

Corn maze planned, planted

Ag attraction will have an outer space theme in a field south of Lancaster

By **CRAIG REBER**
TH staff writer

LANCASTER, Wis. — Today, more than 300,000 corn plants stand about 4 to 5 inches tall in a large field south of Lancaster. By early August they will grow to nearly 10 feet.

"Eighty- and 90-degree (temperatures) brings them up," said Kyle Vesperman, who operates the Vesperman Farms corn maze, about three miles south of Lancaster on Stage Road.

By midsummer, the plants will form a maze that covers five acres in an outer space theme. "Southwest Wisconsin's Ultimate Corn Maze" was designed by Adrian Fisher, an Englishman who creates hedge mazes in England and other types of mazes throughout the world.



Kyle Vesperman

Vesperman, a 21-year-old University of Wisconsin-Platteville student, calls the maze a combination of ag tourism and ag entertainment.

Besides the maze, mini horses, a few sheep and a potbellied pig populate the farm. Vesperman plans to add a llama to the four-legged menagerie.

For those who have trouble navigating the maze, "Reggie the Wonder Dog" will help lead them through. Reggie was a regular at last year's pumpkin maze that attracted more than 2,000 visitors from as far away as Japan and Nigeria, and Florida and New York.

The youngest of four children of Bruce and Judy Vesperman, Kyle remembers selling family-grown pumpkins in his grandmother's front yard on a busy Lancaster street.

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Maze: Cutting of paths can take about 70 hours

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"You wouldn't believe how many pumpkins I could move," he said.

A visit to a corn maze in Rock County celebrating Wisconsin's sesquicentennial sparked Vesperman's idea for his own maze.

"It makes good sense," he said, noting his family operates

a 3-acre pick-your-own pumpkin patch. "It gives people something else to do."

Basically, the maze starts out as five acres of corn, planted in April, in perpendicular rows. When mature, it creates a thick, green wall.

Vesperman plants white stakes, every 15 feet, around the maze's perimeter to mark

a grid. The grid corresponds to a map with the maze's design.

Paths are cut to a width of 5 feet. Last year, the corn was removed with a hoe and power mower. The effort is time-consuming. It took about 70 man hours to create the maze's paths.

"Working up and down, a row at a time, going back and

forth across the whole maze," Vesperman said.

Vesperman plans to open the maze on Aug. 7. It will be open every Saturday and Sunday through October.

When the maze closes after its grand finale on Oct. 31, the ripened corn will be harvested. Next year, the field will return to soybeans.