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Rebecca Johnson, 12, of Midland looks back for her family while running through the corn maze at **Grandma's Pumpkin Patch** in Midland Sunday. The maze was constructed to resemble the outline of Dow 47 Building and H.H. Dow's office "It was fun but very hard. The mud made my feet feel good," Johnson said.

Maize mazes

By Josh Grosteffon
of the Daily News

Hedge mazes usually are reserved for mansions or fancy gardens. Corn mazes might be their blue-collar equivalent.

When it comes time to carve the acres of crop into ornate paths and shapes, area farmers have different methods they employ for the fall festivity.

Bill "Papa" Miller uses a little math when constructing the Michigan Maze at Papa's Pumpkin Patch and Country Farm Market, 3909 South Summerton Road in Mount Pleasant.

The retired math professor basically graphs out his field then connects the dots to build his replica of the state.

"I use a lot of flags," he said. "I do the equivalent of mapping out an x-axis and a y-axis." Using coordinates first plotted on paper, he transfers his design to the field. He cuts the corn when it's short with a push mower.

"Mowers are forgiving. If you make a mistake, the corn will grow back," he said.

The maze, two acres big, has been as large as 11 acres. He outlines major Michigan counties and maps out interstates and county seats. Participants get a state map to follow through its corridors.

North of Midland, **Grandma's Pumpkin Patch**, 4277 North Eastman Road, honors a Midland landmark that made way for a new



A corn maze at Grandma's Pumpkin Patch in Midland resembles the outline of the Dow 47 Building and H.H. Dow's office. The 47 Building was torn down to make room for the Dow Diamond. Grandma's Pumpkin Patch has been making a corn maze for five years. "The first maze was from a kids' coloring book. We had no idea what we were doing. After that we had maze designers from Utah help us out," Andrea Sandow of Grandma's Pumpkin Patch said.

For corn maze web links and events, visit www.ourMidland.com

Not listed? Submit your corn maze info online.

one — Dow Diamond. The maze takes 20 minutes to get through if you're determined and an hour if you want to explore, said Amanda Sandow, a member of the family that runs the farm.

The family decided to use a consultant after attempting to cut a maze on their own one year with a tractor. The theme this year commemorates the 47 Building, as chosen by The Dow Chemical Co., the maze's sponsor.

The Sandow family's maze is constructed by The MaIZE, a national corn maze company. The company says their methods

are trade secrets (other farmers point to Global Positioning Systems), but admit on their website that they use computers and cut the maze when corn plants are fairly short.

It's up to the Sandows to keep the maze clean, though. They go through the 3.5-acre area with a rototiller to keep the paths nice and clean.

"Otherwise it gets overgrown with weeds," Sandow said.

Gerald Johnson of Johnson's Giant Pumpkins, 4715 North Portsmouth Road in Saginaw, like Miller uses a simple approach to cutting his maze.

"I map it out on paper first and once I have it mapped out, I go out on the field and start measuring and flagging it," he said. His tools of choice are a measuring wheel and a lawn mower.

"I'm kind of a low-tech person, so I don't get into computers or GPS," he said.

The theme this year is "Support Our Troops" and the maze features that message along with a ribbon and peace sign design. He chose the design as he believes in supporting the country's military and also has a son-in-law who is about to do a tour in Afghanistan.

The maze features a few miles of trails, Johnson estimated, and is accompanied by a smaller soybean maze for younger children.

"The way I like to design mine so on the average when someone's in there it will take them about 30 to 40 minutes," he said. "Some people take well over an hour and some come out a little quicker."