

## Pumpkin Pie, Jack-o-Lanterns & a 1,662 Pound Giant?

By: Meagan Moellers

**A**s you admire the fall foliage that autumn brings, do you also notice the pumpkins that decorate and adorn the doorsteps of many Americans? Pumpkins have become a trademark of the season, but have you ever considered their history as you enjoy a scrumptious piece of pumpkin pie or set out your jack-o-lanterns?

Pumpkins are believed to have originated in Central America dating back over 7,000 years ago. Native American Indians relied on pumpkins in their diets centuries before the pilgrims arrived. Colonists began to slice off the top of the pumpkin, remove the seeds, fill the insides with milk, spices and honey then bake in hot ashes, creating the “pumpkin pie”, which to this day still reigns as the perfect ending to our Thanksgiving dinners. The origin of Halloween dates back at least 3,000 years to the Celtic celebration of Samhain or “summer’s end”. On this magical night, glowing jack-o-lanterns, carved from turnips or gourds, were set on porches and in windows. When European settlers arrived in America they found the native pumpkin to be larger and easier to carve, perfect for jack-o-lanterns, even though Halloween didn’t really catch on big in this country until the late 1800’s.

### Giant Pumpkins

Growing pumpkins was always a favorite pastime of Chris Schultz until three years ago when producing giant pumpkins became his new obsession. Chris and his wife Robin now enjoy the competition of harvesting

these special pumpkins, even competing against each other to see who can raise the largest. They entered two of their pumpkins in Anamosa’s annual Pumpkinfest this year. They didn’t win the title of largest pumpkin, but one of their home-grown giants weighed in at 719 pounds, capturing 14th place in the competition. This year’s winner, Don Young, harvested a pumpkin weighing 1,662 pounds, only 27 pounds short of the world record.

“It takes time and dedication to raise these pumpkins. They must be fertilized and watered regularly. We had to buy a trailer to haul the pumpkins to the contest this year” says Robin. Raising giant pumpkins is fun, exciting and becoming more popular. How about giving it a try next year?

Chris and Robin live in Decorah and have two children. Brett (21) graduated from the Powerline program in Sheldon and is employed with Highline Construction (working on rebuilding Hawkeye’s lines damaged from the ice storm). Their daughter BreAnn (18) is a freshman at Iowa State University.



Robin Schultz of Decorah proudly showcases one of their giant pumpkins.



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# Pumpkins...

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## **Fun Pumpkin Facts**

- Pumpkins are grown all over the world on six of the seven continents, except Antarctica. They are even grown in Alaska.
- Iowa has over eighty (80) pumpkin producers. Many have 'pick your own' patches.

## **Here's To Your Health**

- Pumpkins are rich in Vitamin A & C, beta-carotene, potassium and are high in fiber. This helps prevent arteriosclerosis, which can lead to strokes and heart attacks.
- Pumpkin seeds and the oil are good sources of zinc and unsaturated fatty acids which are effective help for prostate ailments.

