

BUSINESS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gnome Sweet Gnome...

Maxi-sized landmark for area's Mini-golf course



Chomsky goes for World Record. Photo by Rochelle Riservato

by Sarah Gantz

Like a hulking guardian angel, a giant garden gnome now watches over Route 209 as traffic flows into Kerhonkson. His name is Chomsky, and he is 13.5-foot tall. Chomsky, the Hudson Valley's latest celebrity-in-residence, will soon hold the Guinness World Record as the largest garden gnome. A stark break to the softly undulating fields abutting to Route 209, his attention-demanding stature is somewhat out of context.

At a 55-mph passing glance, Chomsky is every bit the enigma his unusual name and presence suggest. Awestruck upon first sight, one begins to wonder, "So, what sort of guy is the world's largest garden gnome? What kind of things are 13.5-foot cement statues into?" It just so happens that giant garden gnomes are a rare but fun-loving breed, whose choice forms of recreation include gardening (naturally) and miniature golf.

Chomsky's host family, Kelder's Farm, collaborated with miniature golf course aficionado Maria Reidelbach to create Gnome on the Grange Mini-Golf. This 10-hole course features a farm theme complete with local fruits and vegetables tucked into crevasses and old tires. Reidelbach incorporated as many local products, like mulch and cedar, as possible. She constructed golfing hazards from recycled farm equipment, including tractor tires and various other rusted gizmos.

While putting, golfers can learn agriculture trivia and history, such as cabbage ancestry. Just as the all-natural course blends with Kelder's Farm's "rustic" atmosphere, the informational vegetation complements Chris Kelder's farm philosophy. "Our farm has always worked hard on education," said Chris. He thinks it is vital that children receive agricultural education because "they are our future consumers."

It is no coincidence that Reidelbach's and Kelder's vision for the mini-golf course synchronize so well. Reidelbach contacted numerous farm owners with her "Gnome on the Grange" idea before joining forces with Kelder's Farm.

Reidelbach, a Manhattan native, has spent ample time vacationing in the Hudson Valley. She built an indoor "12 Holes of Christmas" course and a course at Pier 25 in Manhattan previous to conceiving "Gnome on the Grange." Reidelbach wanted her first farm-themed course to be in Ulster County, as a tribute to her love of the area. High property prices kept her from purchasing land, so "I started knocking on barn doors," said Reidelbach.

Reidelbach felt that her vision was "very much in the spirit of Kelder's." Kelder's felt that a farm-themed mini-golf course would be a "great [way] to market produce." Thus, "Gnome on the Grange" and Chomsky were born.

Reidelbach's brainchild, and artist/musician John Hutchison's creation, Chomsky, will soon receive his finishing touches – polychrome paint. In order to qualify for the prestigious title of the Guinness World Records' Largest Garden Gnome, Chomsky was constructed from the same materials as average-sized gnomes.

Chomsky's exceptional size and welcoming aura drew a pleasantly large crowd for the "Gnome on the Grange" grand opening earlier this month. Kelder's Farm hopes that the new mini-golf course and the world's largest gnome will continue to attract tourists and locals alike. "It's healthy to see more...going on in our community," said Kelder. Reidelbach agreed that the new mini-golf course is an excellent addition to the Kerhonkson area...an area that has been "under-appreciated for a long time." With the help of Chomsky's good looks and charm, "Gnome on the Grange" is sure to become a local sensation.

"Gnome on the Grange" is located at Kelder's Farm, 5575 Route 209, Kerhonkson, and will be open every day from 10 a.m. until dark.

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