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SQUARE'S FIRST  
BREWERY

POWDER SPRINGS'  
SLEEPY HOLLOW  
FARM

PETS  
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MEET *Emily*

WINNER OF THE COBB LIFE COVER CONTEST



# STRANGER THINGS

HAVE HAPPENED

*STORY AND PHOTOS BY AMANDA MORRIS*

FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS, **SLEEPY HOLLOW FARM IN POWDER SPRINGS** HAS PLAYED HOST TO CHRISTMAS TREES, PUMPKIN PATCHES, AN OUTDOOR ESCAPE ROOM EXPERIENCE AND EVEN A POPULAR NETFLIX SHOW

**W**HEN PERRY DEWEESE purchased his property more than 40 years ago, he had no idea it would be recognized all over the world. What started as a Christmas tree farm now offers fall activities and the world's first outdoor escape experience. But most people recognize the property as the setting for the popular Netflix show, "Stranger Things."

In 1971, Perry DeWeese bought 30 acres in then-rural Powder Springs. He saw a need for local Christmas trees. DeWeese recalled, "We were going out to Villa Rica and Carrollton to buy Christmas trees, and I said 'I can do this.'" He started the farm in 1977 with the guidance of the Christmas Tree Growers Association and sold his first big crop in 1984. Now, with many years of growth behind them, they plant and sell 800 trees a year.

### SLEEPY HOLLOW FARM

When DeWeese's daughters Suzie Kimmel and Chrissy Baum became involved, along with their husbands, Brad and Jeremy, the size and offerings of the farm increased with the addition of 30 acres.

In 2011, Chrissy & Jeremy Baum added a hay ride and a pumpkin patch. Two years later, Suzie and Brad Kimmel joined the business and contributed the corn maze. They purchased 30 additional acres and have added farm animals, a gift shop, a playground and a picnic pavilion.

Equipped with information from the Georgia Agritourism Association, the family has been able to bring a focus to outdoor activities. "Agritourism is a way to bring the public to an active farm. Everything from the Christmas trees, to the pumpkin patch to the escape woods, it's all about bringing people back outside," noted Jeremy.

Field trips to the farm offer a chance to bring children outside and educate them about a working farm, Suzie explained.



"We get a lot of field trips from public schools. We'll ask the kids 'Where do your eggs come from?' and they'll say 'From the grocery store,'" she said.

Suzie and Chrissy want to change that. Their educational session shows children the source of their food and students get to see farm animals up close, hold bunnies and learn how to grow pumpkins.

The farm animals are Chrissy's passion. She calls each animal by name and they return her love. "I call the goats 'pure joy' because they always make me

*The farm was the setting for the pumpkin patch in Netflix's "Stranger Things 2," as well as the cabin where Eleven lived with Police Chief Jim Hopper.*



smile,” Chrissy beamed. “I can be having a bad day, come out to watch the goats playing and they instantly make me happy.”

Goats, sheep, pigs, a donkey, a miniature horse, rabbits, ducks, turkeys and over 60 chickens call Sleepy Hollow Farm home.

Sleepy Hollow Farm has become a full-time job for most of the family and each person contributes in a different way.

“We are all from different places. We all kind of make it work. Everyone has their own skill set, and we somehow all get along,” Jeremy said.

Chrissy and Suzie are mothers and farmers and the resident-realists. “They want to make sure it’s perfect. They make you want to do better,” Jeremy quipped. Maureen DeWeese, mother to Suzie and Chrissy and wife to Perry, is the glue that holds the family together. She is that very important behind-the-scenes person who is taking care of the kids or cooking meals for the big group.

## ESCAPE WOODS

Brad and Jeremy, armed with a great idea and a desire to make a year-round experience, created Escape Woods in 2016. In the



escape experiences, you solve puzzles, unlock doors, and find clues that help you escape before time runs out. “We really want people to feel like they are in a movie and they’re escaping. Whether it’s the dragon theme or the serial killers’ cabin--we want you to feel like you’re in a movie,” Brad explained.

“They are not rooms; they are adventures, from the drive through the front gate all the way down to the back of the property. Then, for the cabin, it’s a quarter-mile walk through the woods before you get to the game. It’s an adventure all the way through,” Jeremy described.

Holding the title as the first outdoor escape experience in the world, Escape Woods has found success. “This October season, we will have six games on the farm,” Brad said. “It has definitely grown and expanded. Two are family-friendly, 10 and up.”

The rest are adult-only, like the new scary circus theme that will be opening this fall.

Brad explained that the games are refreshed as soon as they start to become stagnant. “Even if we are not building totally new structures, we try to refresh the games every quarter and then every one-and-a-half to two years, try to come up with a new game within that existing set.”



The farm provides many family-friendly activities, such as hay rides and corn mazes.



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(L-R) Sleepy Hollow Farm Owners Brad Kimmel, Susie Kimmel, Perry DeWeese, Chrissy Baum and Jeremy Baum

The majority who try the games do not escape. They have closed-circuit TV and provide people hints, but it is still extremely challenging. “We try to keep the escape rate at 20 percent. If it’s too easy, people don’t feel like they’ve gotten their money’s worth,” reasoned Brad.

## FILMING LOCATION FOR “STRANGER THINGS”

If you are one of the more than 15 million people who have watched the second season of “Stranger Things,” then you will recognize part of the Sleepy Hollow property. Tony Holley, the location manager for the show, knew about the farm from growing up in the area.

“Originally, they were only going to use the pumpkin patch and corn maze, and then we started showing them more around the farm and they built the cabin,” Jeremy said. “That’s all brand new lumber and we watched them beat it and age it. It was a cool process to watch them work on that. To see them put up a brand new structure and then when it was done, it looks a hundred years old. Then they dug the hole for the ‘Upside Down’--that was a massive hole.”

“We’ve had other small commercials and productions filmed here in the past and we’ve had good and bad experiences, but Netflix has always been great. With the amount of trucks and people that they bring in for a filming day, the next day, we don’t even know they were here,” Brad added

## HARD WORK REAPS GREAT HARVESTS

It’s a lot of work to prepare for the rush of 15,000 people visiting in the fall season. “It’s hard because all the reward is on the back end,” Jeremy said. “You have to be committed from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed. There have been nights I’ve been on the tractor till midnight, just plowing to get the corn in the ground in time. We will farm all day and then run Escape Woods all night, then get up and do it all again.”

Suzie added: “When we get to that point in the season when the masses are here, and everyone is having a great time with their families, and the kids are just running around and meeting the farm animals, and having such a great time - I think that’s when it really comes together and makes it all worth it. Because then you see the reward of all our hard work.”

Jeremy agreed. “Then you can sit back and smile,” he said. “Once you see that first wagonload of kids, that’s when you say, ‘It was worth it.’ When you see thousands of people running around enjoying themselves, that’s when it finally kicks in.” **CL**

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