

Vesperman's corn maze is collecting more fans

Three years ago, University of Wisconsin-Platteville student, Kyle Vesperman, broadened his education to the study of corn mazes. As a sophomore in college, this ornamental horticulture student with an emphasis in business administration and marketing, began to look for ways to broaden the use of his family farm beyond conventional farming. The result? Now in its third year of operation, the Vesperman

Farm corn maze is becoming a thriving enterprise and Vesperman credits much of his marketing success to what he has learned during his time at UW-P.

The "maize maze," located near Lancaster, is given a fresh design every year by world famous maze designer, Adrian Fisher, a native of Great Britain and architect of over 300 mazes in 20 countries. But it is Vesperman himself who

stakes out the maze, following a painstaking grid pattern as he removes everything necessary to create the five acre journey of twists and turns.

"I knew a lot about farming when I got to UW-P, but I learned a lot more through my courses. I've also discovered a whole new world in the field of marketing and it's been enormously helpful as I've tried to promote this new use for our old farm. I'd never

understood what the terms 'target market' or 'demographic' meant until I started taking these business courses. I've tried to take every theory, idea and definition and apply it to what I'm working on," Vesperman said.

Apparently, his applied learning is yielding results. The number of visitors to the maze and pumpkin patch has increased every year, and this year he predicts 4,000 to 5,000

visitors will visit the new steam engine design. Many student groups and locals visit the farm, but he also has frequent visitors from nearby metropolitan areas, including Chicago, looking for a country retreat; people have come from as far away as Germany. In future years, he hopes to add new attractions such as a reception hall, bed and breakfast and music festival.

Vesperman said his advisor,

Mike Compton, UW-P professor of agriculture, has been a steady hand during this process.

"He kept me on track by helping me to schedule my classes around my other obligations and keeping me balanced. There were times when I wasn't sure I was going to be able to continue the balance, but he counseled me a lot about time management. I am truly grateful for his guid-

ance," Vesperman said.

Anyone interested in learning more about the farm may visit the Vesperman's Web site at www.vespermanfarms.com. Students interested in learning more about Vesperman's trial and error process at creating a new business may contact him at 608/558-4961 or vespermk@uwplatt.edu.