

Kids Korner



Alice Pennell, master gardener, brought in compost for students, who look at the life inside, including earthworms.



Michelle Ranck allows students of Mrs. Movak's fourth grade class in Smoketown to see the wonders of a watershed.

Conestoga Valley Elementary Students Learn 'Caretaking'

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff
LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)
— Michelle Ranck led Mr. Kemper's fourth grade class at Smoketown Elementary in a simple discussion.

She asked, "Has anybody heard of a watershed?"

Some of the fourth graders shook their heads. One correctly pointed to an EnviroScape model that showed an area marked by bodies of water that led, eventually, into the Chesapeake Bay.

Ranck asked the class, "What are water bodies?"

Many raised their hands. "Bays," some said. "Oceans." "Lakes." "Ponds."

"And what are some kinds of pollution that can end up in the waterways?" Ranck asked.

"Trash," some said. "Oil." "Chemicals." One even said, "CFCs."

About 75 students began to realize what those concerned about the environment already know: there are connections between what the farmer grows and what everybody eats. And the message they learned: we are all responsible for protecting the health of the environment.

The students making up Leola and Smoketown elementary schools traveled to the John and Bonnie Rohrer Farm Tuesday morning to see a part of the "cycle" of farm products, from producer to

consumer, and the importance of learning to recycle.

They learned how to be "caretakers" of the water, plants, resources, animals, soils, and community.

Rohrer, who "recycles" newspapers in the form of stall bedding, also spoke to the class about how milk is produced. He explained what it is like to take care of his 150 tillable acre dairy farm. Rohrer said he milks about 60 cows and cares for another 60 replacement calves.

Rohrer allowed some students to feed milk replacer to calves from a bottle.

One fourth grade student in Mr. Smecker's fourth grade class in Smoketown considers herself a veteran of calf feeding.

"This is pretty good," said Samantha Wickenheiser after holding the bottle to a Holstein calf. "These cows are pretty clean." Samantha, 9, is the daughter of Greg and Susan Wickenheiser, Lancaster.

Samantha was petting a calf when a friend said, "Don't, he'll bite."

"No it won't," she replied.

Samantha said that she was "familiar with this," since she sometimes works on a farm near York, operated by a friend of her dad. She said she has fed calves, done some milking, and other chores.

Sue Martin, who helped at the

Rohrer farm site, said, "For some children, this is the only experience they will have with farm life and agriculture as a business."

The Ag In the Classroom field

day allowed students to see firsthand how what they learn about the processes of life, including the study of soil science and animal nutrition, are applied in the real

world.

Martin explained that students can understand the role of the farmer with animals.

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Mr. Kemper's fourth grade class at Smoketown Elementary with the EnviroScape watershed model at the "caretakers of water" station at the Rohrer farm.



The Rohrer family was host to the Ag in the Classroom event at their farm. From left, Ryan, John, Bonnie, and Jason Rohrer.



Students from Smoketown Elementary feed calves at the Rohrer Farm.