

# Pumpkins

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with his pumpkin, let alone inside the school.

"We heard a pumpkin hit the ground and split open, so we gave (the student) another one," Fisher said with a chuckle.

Teacher Sheryl Blackinton took no further chances with ill-fated pumpkins.

"We're not taking them inside," she told her class. "Just take this marker and put your name on your pumpkin, and we'll set them along the building. You can pick them up after school."

Blackinton said students find creative ways of transporting the orange orbs home. "They figure how to get it on and off the bus or how to walk home with it," she said.

Beadle School principal Carey Mitzel noted that grades K-2 receive pumpkins from the Sertoma Club, while third graders receive the YMU pumpkins. He has seen the students use different ways of carting their pumpkins home.

"We have a lot of parents who come to the school and help their kids carry the pumpkins to the car," he said. "Other kids walk home, and they may roll their pumpkins down the sidewalk. But we have some students who pick the oddest shape for their pumpkin."

Third graders Cassandra Witte and Hayden Hupertz knew exactly what they wanted in their pumpkins.

Witte said she looked for something resembling the reporter covering the event.

"I wanted one that was really tall, as tall as you. And one that was very fat, like the school," she told the re-



Beadle School third graders pose with their newly-selected pumpkins Wednesday. The school was one of many in the area to receive the pumpkins grown at the Yankton Minimum Unit (YMU) garden as part of a yearly giveaway.

RANDY DOCKENDORF/P&D

porter. "I also wanted one that was very orange and bumpy."

She didn't mind lifting the hefty find from the garden. "I'm going into wrestling," she said, explaining her strength in lugging the prized pumpkin.

Hupertz was highly selective in choosing her orange orb.

"I want a perfect pumpkin," she said. "I don't want it that tall and fat, and I don't want it that heavy. And I like to sit on it, so it has to be strong."

The two girls plan on carving their newfound finds.

"Last year, I made a cat face on my pumpkin," Witte said. "This year, I plan to cut out a bat face."

Hupertz is also opting for the Halloween look as her pumpkin pose. "I would like a scary face, like a vampire face," she said.

Hupertz's family bakes

the pumpkin seeds as a treat. In addition, she puts a light inside her Jack O'Lantern and places it outside to greet Halloween visitors.

However, the ghoulish gourd won't find its way onto the dessert table, she said. "We won't use this pumpkin for a pie, but we'll have a pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving," she added.

Another section of third graders, with teacher Lori LaFave, overcame the heavy lifting and hauled the orange fruit to their classroom. The other section of students, taught by MaryBeth Herboldt, had already claimed their pumpkins.

Students Cooper Grotenhuis and Brooklyn Townsend shared their secrets to finding a good gourd.

"I always look for the biggest one," Grotenhuis said. "When it gets closer to Halloween, we'll cut it open."

"I want one that's not too

big and not too small," Townsend added. "We'll wait to cut ours open. Then, we take out the seeds and make a pie."

The sight of the scampering youngsters brought a smile to Alvin Robinson, one of the inmates tending to the garden.

"I enjoy seeing how happy it has made the kids, and to see the looks on their faces," he said. "It's funny, but the smallest kid usually goes for the biggest pumpkin."

The inmates harvested about 50,000 pounds of produce from the garden this year, Robinson said.

"This is the first year that I've worked with the garden," he said. "It's very enjoyable, and we're learning a lot of new things. It's been fun."

The inmates not only raise the crop, they also clean the pumpkins before distributing them, Mitzel said.

"The inmates do a really great job of cleaning off the pumpkins," he said. "The kids will give the pumpkins a bear hug, and this way, they're not full of mud. It's really appreciated."

The schools aren't the only ones receiving pumpkins, Fisher said.

"We took about 20 pumpkins to the senior center, and (Robinson) said it reminded him of his grandparents," he said. "This (pumpkin distribution) is ideal for people of all ages, from 3 to 80."

Fisher may distribute any remaining pumpkins to other school districts. He has also received requests from the City of Yankton and Sacred Heart Church.

The pumpkins aren't the only crop enjoying a banner growing season at the prison garden, Fisher said.

"We are having a record year. We have thousands of pounds of potatoes and tomatoes," he said. "And the

watermelons are huge this year. We have grown around 5,200 pounds of melons that we provide to the non-profit agencies in the Yankton community."

Fisher expressed his thanks to HSC for allowing the garden on its grounds. "We greatly appreciate it. We couldn't do this without (HSC's cooperation)," he said.

Wednesday pumpkin distribution also provided an important connection between students and the inmates, Mitzel said.

"The kids are super excited about this," he said. "It's a chance for them to see (the inmates) give back to the community."

For Robinson, the garden project provides more than a chance to work outside.

"I have a bit of a green thumb, and this (project) takes just a little TLC," he said. "We can't wait for things to start growing. It's a good feeling, man."

He also sees the garden as a symbol of the good things ahead when he leaves YMU.

"I'll be out (of prison) in seven months, and I look forward to planting a nice garden," he said with a smile.

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at [twitter.com/RDockendorf](http://twitter.com/RDockendorf). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

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# Benefit

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with leukemia following a doctor visit for fatigue, headaches and nosebleeds. Since then, family members in Yankton have tried to offer Sharron and his family help that they haven't received elsewhere.

"They are very appreciative of the type of support they are getting from Yankton," Scott said. "They don't get that kind of support in Omaha unfortunately."

Sharron is currently undergoing a two-year course of chemotherapy, which has taken a toll on both him and his family, Lynell said.

"He's been pretty sick lately — every day for the last couple of months — and he's been missing school," she said. "And every time (my sister) takes him to the doctor, she has to miss work, and the expenses add up. She's a single parent of four working hard, and it's been tough."

Scott said a bake sale was held for the family this summer, but he noted that those types of events can only raise so much money.

"We thought we could do something more," he said. "We wanted to see if we could

put together a musical show, and we have just been overwhelmed at the response from people. We have performers and others donating their time, and we've had a lot of people donating items for the auction. It's really neat."

The show will feature entertainment from Lynell Kooistra, Scott and Kim Olson, Jackie Quinn, Mike & Jay and others. The event also will include a live auction and Papa Ray's Karaoke.

"These are wonderful performers who have performed all over the area," Scott said. "It's going to be a musical, quick-paced show."

He added that Sharron and his family also will be present for the benefit.

Admission for Saturday's event is free, with free-will donations accepted. Checks can be made payable to "The Tyjuan Benefit." A benefit account also has been set up at First National Bank.

"We just want the public to come on out and enjoy some great music," Scott said. "Help celebrate the talent we have here, and if you like the show, you can give us a donation afterward."

You can follow Derek Bartos on Twitter at [twitter.com/d\\_bartos/](http://twitter.com/d_bartos/). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net/](http://www.yankton.net/).

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