

Crop Production

Sunflower wish

By LON TONNESON

AGRISWOLD, Conn., farm family found a creative use for sunflowers — and a way to attract customers to their dairy and raise money for charity at the same time.

Duane and Kim Button of Buttonwood Farms have raised more than \$150,000 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Connecticut, a nonprofit organization that grants wishes to children with

life-threatening medical conditions, by giving away bouquets of five sunflowers in exchange for a \$5 donation.

The Buttons originally planted sunflowers in 2003 to brighten up their dairy and agritourism business. As the sunflowers bloomed, people began traveling long distances to see them and take pictures.

“Although the flowers were beautiful, we had not thought about what we were going to do with them. When the



PHOTO BY BUTTONWOOD FARM

WISHES GROW: Sunflowers bloom at Buttonwood Farm, which sells sunflower bouquets during a weeklong event to raise money for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

blooms expired, we used them as feed for our cows,” the Buttons explain on their Web site. “We felt that we could find a better use for the flowers and, in

turn, have established the ‘Sunflowers for Wishes’ fundraiser.”

The weeklong event held each July when the sunflowers are blooming includes a hay ride around the farm. The rides give guests the chance to see grazing cattle, rolling pasture and blooming sunflowers.

In addition to taking donations for the Make-A-Wish Foundation, the Buttons also sell ice cream (including a sunflower-flavored one), sunflower T-shirts and other products during the event. This year, they raised \$68,000 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

■ To learn more, see the Buttonwood Farm Web site at www.buttonwoodfarmicecream.com.



‘Grab ’em’ videos score big online

SUNFLOWERS have cashed in on the YouTube video craze.

This summer, the National Sunflower Association held a video contest. It asked contestants to make a two-minute video promoting sunflowers with the theme “Grab ’em by the sack.” NSA received 55 videos.

In one of the “honorable mention” videos, a young woman stuffs her mouth with sunflower seeds and suggestively says, “Grab ’em by the sack.”

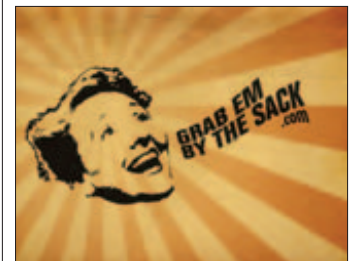
In another, a sack of sunflower seeds taunts a college student until he grabs it “by the sack.”

Dan Cunliffe II, Minot, Maine, won the contest with a video of kids with baseball gloves catching sacks of sunflower seeds instead of baseballs.

Cunliffe won \$10,000 in the contest and donated the money to a group building a new youth baseball field in his hometown.

Perhaps sunflower growers received a bigger prize. The Web site had more than 257,000 views during the contest.

■ To see the finalists, go to www.grabembythesack.com.



ATTENTION GETTER: The National Sunflower Association’s promotion theme — “Grab ’em by the sack” — proved to be a hit with viewers.

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