

Knights in Action                      September 25, 2020  
Fr. Finley Council #4374, Oakdale Minnesota

Sweet Corn Picking with the Knights. It all started in 2014 under the leadership of Bob Spangenberg.

Bob found a farmer in the neighboring state of Wisconsin, who was a neighbor to his wife's relative. This Farmer, Brian and Mary Hopp, plants 4 plantings of sweet corn each year, staggering the planting so the harvest is also staggered.

Bob called a bunch of Knights for hand picking sweet corn, and the trip was on. We met at Transfiguration Church Parking lot on a Wednesday Morning. The First two times we would attend the 8:00 Mass first and then leave about 8:30 AM for the Farm

It would take an hour to get to the farm where we would pick and load the sweet corn in cars, trucks and trailers. We had to be done unloading the corn before 3:00, at Second Harvest. The whole process would involve about 100 miles for each vehicle. The time constraint dictated that we Leave from the Church parking lot by 7:30 so we could pick a good supply of Corn and get it loaded and delivered safely before 3:00 PM, Wednesdays, at Second Harvest.

This scene was the norm until the spring of 2020, when Second Harvest had moved about 20+ miles away. That was just too far to drive, at that time of day with the city traffic, loaded with sweet corn. The decision was made to stop picking the Corn.

In a conversation with Bob Spangenberg, Mike Schilling, one of the regular Pickers and drivers suggested that we have done this for 6 years, and it would be a shame to just quit. There had to be some smaller food shelves on the east side of St. Paul who would take sweet corn. There was.

Bob started calling around. He found four for the first picking of August 3. But we had to deliver before 1:00 PM. We delivered 3606 pounds of corn. The vehicles would deliver at different places, and it was still about 85-100 miles, depending on which food shelves you delivered to.

August 17, our second Picking, one food shelf declined delivery, but we added Catholic Charities. We delivered 3194 pounds of corn to 4 Food Shelves.

August 24, the third picking, normally we only did 2 or three pickings a year, we delivered to only three food shelves. We delivered 2337 pounds of corn.

August 31, our fourth picking, we delivered 3713 pounds of corn to six (6) of the seven food shelves Bob found. It was raining all morning, and we got wet, but our spirits were not dampened. We were "Singing in the Rain". This was to be the final picking for the year.

September 14, things changed a bit when a store declined buying the remaining sweet corn, so Bob organized a fifth and final picking. This happened on the morning of our Council's first day making Booya. We left with 3 vehicles and returned with 3141 Pounds of sweet corn for 4 food shelves. And several of us still worked on Booya that night.

The total corn delivered to seven food shelves for the year 2020, 5 pickings, was 15,991 pounds. An additional estimated 1470 pounds to Churches and needy families. In our area.

In the seven (7) years of picking and delivering sweet corn to Second Harvest, and the seven Food Shelves this year, we delivered over 81,000 pounds of corn That is equivalent to two Semi trailer (18 wheelers) of Corn.

People who helped with the corn Picking in 2020, include the following:

Bob Spangenberg	Chairman
Bob Altman	PGK and a couple times, his friend Patti Fahey
Sherman Branum	Jim Lingner
George White	PGK Lee Martin
Ron Warner and his grandsons	Simon, Leyton, Damien
Mike Schilling	PGK FDD Mike Braun PGK

The farmers, Brian Hopp, and Blane Hopp.

The sweet corn picking and delivery consumed over 339 hours of volunteer time.

For the five trips to pick corn, there was 19 vehicle trips for over 1700 vehicle miles.

The Food Shelves we delivered corn to include:

Food Shelf	City	Pounds
United Way	Hudson Wisconsin	1805 LBS
Family Services	Hastings	837 LBS
Friends In Need	St. Paul Park	5600 LBS
Catholic Charities	St. Paul	4312 LBS
Christian Community Cupboard	Oakdale	2437 LBS
N. St. Paul Food Shelf	North St Paul	204 LBS
Valley Outreach	Stillwater	796 LBS

The logistics involved in making the deliveries, multiple locations on the same day, is a bit challenging in itself, but Bob Spangenberg did a great job organizing this Sweet Corn Picking this year. The same group and hopefully some new faces will be available next year.



Here is a loaded truck with 1148 lbs of corn for Catholic Charities food shelf.



At the left is a second truck loaded with corn, to the top of the topper. Totes and Gunny sacks. In total about 1550 lbs.. 200 lbs for Hastings, and 1200 LBS for St. Paul Park.



At the left is Mike Braun, a past Grand Knight, and currently in the deaconate program. This was his first time with us. He had no idea of the work involved in this project. Next to him is George White also a past Grand Knight and the farmer, Brian Hopp.

At the right is a crew packing the corn in totes and boxes for delivery to food shelves, in the rain.





Above we are picking corn, we hand pick 6 rows at a time and put the corn in the snow bucket on the tractor that follows the pickers. When the bucket is full, it is dumped on the trailer in the previous picture or in the trailer pallet totes in the picture below.

The picture below shows the trailer totes full of corn, including George White, Bob Altman, both past Grand Knights and Bob's friend Patti Fahey. There is also Simon, a grandson of one of the Knights Ron Warner.

