

BONNYBROOK FARMS, CLARKSVILLE

The haunted wagon rides provide a seasonally appropriate chill on Saturday evenings, but there's a full day of fun here, from pumpkin picking to a petting zoo. *By Michelle Sullivan*

Torch flames dance in the darkness in rural Warren County, the flickering light revealing the mouth of a driveway that disappears into blackness. On a crisp night, an hour after sunset, headlights are the only source of illumination on the bumpy gravel path.

On and on it unfolds until a sharp bend gives way to a meadow aglow with lantern light and twinkling bulbs strung from trees. Fall has arrived at Bonnybrook Farms' 370 acres of woods, fields and streams.

On this late-October evening, families are waiting patiently for their turn on the Lantern Light Wagon Ride, the farm's biggest draw on Saturdays this time of year. Guests can hop aboard for a 40-minute ride along Todd Fork Creek and a trip into Ohio history.

In the past, riders have met characters such as the hitchhiking Irish woman traveling to her late husband's gravesite (where he returns to dance with her every Halloween) and the ghost of American Revolution officer "Mad" Anthony Wayne wandering in search of his lost bones.

"I just love history, especially the history in this area," says Bonnie Mercuri, who lives on the farm with her husband, Joe. The couple purchased the land in 2007, and Mercuri says there's evidence the property had previously been used as



AUTUMN ATTRACTIONS: Mini pumpkin launching (above), ghostly tours (bottom left) and plenty of fall decorations (bottom right) await guests.

a Native American hunting ground and a pioneer homestead.

The haunted wagon ride, which runs only on Saturday evenings in October, is just one of the farm's attractions. On weekends throughout the month, visitors can enjoy mini golf, a petting zoo and pony rides. There's a pumpkin patch to explore and even giant slingshots on Halloween weekend that challenge visitors to launch miniature pumpkins.

The farm's corn maze asks guests to correctly answer a multiple-choice trivia question such as "What did Johnny Appleseed wear on his head?" to be rewarded with a hint on which direction to turn. Answer incorrectly and you'll be sent

the wrong way, but it only takes about 15 minutes or so to find the exit without making any wrong turns. "You could spend an entire afternoon on the farm without trying it all," Mercuri says.

Be sure to grab a hot home-cooked meal in the barn before sunset. Highlights include chicken and dumplings and pulled pork sandwiches made on-site. For dessert, there's pie, cake and s'mores around the campfire.

"You just get overloaded with everything in everyday life," Mercuri says. "I think people get tired of that. You can come out here and breathe the fresh air, see the green grass and the trees changing colors in the fall. It's soothing and relaxing. It's a farm. It's a real farm." Admission and parking are free; activities require separate fee; October Saturdays and Sundays noon-6 p.m.; haunted wagon rides October Saturdays 7:30-10:30 p.m.; 3779 St. Rte. 132, Clarksville 45113, bonnybrookfarms.com

