"Farmers Market was the salvation of the orchard," Ayres said. "It put us in contact with thousands of people. I first thought we'd sell a lot more here at the orchard."

Ayres Orchard sells at markets in the counties of Franklin, Owen, Anderson and Boone. While Ayres says it's the 15th year at the local market, it's the first at Boone.

When talking about the Franklin County market, Ayres told *The State Journal* that he absolutely "loved it."

"It's chaos down there on Saturday," he said. "I take at least 14 crates of apples and eight crates of peaches when I go."

And because Ayres says he owes the majority of his business to farmers markets, he makes sure to always have enough for the loyal market customers.

"We never want to run out at market because we have plenty of fruit. It's a balancing act."

He's not kidding about having plenty of fruit. The orchard produced 400 bushels of June apples recently and an estimated 3,000 for the year, according to Ayres.

Each bushel is equivalent to about 40 pounds, he says.

Ayres Orchard also does business with the Owen County school system as a part of its nutrition program.

"I think it's a good thing for kids to be eating fresh fruit instead of junk," Ayres said, adding that he'd like to do something similar with other school systems such as Franklin County.

In keeping with the healthy trend, Ayres says he is also a part of the Integrated Pest Management program through the University of Kentucky.

"It helps minimize pesticide use," Ayres said.

Coming in September, the orchard will sell cider, according to Ayres - between 500 and 1,000 gallons.

But the orchard's production plan is simple. It consists of at least four pickers, a couple of walk-in coolers and an apple washer.

After over two decades of growing fruit, Ayres says he knows when it's time to pick.

"I can taste them and decide when they are ready," he said. "If you let them get enough sugar in them, their flavor is better."

Becky, a teacher at Bondurant Middle School, and Sherry, Ayres' wife of 39 years, enjoy making cobbblers and dumplings with the ap-



Larry Ayres, owner of Ayres Family Orchard, picks apples from one of his over 1,000 fruit trees on his Owen County farm. The orchard produces 40 varieties of apples. Some of the more popular include Gala, Golden Delicious and McIntosh.

ples. Sherry also does all of the bookkeeping.

Ayres' son, Lewis, who works in state government, is also his father's business partner.

"Lewis started working in the orchard when he was two," Ayres joked. "He learned to work. He learned responsibility and he took pride in it. And eventually

he will take over and I won't have to work as hard."

But the family orchard business has benefited more than just the immediate family.

"It's provided jobs for a lot of people in our family and job training for a lot of the younger kids," Ayres said. "That's the biggest reward. We've done it as a family."

'DROPOUT FACTORY' | FCPS had a retention rate of 60 percent

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

FCPS had a retention rate of 60 percent, according to the study. Nationally about 70 percent of U.S. students graduate on time with a regular diploma.

The 2007 study was researched by Johns Hopkins University and based on data from the U.S. Education Department.

FCPS implemented sev-

eral strategies last year to combat the high rates, including targeting freshmen and focusing on providing emotional and physical support for students. FCPS also created an alternative to suspension program at the Educational Development Center located on the side of the school.

Instead of missing class work to serve out-of-school

suspensions, EDC Alternatives to Suspension gives students an opportunity to catch up with class work with the help of teachers.

Jones, at Tuesday's meeting, also discussed various improvement strategies for the schools that failed to meet NCLB annual measurable objectives.

Those included identifying and working with stu-

dents who fall behind, working with principals to provide support needed at the schools and differentiating programs at various schools that failed target goals.

"We're trying to differentiate between schools just like we ask teachers to do for their students," Jones said.

FCPS will receive nearly \$22,000 back from the construction of Hearn Elemen-

tary School at Copperleaf because of change orders on the project.

The board approved two orders from the Sherman-Carter Barnhart - the architects of the school - totaling more than \$21,000.

The refund comes from a variety of minor issues the district originally agreed to pay for at the start of construction, according to FCPS

Assistant Superintendent Charley Preston. The sum will come off the remaining balance owed to Sherman-Carter Barnhart, which stands at \$488,586 after a payment of \$602,731.

The board also appointed Shellie Jones as board secretary, replacing Katrina Kingman, who left the district to work for the Kentucky School Board Association.

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