



HARBORSIDE FARMS Pilot Mound, Manitoba

Overview

The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) was created to address human resource issues facing agricultural businesses across Canada. CAHRC works with industry leaders, governments, and education stakeholders to research, develop and communicate solutions to the challenges in agriculture employment and skills development.

CAHRC representatives visited and interviewed employers and staff at a number of agricultural businesses across Canada. Interview notes and observations were used to showcase farm profiles that highlight industry management practices to recruit and retain workers.

CAHRC is led by industry and funded by the Sector Council Program of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). For more information about CAHRC, visit www.cahrc-ccrha.ca.

About Harborside Farms

For more than ten years now, Clinton and Pamela Cavers along with their three children have worked together on their 200 acre livestock farm and direct marketing business near Pilot Mound, Manitoba, located about two hours southwest of Winnipeg. They describe their approach to farming as holistic, producing and selling grass fed beef, pastured poultry, eggs, hogs, as well as rabbits and ducks. Clinton and Pamela are committed to the principles of small, sustainable farming and have incorporated these principles into their farm production systems and their lifestyle.

In the last five years, the Cavers have opened a meat shop business, processing and marketing their own meat and products from selected neighbouring operations. They market their produce as being raised without hormones or antibiotics and sell products ranging from traditional meat cuts of pork, beef, lamb and goat to wild game and specialty meats, including sausages and hotdogs.

Harborside Farm's Human Resource Management

The Cavers family works together on the farm. Clinton and Pamela work full time, year round, and their children work part time throughout the year. The three children work to care for livestock and poultry and in their on-farm meat store. Though the Cavers do not employ paid non-family workers, a young person does work on the farm on a part-time basis in exchange for land use.

Harborside Farms are host members of WWOOF Canada (Worldwide Workers on Organic Farms, Canada). WWOOF Canada's mission is "to raise consciousness about ecological solutions to environmental issues through support of a community of people who are passionate about sustainable organic stewardship of food, animals and land while respecting nature and protecting natural resources." Harborside Farms host up to 10 individual WWOOFers per year, who help on the farm for 4-6 hours a day for five days per week. In exchange they receive accommodations, meals and experience.

One factor that makes Harborside Farms unique among other similar operations is that they offer an internship to young farmers starting out in the industry. They offer two positions each year, either full time or part



time. The full-time position runs from May to September, and the part-time positions can last either from May to July, or July to September. The farm has several applicants each year, demonstrating a keen interest from new entrants to agriculture.

Recruitment Strategies

The Cavers recruit their interns through their contacts as members of the Manitoba Farm Mentorship Program. Potential interns can also apply for a position through the Harborside Farms Web site. All interested interns are interviewed prior to acceptance. As Clinton is also a certified teacher of the farm mentorship program, he has connections with new farmers who are interested in learning more about the agricultural industry.

Retention Strategies

Harborside Farms offers housing and meals to their WWOOFers as well as the opportunity to learn the various techniques and practices on the farm and in the meat shop. They also offer a land exchange with a young worker. The Cavers remain very positive and flexible with the various workers on their farm, and they enjoy welcoming others into their family during their stay on the farm.

Farm interns work closely with the Cavers family and are provided with accommodations in a farm house, farm produce, a learning plan and a stipend of \$200 per month. Clinton and Pamela work closely with their interns to ensure that they focus on the skills and knowledge of interest to the intern in order to maximize their work experience. Though the work is labour intensive and requires long hours, the Cavers try their best to schedule time off for the interns when possible.

Human Resource Challenges

As the internship program is relatively new to Harborside Farms, it is important to manage performance and maintain open communication. Harborside Farms would find value in tools or templates that would assist with implementing performance reviews to manage expectations.



Photo Credits: Harborside Farms



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