

## Richard Corbin – part 2

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

“On Dasher, on Dancer, on Prancer and Vixen! On Comet, on Cupid, on Donner and Blitzen!” Those words tell us that Santa’s reindeer are on their way. But what if we could see an actual, living reindeer? Today, in the conclusion of this two-part series, we’ll learn about a rural Kansas family which is incorporating reindeer into their remarkable agritourism operation. It’s a special holiday edition of Kansas Profile.

Last week we learned about the Corbin family at Fulton Valley Farms in Butler County. David and Betty Corbin are the fifth generation on their family farm. Through the years, they diversified the operation to include a commodities brokerage and a wedding venue. Their son Richard is now a part of the operation.

One year they needed a venue for their son’s wedding reception. The wedding was in a small church but there was not enough room in the fellowship hall. They finally decided to clean out a barn and host the wedding reception themselves, right there on the family farmstead. It was so successful that another lady wanted to use the barn for her reception.

That was the beginning of the building which the Corbins call the Boot Scootin’ Barn. It was their first wedding venue and they found there was a lot of interest in rural, outdoor weddings. The Corbins invested in the materials and infrastructure to expand the wedding operation.

“Through the rural electric cooperative, we got a couple of big telephone poles which let us build a bridge over the creek to the woods next to the barn,” Richard Corbin said. “We used a skid steer to clear out some of the deer trails in the woods. We didn’t take out any trees, but we made nice paths for the people to walk,” he said.

The Corbins have continued to expand, improve facilities, and use creative ideas and good customer service to grow the business. They are located in a pretty, rural setting, just minutes from Wichita and El Dorado.

Over time, they have converted buildings to offer places for meetings and retreats as well as weddings. Today the farm offers six venues: The Boot Scootin’ Barn which can hold up to 350, lodging for up to 16 in The Creek House, several outdoor wedding sites, a secluded dining location in the woods called The Bower, a corporate meeting place called The Woods Conference Center, and smaller meeting places in the Cattle Shed and the Hayloft.

In their first year of wedding operations, the Corbins hosted a half-dozen events. By 2015, they hosted 75 weddings at the farm.

Then came the holidays. “Mom loves Christmas,” Richard Corbin said. They strung lights up to 45 feet in the air through the trees across the creek and hosted Country Christmas dinners. “This year we’ll have close to 50,000 lights, all blinking in time to the music,” Richard said.

The Corbins even thought about getting reindeer. It turns out one doesn’t just buy reindeer down at the sale barn. In fact, they were nowhere to be found in Kansas.

The Corbins finally found a breeder in Minnesota, but they had to order the reindeer in advance, pay a deposit, and be placed on a waiting list. Now the Corbins have them. Guests can sit in a sleigh and get their pictures taken with an authentic reindeer.

Richard also takes the reindeer out on location. This year the reindeer will make 35 appearances, as far away as Omaha, Nebraska.

Visitors to Fulton Valley Farms can walk through the light displays, enjoy hot chocolate, and visit a live nativity scene.

“With all the weddings plus other special events, we figure we had nearly 20,000 people at the farm in the last year,” Richard said. Wow. “It’s been amazing,” Betty Corbin said.

That’s certainly impressive for a place near the rural community of Towanda, population 1,319 people. Now, that’s rural.

For more information, see [www.fultonvalleyfarms.com](http://www.fultonvalleyfarms.com).

We commend Dave, Betty and Richard Corbin and all those involved with Fulton Valley Farms for making a difference with entrepreneurship in agritourism. “Now, dash away, dash away, dash away all!”

Wishing you happy holidays, for the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.