

May 10, 2019

DAY ON THE FARM

Last week I assisted in two activities teaching 3rd graders called the Day on the Farm in Beatrice and the Ag-Citing Ag Festival at Tuxedo Park in Crete. I was reminded how much energy it takes to do back-to-back sessions with a lot of students. It really gives you a great appreciation of what classroom teachers do every day and the effort involved.

We had 185 students and 7 schools involved in Beatrice and 247 students from Crete, Friend, Dorchester, and St. James Catholic School-Crete in the Saline County event held at Tuxedo Park and fairgrounds. Eric Stehlik, Saline County 4-H Associate, helped to organize the first Saline County event in May of 2014 and continues to do this.

There were nine sessions for the Ag-Citing Ag Festival in Crete. Farm-to-Table activity (Leanne Manning and Anita Stougaard), Sheep (Eric Stehlik), Dairy (Jodi Cast, J.J.C. Dairy, Beaver Crossing), Beef (Darci Pesek, animals provided by Grant Kraus), Great Grain experience (taught by me including products from the Crete Mill), Swine (Kyle Baade, farmer, animals provided by Mike Vales), Poultry (Gary Vorderstrasse, poultry provided by Madalyn Coe-Ahl), Ag Careers (Dennis Kenning, Farmers Cooperative) and Ag Machinery (Ryan Keller, combine provided by John Hayek and Brian Lorenz).

Dennis Kenning, Farmers Cooperative, in a noon speech in Beatrice, said it best about how lucky the kids were to be growing up in America with the cheapest food in the world. Because of that, your parents can spend money on other modern conveniences that you take for granted. Americans spend just 6.4% of their household income on food, the cheapest in the world. That's according to the figures compiled by the USDA in 2016. There are only eight countries in the world that spend less than 10% of their household income on food. Nigeria spends over half of household income on food and there are nine other countries that spend over 40% on food, four of them are in Africa.

Why are these ag education programs important? Not only did students get to see some of their favorite farm animals up close and in person, but they learned about the importance of agriculture and the importance that agriculture has producing food, fuel, feed and fiber. As a co-worker recently said, Nebraska Extension strives to increase youths' knowledge of our food system that includes production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste management. It will help them develop a better understanding, confident attitudes and interests regarding the food system. As a result, youth will be better informed about the role agriculture plays in the state and local economy as well as in their daily lives.

It gives the youth a better understanding of the community around them. I would open the door of the 4-H Exhibition Building and ask the third graders "What's that sound that you hear by the park? It's from a factory, what factory is that?" Only a few will know it's the sound of the Crete Mill with the capability of milling 50,000 bushels or 50 semi-loads of corn a day. The kids love to touch the corn flour and how soft it is, a product of the Mill and the key ingredient in Kellogg's Fruit Loops and Apple Jack cereals.



Only 9% of our corn harvest of dent corn in Nebraska goes for food, 35% for ethanol and distillers grains for feed, 22% directly for feed, 18% exported, and the remainder is carry over and miscellaneous. I explain to the youth they are fortunate to live in the breadbasket of the world. I asked them to guess how many boxes of corn flakes can come from just one pivot of irrigated corn. The answer is approximately 300,000 boxes of corn flakes (24 oz) plus other ingredients leftover such as for feed.

As a side note, Saline County farmers produced a record corn crop in 2018 according to USDA-NASS. The record corn yield was 188.7 bushels per acre on 141,700 acres. The irrigated average was 220.8 bushels per acre and dryland was 158.2 bushels per acre. What a tremendous accomplishment.

Randy Pryor, Extension Educator

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Saline County · 306 West 3rd Street, Wilber, NE 68465

Phone (402) 821-2151 · Fax (402) 821-3398 · e-mail: randy.pryor@unl.edu