

# Kids Korner

## Potato Daze

**LORETTA GOLDEN**

**Cambria Co. Correspondent**  
**PORTAGE (Cambria Co.)**—In conjunction with farm-city week in Cambria County, the kindergarten classes of Barbara Kent, Martha Krisko, and Neva Shaw at Portage Elementary School, celebrated "Potato Daze." For two days, most of the activities in their classrooms centered around Cambria County's main agricultural commodity—the potato.

The three teachers put forth quite a bit of time and effort planning age-appropriate activities for their students. One purpose was to familiarize the children with the importance of potato farming in this area. The project also gave the students a little bit of the background of this versatile vegetable.

The children learned that the potato is one of the main food crops of the world. The edible part of the plant is called the "tuber," the swollen part of the underground stems. The potato plant is grown from pieces of the tuber. Each piece of the tuber must have one or more little buds, or "eyes"

in order for the plant to sprout and develop.

The kindergarten students were able to have a real "hands-on" experience with the potatoes. Buckets of potatoes, still in the ground, were brought in so that the students could see that they actually do grow underground. This came as a surprise to some of the five-year-olds who thought that the vegetable comes from the store, factory, or even trees. The children thoroughly enjoyed digging in the dirt to find the potatoes and didn't seem to mind getting their hands dirty.

The Rick Weakland Farm located in Portage donated the potatoes for the project. This provided the teachers with enough spuds to be able to set up a number of "stations" in their rooms so that the children could participate in a variety of activities. The children were able to count, weigh, estimate, and categorize the potatoes. The skins were especially interesting to the students who investigated them with magnifying glasses.

The potatoes even provided for some "artistic" endeavors. A number of the tubers were cut in half and the teachers carved simple geometric shapes onto these halves. These shapes were then dipped into paint and used to create shape patterns. Ethan Stoker really enjoyed printing with his potato. He said "it's neat to do, but a messy job."

Pipe cleaners, construction paper, yarn, eyes, and other craft materials were glued to some of the other spuds as the children had a great time creating their potato "pets" and "people." Krisko even made a few miniature sofas for those students who wished to turn theirs into "couch potatoes."

The nutritional value of the vegetable was also stressed and the children were given potato recipes to take home to their families. The three teachers spent some time preparing the potatoes in a variety of ways: French fries, baked potatoes, grating them for potato pancakes, and even using mashed potatoes for making potato candy.

The fun didn't stop here...relay teams were set up and the kindergartners ran "potato" races. They

had to keep a wary eye on their potatoes as they raced around the "potato man" with their spuds on spoons. One class used the sacks and ran a traditional "potato sack race."

All in all, Portage Area's "Potato Daze" proved to be fun as well as educational.



Grade "K" (kindergarten) "Class"-ifieds, Morgan Portash and Camette Hoberney, getting ready for the potato sack race.



Michael Storey and Chris Krinjeck investigating their potato skins with magnifying glasses.



Mrs. Kent's class in the process of categorizing their potatoes. Nick Crum is deciding whether or not this spud is "big" or "little."



Megan Pisarski and Briana Schmidt are doing quite well in this potato relay race.



Kindergarten "Picassos"—Shane Noel, Ethan Stoker, and Robert Theys, making potato prints with a cut potato and tempera paints. Ethan remarks that "it's neat to do but a messy job."