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## GREAT PUMPKIN COMMONWEALTH'S ANDY WOLF ABOUT THE McKIE BROTHERS' PUMPKINS



Dennis C. Enser/Buffalo News

**Brothers Dan, left, and Jason McKie prepare to load their 1631.5-pound pumpkin onto a truck Saturday to take it to New York City for an appearance on ABC's "Good Morning America."**

# Pumpkins pave way to fame

*Two brothers will appear Monday morning on national TV*

BY DENISE JEWELL GEE

NEWS NIAGARA BUREAU

Three giant pumpkins are bringing fame to two Niagara County brothers.

A 1,631.5-pound pumpkin grown by Dan and Jason McKie this summer in Gasport shattered New York's pumpkin record and fell just 57.5 pounds shy of the world record measured by the Great Pumpkin Commonwealth.

The McKie brothers loaded their giant pumpkin onto a truck Saturday and headed to New York City for an appearance Monday morning on "Good Morning America."

The brothers already have won national acclaim.

Their pumpkin was the third heaviest ever officially weighed by the Great Pumpkin Commonwealth. The total weight of it and two other pumpkins grown by the McKies hit 4447.5 pounds and edged out all other triple pumpkin entries to win a top award from the organization.

"It's kind of like the MVP award," said Andy Wolf, a Little Valley resident and secretary of the Great Pumpkin Commonwealth, an international organization that runs pumpkin contests. "The MVP isn't necessarily going to hit the most home runs every year, but

they're considered a well-rounded player."

The McKies are part of a national pumpkin-growing frenzy that produced three pumpkins heavier than 1,600 pounds this year. Growers across the country also nurtured nine pumpkins to a heftier size than any other qualifying pumpkin ever weighed in a Great Pumpkin Commonwealth contest.

"The world record has gone up every single year for the last 11 years now," Wolf said. "I don't know if that's going to continue or not, but it's quite the triumph."

The McKies started growing

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# The pumpkin seeds will carry on

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pumpkins competitively three years ago as a hobby. Jason McKie, of Sanborn, is an ironworker, and Dan McKie, of Gasport, works at Delphi.

They will appear on "Good Morning America" along with two other growers of pumpkins heavier than 1,600 pounds. Dan McKie, 33, said a second television appearance on another national morning show is being lined up for Tuesday but has not yet been confirmed.

After that, the pumpkins will likely meet their fate. Wolf said one of the McKie pumpkins will either be carved on a national

television show Tuesday morning or will be shipped off to Connecticut for a similar fate.

Jason McKie, 28, won't be sad to see it go.

"After it's all done, we're both tired," he said. "It takes a lot of time to get them that big."

When the pumpkins are finally split open, the seeds will be scooped out of the record breaker in the hopes that its lineage will lead to future giant generations.

It's a line that already has been carefully cultivated. The pumpkin was a descendent of two others grown by the McKies in previous years.

"There's an incredible amount of effort in the winter,

in our off season, put into tracking and studying the family trees of each seed, finding out which ones do well, finding out which ones don't work well," said Wolf, a Cattaraugus County health inspector.

Like the McKies, Wolf spends his nights tending to giant pumpkins in the summer months. The fruit of his labor met the knife last week when professional carver Patrick Moser carved up his giant pumpkin at The Summit mall in Wheatfield.

"We're basically doing this for fun," Wolf said. "It's just our backyard hobby."

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