

# A Sticky Situation – The Susan DeMars Story

Just off Interstate 94 in Stearns County lies the small village of Collegeville, MN. It is home to St John's University and the College of Saint Benedict. Tucked away behind the "Pine Curtain" of Collegeville is a beautiful arboretum of hard sugar maple trees. Since the early 1940's the St. John's community has participated in an annual rite of spring known as The Saint John's Maple Syrup Operation. The operation involves tapping the trees, collecting the sap, cooking the syrup and bottling the syrup for distribution. The syrup is not sold, but rather used as a promotional gift. The maple syrup operation is run by Brother Walter Kieffer, O.S.B.

Susan DeMars of the Wright County Public Health Department has participated in this operation for the past two years, along with her husband Neal and daughter Marie, who are both three year veterans of the operation. Marie is a senior at the college of Saint Benedict, completing her final semester of school. On Saturday, March 14, Susan, Neal and Marie were part of a group of roughly 100 volunteers who, in two hours time, set up 800 taps in holes, drilled in maple trees, at the arboretum. The volunteers were primarily college students and their parents, providing an opportunity for family bonding in a pristine winter environment.

Susan and Marie were featured in an excellent video done by the Star-Tribune on the operation. The video can be viewed at <http://www.startribune.com/video/?vid=41353722&elr=KArks5PhDcU9PhDcU9PhDcU5PhDco8P77jyPhU>.

The arboretum will be holding its annual Maple Syrup Festival on March 28 and April 4. The festival includes Sap collecting, syrup cooking, horse-drawn rides and demonstrations. Hot maple syrup sundaes and fresh maple syrup taffy await the whole family during this fun-filled event. Scouts can attend and receive the new maple syrup scout patch.

Contact the Saint John's Arboretum Office at 320-363-3163 or e-mail [arboretum@csbsju.edu](mailto:arboretum@csbsju.edu) with any questions.

