

# This orchard is meant for picking and petting

By ELIZABETH G. HOWARD  
Special to The Star

A bright blue house with creamy yellow shutters — decorated with apples, of course — appears over the crest of the hilly two-lane highway. Two Belgian horses, the color of brown sugar, twitch their tails in the corral while plump feathered cochin chickens wander the neatly landscaped yard.

It's harvest time at the Alldredge Orchard in Platte City. The trees are heavy with Empire, Jonathan, Blushing Gold, Braverman and Gala varieties. The pumpkin patch is filled with jack-o'-lanterns-to-be; and inside the bakery, where Beatrice Alldredge is perpetually cooking, the smells of apple pies, chocolate macaroons and other homemade treats assault the senses.

When you take the kids out to Curtis Alldredge's orchard, they won't just leave there with a peck and a pumpkin. They will come away with a glimpse of a way of life that may be foreign to them — and may learn a thing or two about pollination, cider-pressing and raising chickens.

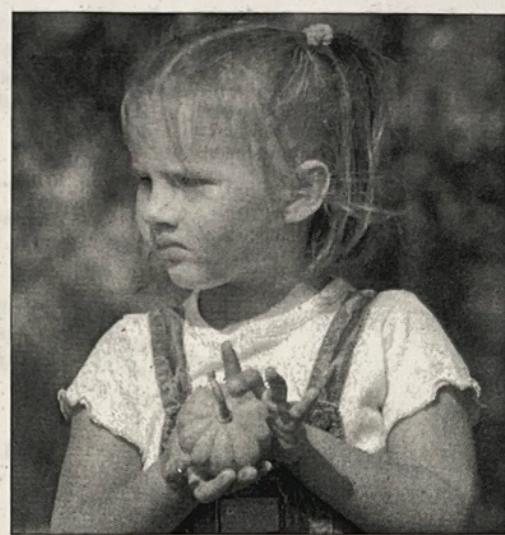
"The animals are here for the kids to go on up and pat them," says Beatrice Alldredge, Curtis' mother. "It's not just a matter of

having a real good time. We want it to be a learning procedure."

Although the farm is busy with school tours and scout groups all season long, the orchard is open every day to the public, offering apple picking by the half-peck, peck or half-bushel; pumpkins; mums; honey; and freshly baked cookies and pies. Visitors of all ages are allowed to feed and pet the goats, chickens and other animals. Old-fashioned music floats across the yard, and antique tractors are also on display.

There are a few rules, Beatrice Alldredge will tell you. Climbing the trees is not allowed, and children should go picking only with a parent or other responsible adult. She also asks that children be respectful of the old farm equipment.

Curtis Alldredge grew up with



WENDY YANG/The Star

Jamie Leonard, 4, of Merriam spent a recent morning at the Alldredge Orchard with classmates from Holy Trinity Children's Center.

the orchard life and learned about growing fruits first from his parents on their farm in St. Joseph, and then from professors at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., where he received a degree in pomology, or orchard management.

Other orchards in the Kansas City area also offer apple picking (check the phone book under "Orchards"), but Alldredge calls his place "kind of a secret" that offers something magical and brings loyal customers back year after year.

"When I was deciding (about college), I thought 'what would make a good life?'" he says. "My parents did it when I was growing up, and I had always loved it. I thought I wanted to try it for myself."

## Out in the country

Alldredge Orchard and Bakery, 10455 County Route N in Platte City, is open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. From Interstate 29 North, take the exit for Missouri 152 West and follow it until it becomes N. From the south, take I-435 North to Exit 24, 152 West. Head north on N. The orchard is on the east side of the road. Watch for the signs. For information about the farm or booking group parties, call 330-3448.

### ■ THE CHEESECAKE FACTORY:

Any mention of this wildly popular Country Club Plaza eatery tends to elicit a familiar chorus: The wait! The wait! While you will certainly face more wait than children can bear on Saturday nights, you can get seated immediately most other nights if you arrive before 6:15 p.m. Surprisingly the tables outside on the lovely Chandler Court seldom fill up, even at lunchtime on weekends. Depending on the weather, patio service usually is offered until mid-October.

■ WHERE: 4701 Wyandotte. (960-1919)

■ FOR KIDS: On nice days you can sit by the really big fountain on the patio and watch passers-by. Inside, from window booths you can see pretty Plaza buildings and J.C. Nichols Fountain. You can pick

### HEY, LET'S EAT!

your own dessert from a glass display case.

### ■ FOR PARENTS:

The menu, one of the largest in town, has no children's offerings per se. Extra plates are offered at no charge, however, so the kids can share your entrees. The appetizer page is also a source of inexpensive kids' fare. A plate of mini-burgers called Roadside Sliders (\$5.95) is plenty for two kids. Reservations can be had for 11-11:30 a.m. Monday-Saturday and 10-10:45 a.m. Sunday only (subject to change).

■ HOURS: 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays; 11 a.m.-12:30 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays; 10 a.m.-11 p.m. Sundays.

—Cindy Hoedel