



# AGRITOURISM

FARMS / GARDEN CENTERS / WINERIES .LIFE

SUMMER 2022



# MARYLAND AGRITOURISM

**Growing up in Howard County, Maryland in the 1970's was everything you could ever want as a kid. Safety. Sanctuary. Family. Friendship. Farmland. Faith. Fun!**

My memories of this time-stamp of my life is forever part of my DNA and my foundation of values. Growing up on a small farm in Fulton, Maryland, my first real job

was selling corn on the side of the road to folks headed home from work on Hall Shop Road.

I believe I made 50 cents a day.

Everywhere you went, you walked. To the local market, Boarman's. To "trick or treat." Hours spent walking since homes were separated by acres and miles, not driveways and cul-de-sacs. The favorite cos-



# GREENSTREET GARDENS OF IOTHIAN, MD

tume of choice was a burlap bag emptied of feed and fashioned as a Native American Indian. Scratchy, smelly, but did the trick respectfully.

The other form of transportation was by horseback. And I remember saddling up with a sandwich in the morning and not returning until sundown. Even fishing was a few miles away at the reservoir.

What was also a good long walk across a cow field was my best friend as a kid—Ray Greenstreet. We were 5 or 6 when we met in grade school and almost inseparable. I was almost an adoptive child to his awesome parents Sandy and Ray, Sr.

When I left Maryland to live in Australia for two years (we were the largest family to cross the Pacific in the history of

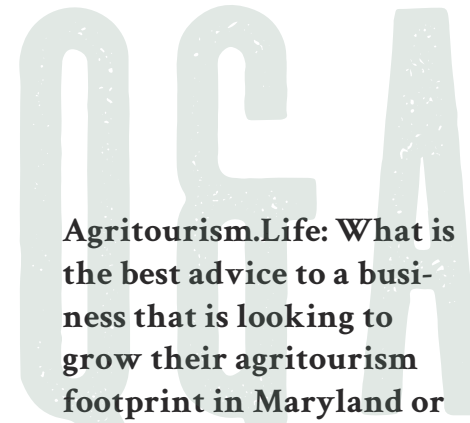
Pan Am airlines at the time), the very first thing I did when I returned was run across the fields to visit my friend, Ray.

Years went by. Families moved. Life unfolded. High School. College. West Coast. Careers. Kids.

It was nearly three decades later that I ran into my friend Ray Greenstreet as I was arriving home from travel to BWI.

We caught up quickly on the curb and promised to connect again soon. Over those 30 years, Ray and his wife, Stacy had built an enterprise in Southern Maryland.

Firstly, Ray is a world-class plantsman. But he is also a world-class businessman that sees the trends and trajectory of the ever-changing green industry. His initial baby was Greenstreet Growers.



**Agritourism.Life: What is the best advice to a business that is looking to grow their agritourism footprint in Maryland or beyond?**

**Greenstreet Gardens:** We recommend establishing ties to your community – they are the backbone of your business and can help you out if you show commitment. Next, get involved with local politics to help support bills dealing with agritourism and farming. Think about offering educational experiences for kids and adults. Our world is losing touch of the physical world around them and so it's important to remind everyone of your roots. Showcase the significance of agriculture in our world.

Create opportunities for families to have a memorable experience at your establishment that promotes agriculture. When you give someone that experience, they're going to want to come back for more.

**ATL: What is the most memorable moment in the evolution of your business model?**

**GG:** It's been more of a conglomerate of memorable moments that stick out. We started with purchasing Windmere Farms and taking over that small bit of wholesale business and that was memorable. Building our first retail center was a success, and so was purchasing our second and third stores

in Alexandria. We've built up so many departments and divisions and have continued to grow in so many other ways. We're proud of the diversity of our products and our methods and our staff; not only do we have talented growers and gardening experts, but we also have staff working on social media, and some who focus on data entry, and some who focus on ordering specialty gifts. We not only offer garden supplies and flowers, but now we offer gifts, events, workshops, fundraisers, and landscaping; we just opened a pet department in our Lothian, MD retail store. There are so many more avenues to explore, and we couldn't do it without the amazing team we have.

Then came Greenstreet Gardens (a beautiful and successful retail garden center in Lothian, Maryland) that joined the family (along with two sons and a daughter). Then came his corn maze, haunted hay ride, jump pad, and hugely successful Fall Festival that is a must visit from folks from hundreds of miles away.

Ray was an early adapter to the agritourism movement and saw the value and revenue that can be

generated from a great day out on the farm...just like the old days!

I can't be more proud of my friend, Ray... and his entire family, who are now part of the business enterprise. Three generations of Greenstreet's all in one place.

***Life is good in Lothian, Maryland!***

2000

2002 - Present

2005

2012

2014

2015

2018

Ray and Stacy purchased Windmere Farms and started Greenstreet Growers – continued the liner business already established and started growing more finished products. Created a small retail stand for residential customers to shop.

Fall Festival starts! What began as a hayride around the farm to support the local high school has turned into a 7- weekend long fall fun extravaganza! With a corn maze, hayrides, jumping pillows, tire tower, woodlands, straw maze, and more, the whole family is bound to have a fun time with every visit!

A retail building was finished! Greenstreet Gardens opened its new doors in Lothian, MD... right down the driveway from the growing facility and offices of Greenstreet Growers. This also was the start of workshops, Easter events, greenhouse tours, private events, and more!

Opened first Virginia retail location at 1721 W Braddock Road in Alexandria.

Start of Greenstreet Garden Landscape – a residential landscape division that works with our wholesale and retail division to provide the best plants and designs to the customer directly.

Greenstreet GreenWalls begins! Also known as living walls, bio-walls, eco-walls, or vertical gardens – green walls are an engineered system of plants grown on a vertical plane. Green walls create a dramatic statement for both exterior and interior applications, allowing individuals to breathe clean air anywhere.

Opening of Belle Haven in Alexandria, VA – an outdoor location offering flowers, trees, shrubs, gardening supplies and more right off Richmond Highway.

**ATL: The best part of working with family?**

**GG:** Best part of working with the family is that you always get to see them. Today everything is so hectic, and everyone is busy in their personal lives, so it's nice to be able to see each other a few times in the week to reconnect. Better yet, as a family, we get to work together and see all our efforts pay off. It's rewarding to see everyone in the family doing a different job on the farm, all to support the main business. Working with family also constantly reminds you of your roots and why you work as hard as you do.

**“LOOKING AT THE FUTURE, WE'RE PLANNING ON JUMPING MORE INTO ECOMMERCE AND ONLINE SHIPPING OPPORTUNITIES.”**

**ATL: What's next for Green-street Gardens?**

**GG:** It's really like, what's NOT next? With spring in full swing, trying to do anything new is a bit challenging. This season though, we're planning on improving our databases and social media content. We hope to increase our video content and jump on the bandwagon with new social trends (TikTok is the new hot ticket). Additionally, we also have been adding more tech to our belt. With the arrival of a brand new transplanter in our wholesale facility that had to quickly be put together and users had to be quickly trained on, we also had to implement new software on our entire team's equipment.

Looking at the future, we're planning on jumping more into ecommerce and online shipping opportunities. We have our annual Fall Festival coming up which is a HUGE event. Looking at some new partnership prospects along with expanding our community offerings (such as workshops, increase of farm-to-table products and classes, etc.). There are always new ideas in the agritourism world.

**ANNUAL EVENTS:**

**FALL FESTIVAL**

This year's event runs every Saturday and Sunday from September 17th to October 30th.

**EASTER EGG HUNT & FREE PIGS WITH THE EASTER BUNNY**

This year we brought in a helicopter to drop the eggs for the kids.

**VEGGIEMANIA**

Every year for a weekend we promote and sell over 180 varieties of tomatoes and have a large assortment of other vegetables and herbs.

**TWILIGHT TASTE & SIP**

We team up with a local organization to raise support for them while showcasing our holiday set up. The event takes place the Friday before Thanksgiving and we bring in numerous local restaurants, breweries, wineries, and distilleries to offer a tasting of local cuisine and drinks.

**HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE AT BRADDOCK**

Start off the holiday season with holiday cheer! We offer discounts throughout the night, holiday music (usually live), local fare and drinks and Santa!

**TAKE YOUR PICTURE WITH SANTA!**

Every holiday season, we have Santa and Mrs. Claus visit on the weekends and kids are welcome to come meet them!

We also invite local choirs to perform on the weekend, offer free cookies and cider, and have a few crafts for kids to do while they visit such as creating a bag of reindeer food, writing letters to Santa (which we end up writing back every kid who provides an address on their letter), and more.