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Sustainable Solutions: Support NJ farms and sanctuaries by donating your leftover holiday pumpkins

As the fall holidays embrace us, many New Jerseyans will soon find themselves with an abundance of pumpkins leftover following the Halloween and Thanksgiving festivities. While these decorative gourds often end up in landfills, Jennifer Seifert, founder of Pumpkins for Pigs, offers a sustainable solution that not only benefits local farms but also helps reduce food waste. In a recent interview, Jennifer shared insights into her organization and how New Jersey residents can get involved.

What is Pumpkins for Pigs?

Jennifer Seifert, who has a background in IT change management, started Pumpkins for Pigs after realizing the staggering number of pumpkins that go to waste each year. "Two billion pumpkins are grown every year in this country, and 1.6 billion of those will end up in landfills," she explained. "I wanted to find a better way to utilize them."

The initiative began when Jennifer learned that local farmers were eager to feed their animals leftover pumpkins. "I talked to a farmer who said, 'Bring them by; my animals would love them,'" she recalled. This simple conversation sparked a movement that has grown exponentially over the years. From just a handful of farms in its inception, Pumpkins for Pigs now boasts over 600 participating farms across the United States.

How New Jerseyans Can Get Involved in Pumpkin Donations

New Jersey is known as the Garden State, and it has a wealth of farms that can benefit from this initiative. Jennifer encourages residents to consider donating their pumpkins and other food items. For New Jersey farmers seeking donations this season, sign up is simple-and free. "The first step is to register with us at pumpkinsforpigs.org," she said. "It takes about five minutes to fill out the form, and we vet each registration to ensure authenticity."

Once registered, farms can specify what types of donations they are willing to accept. "We encourage homeowners associations (HOAs) and community groups to coordinate collections," Jennifer added. "If you have a neighborhood with several families, consider organizing a collection drive. We can help you with the logistics."

What Can You Donate?

While pumpkins are the primary focus, the donation list is extensive. Jennifer highlighted several items that farms can accept (remembering all farms individually choose what they will accept), including:

- Pumpkins:** All varieties, including jack-o'-lanterns.
- Fruits and Vegetables:** Any surplus from home gardens.
- Bread and Pastries:** These are often wasted and can provide essential nutrients for animals.
- Christmas Trees and Wreaths:** These can be used for goats and other livestock.

– Kiddie Pools: Surprisingly, these are valuable for ducks and other animals.

Jennifer emphasized the importance of ensuring that items are free from chemicals. “If you’re getting trees and wreaths from a big box store, make sure they haven’t been sprayed with colorant,” she cautioned.

Success Stories and Community Impact

One of the most heartwarming aspects of Pumpkins for Pigs is the community impact it has fostered. Jennifer shared a poignant story about an animal sanctuary that took in malnourished horses. “They reached out to us looking for bread and pastries to help put weight on the horses,” she recounted. “It was heartbreaking to hear their situation, but it also highlighted how we can make a difference.”

The organization has also expanded its reach through various media outlets, including National Geographic and NPR, which has helped raise awareness and increase participation. “We’ve doubled our numbers each year, and the pandemic actually helped us grow,” Jennifer noted. “People were looking for outdoor activities, and donating food became a way to connect with the community.”

Volunteer Opportunities and Donations

In addition to donating food, there are numerous volunteer opportunities available through Pumpkins for Pigs. Jennifer encourages individuals to get involved, whether by helping to coordinate collections or spreading the word about the initiative. “We’re always looking for champions in the community who can help us reach more farms and donors,” she said.

Financial donations are also crucial for sustaining the organization. “While there’s currently no cost to participate, we will need to explore funding options in the future to cover operational costs,” Jennifer explained.

The Take-Home

As the fall season approaches, New Jerseyans have a unique opportunity to contribute to a sustainable initiative that benefits local farms and reduces food waste. By donating pumpkins and other food items, residents can play a vital role in supporting animal sanctuaries and farms across the state.

To learn more about how you can get involved, visit pumpkinsforpigs.org and register today. Together, we can make a difference in our community while embracing the spirit of sustainability.

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For more information on how to donate or become a site for donations, please visit the [Pumpkins for Pigs](http://pumpkinsforpigs.org) website. Let’s work together to ensure that this fall season is not just about decorations but also about giving back to our local farms and animals.