



progress through their respective growth cycles to reach maturity and are dependent on many variable factors. It is an understatement to say that the final bounty is at the mercy of the weather and environmental elements—things that are beyond human control.

The Farm has been in the Monts family for eight generations. Originally owned by George Monts in the late 1700s, it covered roughly 630 acres. Over time the land was divided into smaller tracts for family members. Since 2017 the remaining 34-acre farm has been owned by Brett Flashnick, the 5th great-grandson of George Monts, and his wife McKenzie. They have blended farm traditions of yesteryear with present-day culture and economy. It is a mixture of the past, the present and a glimpse into the future with a variety of fresh, local, sustainable produce and seasonal delicacies. As McKenzie puts it, “We really try to grow things that will do well in the soil that we have.”

“The family had always farmed it,” McKenzie explains. “When we inherited it, we reevaluated things and decided to move forward with agritourism.” The public has an opportunity to witness how the farm operates as well as attend com-

Giving Thanks

Farm-to-Table Agriculture in Lexington



THE FARM 1780 by Kim Becknell Williams

Creating a business based on agriculture is a much slower and ambitious endeavor than starting many other types of businesses, as Brett Flashnick, co-owner of “The Farm” at 1127 Corley Mill Rd. in Lexington knows firsthand. “Things on a farm take more time than a lot of folks are accustomed to in our current society. We are used to hearing that a new business is coming to the community and within a few weeks a building springs up out of nowhere and in a few more weeks it is open for business.” Farming requires a huge amount of patience, education, labor and skill. Soil and crops must be prepared and nurtured in each stage as the plants



munity events such as birthday parties, weddings and rehearsal dinners, bridal showers and engagement parties, farm-to-table catered dinners, and many ticketed events and charity fundraisers. The Farm is family friendly with hands-on-activities and crafts such as feeding chickens or painting pumpkins. Effort is taken to utilize as many resources as possible straight from the farm, creating “a synergistic, authentic experience,” according to McKenzie. A signature cocktail was one example of this; “I’m in the process of making a candied fig Old Fashioned sauce from figs that we harvested today for an engagement party,” she said.

Brett attended Clemson University’s SC New and Beginning Farmer Program (SCNBFP) in 2020. “To me, this program has taken the most crucial areas of study that you would spend years on while obtaining an Agribusiness degree and distilled it down into a certificate program to teach the most critical elements that can be immediately implemented in an existing or startup agriculture business,” he explained. “Having earned bachelor’s degrees in other areas of study and running two successful businesses for 20 and 10 years respectively, I thought I had a handle on how to revive my family’s farm. I naively thought it was going to be a walk in the park; but looking back I didn’t even know what I didn’t know.”

The Flashnick’s work hard to be environmentally friendly. “We converted two fields to “no-till farming” this year with approximately 240 tons [of] food and forestry waste compost from Re-Soil,” Brett said. “For us this is where the benefit begins. By using this compost, we are diverting more than 240 tons of food waste from a landfill; and repurposing it to grow healthy food for the community.”

Holistic, organic farming strategies and troubleshooting are important on the farm. An example of this is how a recent problem with Tobacco Hornworms was approached. If hornworms are not addressed, they have the potential to turn into a damaging infestation. “Just 2-3 of these worms can devour a whole tomato vine in a single day, and we had about 80-100 of them,” Brett said. “And they had already done serious damage. We try to go over and above being organic, so spraying even an “OMRI Approved” pesticide or horticultural oil is always a very last resort for us if there

is another way.” He and a farm hand picked the worms off the plant one by one. Two hours later the chickens enjoyed the hornworm delicacy; so nothing was wasted, the chickens benefited, and the problem was resolved.

When asked about the future, Brett replied, “As far as long-term plans go, I hate to go too far into the future. I’ve always had a motto that ‘Actions are greater than intentions.’” For more information regarding available produce and to receive weekly email updates, visit the The Farm’s website or social media pages.

AZMI JEBALI AND THE LEXINGTON COMMUNITY GARDEN

by Linnette Rochelle

Azmi Jebali, a native of Taibey, Israel, grew up on a farm with his parents and five siblings. Having a passion for farming at a young age, he attended an agricultural boarding program in high school where his goal was to learn all he could about farming so he could return to run the family farm after graduation. However, his mother said he must acquire a college education first; if he still wanted to return to the farm after he earned his degree, he could. He joined his brother at the University of South Carolina and attended USC’s business school, earning a degree in banking and finance in 1988. Having met Beth, his future wife while in school, he knew he could not leave her even if it meant giving up his dream to return to his family farm in Israel. They married in 1990 and settled down to a happy life in her hometown of Lexington.

When Azmi married Beth, the Hendrix family welcomed him with open arms. Her family and the community of Lexington reminds him of his own family and the Arab community in which he grew up in Israel. He said, “Lexington is a dear place to me and so far, I have spent more than half my life here. Although Lexington has been experiencing rapid growth, it is still a small town in many ways. The people of Lexington are mostly supportive of each other. I have received tremendous support from the community, thus every chance I get, I





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give back to the community.”

Encouraged by friends, Azmi decided to try his hand in the restaurant business and opened The Mediterranean Café located on Main Street in Lexington in 2003. When asked where he learned to cook, Azmi said he always had a great appreciation for good food because his mother is the best cook he has ever known. In 2013, Azmi started Jebali Farms to provide fresh produce for the restaurant and has been serving farm-to-table dishes ever since. He is certified by both the University of Clemson and South Carolina Department of Agriculture. “We don’t try to compete. We just focus on what we do - keep foods fresh, portions generous, and customer service excellent.” Azmi is grateful for the café’s success and attributes it to the hard-working staff and local customers.

THE LEXINGTON COMMUNITY GARDEN

Azmi’s friends, Scotty and Susan Mill who run a non-profit organization, approached him with the idea to provide

fresh produce for the less fortunate in the community. Not knowing how to farm themselves, they asked if he would be willing to help them start and maintain a community garden. He joined their organization in 2019. Scotty and Susan then purchased acreage next to Jebali Farms and the Lexington Community Garden was created. Azmi has run the two farms side by side ever since.

“My favorite thing to do on the farm is daily scouting,” Azmi explains. “This is when I get challenged. I look for things out of the ordinary - first bloom, first fruit, insects, diseases that attack the crops, and other problems that might arise such as failure of the irrigation system. I like to identify the problem and hopefully come up with a good solution.” He is grateful to work alongside Charles Tyler, Jim Albergotti, Lindsey Miles, Stephen Keene, and Scotty and Susan Mill and several nonprofit distribution organizations to provide produce free of charge for less fortunate people in the Midlands.

When asked if there is anything new or different on the horizon, Azmi says he wishes to continue taking care of his family, live healthy, travel across the country, and “maybe with God’s blessing, have grandkids in the future to keep me and

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The Mediterranean Café’

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Beth busy.” For details regarding The Lexington Community Garden or The Mediterranean Café’, visit their website, social media pages, stop by the restaurant or give them a call. ■

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