

# Make the 'Cherry Connection'

BY GINA GOODMAN  
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After enjoying everything from watching parades to eating cherry ice cream, many may wonder where all the cherries came from in the first place.

The Cherry Connection tour is a great way to find out.

"It is a real family friendly event to show festival goers about the cherry industry," said Jennifer Berkey, the event's director. "It connects the Festival, cherries and the farm."

The farm, an extension of Michigan State University, offers guided tours of the cherry orchards. Visitors are lead by researchers who really know about the growing patterns, Berkey said.

There are cherry products to try out inside the Northwest Michigan Horticulture Research Center, along with a variety of displays about why cherries grow best in Northern Michigan.

"We have cherry samples and cherry products to taste," Berkey said. "All five counties are presenting a large assortment of cherry products, cherry bread, cherry salsa and cherry body products, like creams and lotions."

The Cherry Connection also offers activities for kids, such as a cherry pit spit contest and a petting zoo with 4-H animals.

"We have a coloring contest where the children can draw their favorite cherry picture," Berkey said. "Last year their creations were displayed at the Lab and at the cherry Festival office."

The Cherry Industry Program, sponsored by the Michigan Cherry Committee, will take place on Tuesday at 1:30 at the Horticultural Research Station. This year's theme will be "Celebrating 25 years of research and education."

Berkey said the Cherry Connection is a fun way to educate people.

"It's just one large event that really teaches folks everything they want to know about cherries," she said.

Shuttles running every 15 minutes from the Visitor Center across from the Open Space will be available from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. Monday through Friday.



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