



Walt and Linda Zawaski invite people to help harvest potatoes and other fresh vegetables that get donated to local foodbanks.



Most of the equipment the Potato Project uses is old, so they're always looking for donations of newer machines.

## “Potato Project” Harvests Fresh Spuds For Foodbanks

“Our goal is to donate 1 million pounds of potatoes and other fresh vegetables a year to local foodbanks,” says Linda Zawaski about The Potato Project she and her husband Walt started in 2009. The Pennsylvania couple got the idea after reading a news story about a farmer who let people glean his fields after harvest.

“We had a little bit of acreage and we thought we could do something with that,” she recalls. Walt planted a few acres of potatoes and Linda connected with local churches to recruit volunteers to help harvest and bag the potatoes.

With limited acres to work with, the project may have ended that first year, without the “blessings from the Holy Spirit,” Zawaski

says. A pastor from another church saw the Potato Project sign at the end of the driveway and stopped in to ask about it. He offered 12 acres for the project.

Since then the acreage each year has varied but reached about 75 acres one year and they’ve had as many as 1,000 volunteers. Besides potatoes, the group has added other crops, including sweet corn, carrots, and beans.

“It’s a big help to the food bank. They have been increasing the amount of fresh food products they provide,” Zawaski says.

She and other helpers feed a simple lunch to people who help harvest. It includes french fries cut fresh from the potatoes.

“This started as a faith-based project. It

has become a family and multigenerational event with various denominations and different clubs and even people from nearby colleges. We are blessed to spend time together,” Zawaski says. Volunteers choose from different harvest weekends to help. The Potato Project continues to attract new volunteers including FARM SHOW reader Phil Whittmoyer.

“When I saw how their organization works, I was somewhat blown away. They have been adapting whatever equipment becomes available to them to get the job done,” he says. “Perhaps readers might have extra equipment they could donate. Some of their newer equipment is 1940’s vintage, so there is a lot of room for improvement.”

Other than a new Kubota tractor that was donated, the equipment is old, including tractors, planters, and harvesting equipment. In addition to vegetables, some row crops are planted to sell to help fund the non-profit organization’s needs. Its website includes a wish list of items to make planting/harvesting more efficient. Cash donations are welcome as well.

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## Minnesota Family Creates Giant Powered Ice Carousel

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

When Chuck Zwilling and his family decided several years ago to celebrate Christmas by cutting a circle in the ice, they had no idea it would lead to a world record, a popular community event, and an annual fundraiser for a good cause.

The 2019 record-breaking “circle” was a 4.6 acre, 508-ft. dia. rotating carousel that people could walk, skate, curl, play hockey and just hang out on as it slowly spun in the middle of a lake near Little Falls, Minn. Though not yet recognized by Guinness World Records, the World Ice Carousel Association keeps track of records from around the world with four contenders currently - groups in Lohja, Finland; Kuopio, Finland; Sinclair, Maine; and the Zwilling family in Minnesota.

The Zwillings have now made 3 carousels, starting with a 54-ft. diameter circle, and have learned a lot about the art of ice cutting.

“The first year we used an ice chipper and string to mark a circle in the snow,” Chuck Zwilling recalls.

Now they insert a 4x4 into the ice and hook a cable on it to create a perfect circle with a chainsaw secured on a “Chainsaw Chariot” built from a tracked snowblower by Zwilling’s son-in-law, Mike Ruegamer. While one person operates the Chainsaw Chariot, another person pulls a rope connected to the machine to keep the center cable taut. They’ve also learned to angle the 36-in. chainsaw bar and only cut part way with the first cut (about 8 in.) and then go around again.

After the first circle is cut, they cut a second one 9 in. out from the first circle. Then they break up the ice between the two circles and push the ice chunks under the ice to create an opening around the carousel. It took about 9 hrs. altogether to cut out the latest carousel, and a few more hours just prior to the event to recut the 3 in. of ice that had refrozen in

the open area.

To spin the giant ice circle, the Zwillings use four 24-volt trolling motors secured to the ice with H-brackets. In 2019, they added solar panels to power the motor batteries.

Even with four motors, it’s a slow ride, taking about 49 min. to make a complete turn.

“It kept turning from 1 p.m. on Friday until 12:30 p.m. on Saturday. The longest anyone else has been able to keep one spinning was 21 hrs.,” Zwilling says.

They also cut four smaller 45-ft. diameter carousels that spun faster, dedicated to major sponsors for the 2019 event, along with 70 other businesses/groups that raised \$16,500 for Flyer Pride Pack, a Weekend Food Backpack Program for school children.

The 16-in. thick, 8,000-ton circle of ice was more than enough to handle the estimated 4,000-5,000 people who attended the 2019 I.C.E. Fest. The Zwillings added plenty of safety features - cones, caution tape and a shoveled path that led to a “bridge” to cross the 9-in. open water.

“People are fascinated by it,” Zwilling says. “They love seeing the big one and the small ones are fun because you feel you are moving.”

The Minnesotans’ championship was short-lived, after Kuopio, Finland, built a 603-ft. carousel in April.

“We’re going to go above that in 2020,” Zwilling says. “It might be 10 acres.”

“It’s gone from family fun to world competition, a friendly game of one-upmanship that benefits our community,” Zwilling says, noting that 2020’s I.C.E. Fest will be held January 11-12.

Check out the video at [www.farmshow.com](http://www.farmshow.com) of the Ice Carousel.

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Giant powered ice carousel measures 508 ft. in dia. and is rotated by 4 electric trolling motors. Four smaller carousels were cut into the big one.



To cut the ice they use a chainsaw secured on a “Chainsaw Chariot” built out of a tracked snowblower.