

Franklin Fall Farm Fun Fest Features Farming



Alexa Stoner and Carolyn Moyer team up at the Mid-Atlantic Dairy Council exhibit to help students bone up on the importance of calcium to their health. Along with dairy fact sheets, students were provided with recipes to give them ideas to make and eat dairy products.

MICHELLE RANCK
Farming Staff

MERCERSBURG (Franklin Co.) — If you think that saying "Franklin Fall Farm Fun Fest" is challenging, try channeling the energy of more than 1,600 fourth grade students on a field trip to a local dairy farm.

Held this year at Stoner's Hijos Farm in Mercersburg, the event changes locations each year. Sponsored by the Franklin County Farm Bureau, the three-day educational event allows students to experience firsthand a working farm as they tour the grounds and rotate through 18 interactive exhibits stationed around the farm.

A fast-moving schedule of seven minutes at each station kept the students moving to all areas of the farm such as the milking parlor, the dry cow/hospital barn, milk tank room, feed storage, and farm machinery display.

The 25-minute wagon tour included stops to talk about conservation practices, observe crops, see the Slurrystore and check out the freestall barn. A bale maze, petting zoo, and free ice cream were also highlights of the day.

Growing Participation

According to promotion and education committee member and former agriculture teacher

Gerald Reichard, Waynesboro, this year marks the 10th fall fest. The first six years, said Reichard, were a Saturday event open to the general public. Later the event was changed to include the field trip day for fourth graders.

Seven school districts now send approximately 65 class-

rooms to participate in the event.

The students tour the farm two days before the farm is opened to the public on Saturday. Traditionally 1,200 to 2,000 people attend the event over the weekend.

In addition to the host dairy farm, a bus tour is sometimes an option for guests to tour a poultry, buffalo, or horse farm, fish hatchery, or orchard.

Because of increased school participation each year, numbers have in-

creased dramatically.

"We have had a tremendous amount of cooperation from the school districts, FFA members serving as tour guides, presenters, and sponsors," said Reichard. Approximately 60-75 people serve as either presenters or event organizers.

Promotion and education

rooms to participate in the event.

The students tour the farm two days before the farm is opened to the public on Saturday.

Traditionally 1,200 to 2,000 people attend the event over the weekend.

In addition to the host dairy farm, a bus tour is sometimes an option for guests to tour a poultry, buffalo, or horse farm, fish hatchery, or orchard.

Because of increased school participation each year, numbers have in-

creased dramatically.

"We have had a tremendous amount of cooperation from the school districts, FFA members serving as tour guides, presenters, and sponsors," said Reichard. Approximately 60-75 people serve as either presenters or event organizers.

Promotion and education

Barrick. "It will be a learning experience."

The petting zoo and calves were favorite activities of Barrick's students. "Getting the chance to put milkers on a cow was also a big thrill," said Barrick.

Tim Brookens, also a fourth-grade teacher at Chambersburg, agreed that students have limited experience with agriculture. "Even in our rural area, there's not a lot of kids that know anything about farming," said Brookens.

According to fourth grade

Shearer.

"We do a unit on Pennsylvania which will get into Pennsylvania agriculture," said Chambersburg teacher Jodi Feltman. In her class the students learn about the products grown in Pennsylvania and compare these products with other commodities grown in the U.S.

The Stations

In the freestall barn, Joe Middour described the comfortable living conditions of farm's 500 cows. He pointed out the fresh feed and water, the rubber mats, the scraped alleys and ventila-



Philip Wagner, Franklin County extension agent, describes the replacement role of the farm's "teenage cows" at the heifer barn. Wagner described how the heifer pens are sorted by weight. To answer the students' question of whether or not the ear tags hurt, Wagner compared the ear tags to ear piercing.



Jamie Stoner, wife of farm co-owner Todd Stoner, introduces students to the younger members of the dairy herd. Jamie helps to feed the 50 calves mornings at Hijos Hill.

teacher Ms. Shearer from Shalom Christian Academy, students at the school spend four weeks during social studies class learning about and comparing farming regions of the U.S.

"It's a great introduction for upcoming studies in the school year. Fewer of our children coming in are farmers, so this is a good way to help kids understand how it operates, and what is involved," said Ms.

tion systems of the barn.

A at the farm's Slurrystore a representative from the Conservation District described the problems of algae, bacteria, and excessive nutrients for the Bay and producer efforts to install manure management systems and storages to slow or stop nutrient runoff.

Extension agent Ann Bonson believes that educational days such as Franklin County's fall fest are valuable in teaching children the connection between food and where it comes from.

Bonson demonstrated to the students the different parts of a plant, and how they are edible, such a potatoes as roots. Bonson also showed the students groceries and asked about their ingredients to help the students relate groceries from the store to the farm. "Most kids do not even know that chips are made of potatoes," said Bonson. One stu-



Mark Yarish, dairy specialist at Purina Mills, demonstrates to the fourth graders the ingredients of feed in a cow's rations. Students found it hard to believe a cow could eat almost double of an average fourth grader's weight, 100-110 pounds of feed per day. Yarish pointed out that since cows may also drink 40 gallons a day the farmers must take care of their local water system.

committee members Haydee Middour, Waynesboro, and Margie Meyers, St. Thomas, monitored the time for the seven-minute rotations throughout the day.

"Everybody (school districts) has been enthusiastic about the event, so it's been expanding," said Middour.

According to Middour, the event is held in different parts of the county each year to expose more people to agriculture.

Valuable Supplement To School Curriculum

The day provides children with valuable exposure to something they have little or no experience with, according to Chambersburg teacher Jerry Barrick.

"None of these kids live on a farm, and none of them know a things about a farm, or even have relatives on a farm," said

Steve Stoner, co-owner of Hijos Hill, describes the fine art of the mowing process. "All this equipment is like toys for big people," added Mark Stoner, also a co-owner of the host farm. "Useful toys."

