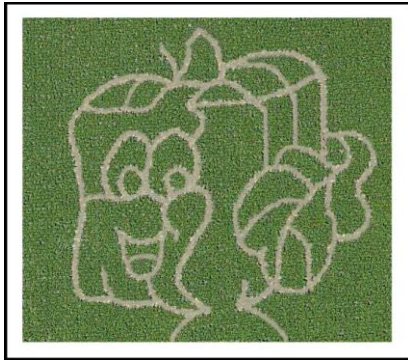




# Spookley the Square Pumpkin™

CONTACT: Jonathan Flom  
203.834.0323  
[jflom@spookley.com](mailto:jflom@spookley.com)

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AERIAL PHOTO "SPOOKLEY" CORN MAZE  
SWANK FARMS- HOLLISTER, CA



"SPOOKLEY" WITH A YOUNG FAN

## CHILDREN'S CHARACTER BECOMING NATIONAL ATTRACTION AT FAMILY FARMS AND FUN "A GRITAINMENT" DESTINATIONS -NEW FACE OF HALLOWEEN BURSTS OUT OF PUMPKIN PATCH INTO THE SPOTLIGHT-

(WILTON, CT) – There's a new hired hand on farms across the nation this harvest season- "Spookley the Square Pumpkin," a fictional character from a popular children's book. But Spookley's duties do not include sowing and reaping the crops. Instead family farmers are employing Spookley's popularity among educators and parents as a way to bring more families and school field trips out to visit their farms at a time when both schools and small farms face shrinking budgets.

Last fall, Hidden Oaks Pumpkin Farm in Montalba, TX was the first farm to introduce Spookley to area school children and teachers. "I couldn't believe how fast the word got around about Spookley," said Debbie Ruf, a former day care provider who owns and operates Hidden Oaks with husband Terry. "We had to stay open the entire month of November to accommodate all the teachers who wanted their kids to share the Spookley experience at our farm."

Hidden Oaks and thousands of other small family farms have an increasing need to self-subsidize so that they can compete with industrial farming operations. One way that they've done this is to become a school field trip destination. But farms are reporting that budget cuts have noticeably affected the number of school visitors in recent years.

"To see Spookley become an important link between schools and farms is absolutely thrilling," commented author and creator Joe Troiano. "I think everyone connects in some way with the core message that it's OK to be square in a round world."

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Depending upon the particular farm, the Spookley program can encompass anything from guided lesson plans, elaborate corn mazes, live plays, book readings or a combination of activities.

In fact, schools across the nation have incorporated the Spookley program into their diversity training as it is endorsed by Operation Respect, an organization that educates, trains and assists schools and youth service groups in creating safe and respectful environments.

“In a world where independent farms are competing with larger farms, fruit and vegetable stands and even discount superstores, Spookley gives us entertainment value,” said Peter Barton, owner of Barton Orchards in Poughquog, NY.

Besides Barton Orchards, numerous farms across the country are also incorporating the Spookley program into their seasonal activities. Each participating farm is carefully chosen for its unique qualities and school outreach programs by Holiday Hill Enterprises. “We work with each of the participating farms like they are family and we want them to grow with us as Spookley becomes a fun fixture in our culture,” said Jonathan Flom, a managing partner.

Highlights of some farms last season include:

- Giant Spookley corn stalk maze on 2.5 acres of land at Swank Farms in Hollister, CA
- Home-grown Spookley square pumpkins at Brown’s Harvest in Windsor, CT
- Spookley pen pal program between city and rural school children at Axdahl’s Garden Farm and Greenhouse in Stillwater, MN

In addition to a best selling book, Spookley has found natural extensions into different media, including production of a live stage show for The New York Botanical Gardens and a computer animated motion picture that can be viewed in movie theaters, on DVD (through Lions Gate Films), on television/online and throughout November and December on iNDEMAND.

“We’ve carefully chosen our entertainment partners that understand how to nurture Spookley’s homegrown qualities and who will help bring fun and learning to children everywhere year round,” concludes Flom.

Troiano created Spookley in 1997 when his young son asked for a bedtime Halloween story that wasn’t scary. Troiano, a well-known lyricist of both children and adult contemporary songs, immediately began telling his son a story in rhyme about a misfit pumpkin, who saves the day. By the time his son’s head hit the pillow, the legend of Spookley the Square Pumpkin had been born. Since then, Troiano has penned five additional Spookley books and has been a guest reader in classrooms and auditoriums for kids with special needs and at seasonal events each year.

Regardless of the particular medium, it is the underlying message that children absorb from the story that gives Spookley a life outside of the written page. According to the New York State Reading Association, “educators, publishers and producers all know that family literacy is the wave of the future for our children... and Joe Troiano and Spookley are on the forefront of the movement. This is the future of literacy!”

Some of Spookley’s friends at Holiday Hill Farm include Santa Claws and the Christmas Kittens, who teaches unselfishness, kindness and charity; Lyla the Lovesick Ladybug, who teaches self confidence, learning to love oneself and Beacon the Bright Little Firefly, who teaches independent thinking, resisting peer pressure and freedom of expression. For more information, visit [www.spookley.com](http://www.spookley.com) or call 1-888-5-SPOOKLEY.