

Coalition Addresses Need for Agriculture Education

HISTORY . . .

As communities continue to urbanize, youth of these communities are losing touch with Nebraska's greatest resource, AGRICULTURE. In June 1995, a group of nine professionals joined together to explore ideas in educating youth about the agriculture industry. In order to develop specific goals and objectives for the newly formed AG AWARENESS COALITION, this group invited several agricultural leaders and held a brainstorming session in August 1995. Since then, the diverse group has expanded to fifteen members and meets on a regular basis to implement program objectives that include the Agricultural Awareness Festival that has educated over 6,500 school-aged youth and the development of the Ag Awareness Web Page found at: <http://ag4kids.unl.edu/>

MISSION . . .

"To increase youths' knowledge and understanding about agriculture concepts by cooperatively bringing together several disciplines."

GOAL . . .

The goal of the Ag Awareness Coalition is to help youth, primarily from urban communities, become aware of agriculture. The group develops resources and opportunities that will increase youths' understanding and awareness about agriculture concepts.

FESTIVAL DESCRIPTION . . .

The development and implementation of the annual AGRICULTURAL AWARENESS FESTIVAL for youth is a major objective of the Ag Awareness Coalition. The First Annual



Students learn about farm technology and are given the opportunity to have hands-on experience with the high-tech farming equipment.

Agricultural Awareness Festival was held in October 1996 at the University Development Center (ARDC) near Mead, Nebraska. The one-day event served as a pilot project for 200 Omaha Public School sixth grade students. Since 1996, approximately 6,500 students have attended the Agricultural Awareness Festival. Most recently, the 2002 Spring Festival included nearly 400 students from Lancaster and York County schools and the 2002 Fall Festival included 950 Dodge, Douglas, Sarpy and Saunders County students. Plans are currently being made for the 2003 Agriculture Awareness Spring Festival that is scheduled for April 1 and 2 and the Fall Festival scheduled for October 1, 2, 8 and 9.

Cooperative Extension in

Dodge County

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University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension

What We Do

Extension helps Nebraskans put knowledge to work. It provides a variety of educational opportunities, delivered via a variety of ways, so participants have knowledge they can use to make sound decisions to better their lives. Extension educators and specialists teach, facilitate and collaborate in providing research-based information to approximately 400,000 urban and rural Nebraska residents annually. A Nebraska mainstay since 1915, extension carries forward the land-grant university mission of taking the resources of the university to the state. As a trusted source of factual information today, extension is just as vital as ever, and perhaps even more so, because of the diverse, complex—and often confusing—issues people encounter.



Students learn about the dairy industry and what goes into managing baby calves. This session usually gets high ratings since students are given the opportunity to touch the baby calves.



Students learn about corn and soybean production. In this picture a student has up-close experience of a soybean plant.

MEASURABLE RESULTS . . .

Pre- and post-tests, as well as evaluation forms have provided valuable input on the success of the Agricultural Awareness Festival. While the method of evaluation has changed since its inception, it has yielded the following useful results:

1996 FALL FESTIVAL / one day

Results from the pre and post (taken directly following the festival) tests showed an overall percentage of knowledge increase of 65%. Results from the pre and post (taken in the spring) tests showed an overall percentage of knowledge increase of 20.7%. Evaluations from both teachers and students indicated the festival was student age level appropriate and very educational.

Overall Increase in Knowledge.....65%

1997 FALL FESTIVAL / three days

Scale of 1 - 4 (4 highest rating)

Overall Rating of Day.....3.70

Scale of 1-5 (5 highest rating)

Overall Increase in Knowledge.....4.39

1998 FALL FESTIVAL / three days

Teacher Evaluations/Scale of 1 - 4 (4 highest rating)

Overall Average of Items Rated.....3.84

Student Evaluation/Scale of 1 - 4 (4 highest rating)

Overall Average of Items Rated.....3.84

Scale of 1-5 (5 highest rating)

Overall Increase in Knowledge.....3.87

1999 FALL FESTIVAL / four days

Scale of 1 - 4 (4 highest rating)

Overall Rating of the Day.....3.90

Scale of 1-5 (5 highest rating)

Overall Increase in Knowledge.....4.40

2000 FALL FESTIVAL / four days

Teacher Evaluations / Scale of 1 - 4 (4 highest rating)

Overall Rating of Day.....3.96

Classroom Evaluations/Scale of 1-5 (5 highest rating)

Overall Rating of Day..... 4.23

Scale of 1-5 (5 highest rating)

Overall Increase in Knowledge.....4.23

2001 SPRING FESTIVAL / one day

Teacher Evaluations / Scale of 1 - 4 (1 highest rating)

Overall Average of Items Rated.....3.86

Student/Classroom Evaluations/Scale of 1-5 (5 highest rating)

Overall Rating..... 4.32

2001 FALL FESTIVAL / four days

Teacher Evaluations / Scale of 1 - 4 (4 highest rating)

Overall Rating of the Day.....3.78

Overall Average of Items Rated.....3.80

Increase in Knowledge

1= no increase / 3 = moderate increase / 5 = extreme increase

Overall Increase in Knowledge.....4.173

TEACHER COMMENTS

About The AGRICULTURAL AWARENESS FESTIVALS . . .

◆*“I felt that the way the presenters tied agriculture in with our everyday lives was good to see especially for kids from the city.”*

◆*“The students enjoyed all of the sections. Most of them were seeing some of the things for the first time up close.”*

◆*“We live in an agriculture state and city children are not aware of what that means. The program helped.”*

◆*“I think students think food comes from the store, now they know that farmers grow crops and raise animals for food.”*

◆*“Wonderful day and well worth our time! Parents all commented how much they learned also!”*



Students learn about ruminant nutrition and the importance of management within the cattle industry.



Students learn about corn and soybean products. They learn how many products and by-products of corn and soybeans effect their everyday lives

2002 SPRING FESTIVAL / two days

Teacher Evaluations

“Overall Rating of the Day” / 100% Good or Excellent

“Quality of the Educational Content” / 100% Excellent

“Knowledge Level of Presentation” / 100% Excellent

Student/Classroom Evaluations / Scale of 1-5 (5 highest rating)

Overall Rating..... 4.32

2002 FALL FESTIVAL / three days

Teacher Evaluation / Scale of 1 - 4 (4 highest rating)

Overall Rating of the Day..... 3.85

Student/Classroom Evaluations/Scale of 1-5 (5 highest rating)

Overall Rating..... 4.08

WEB SITE DESCRIPTION . . .

In an effort to reach a greater audience, the Ag Awareness Coalition became involved in developing an interactive web site. The Coalition’s vision was to develop an all-encompassing site and become globally known as “the hub of information for elementary school agriculture curriculum and activities”.

The Coalition developed a dual purpose site that:

- (1.) Provides curriculum, activities, and resources to teachers
- (2.) Provides on-line activities that are both entertaining and educational for youth visiting the site.

**Ag Awareness
Coalition
Web Site**

<http://ag4kids.unl.edu>

CONTENTS . . .

The web page includes the following sections:

- ◆ **Ag Careers:** These pages include over a variety of careers in the agriculture industry from geneticist to aquaculturist.
- ◆ **Coalition Members:** This page includes the AAC mission statement and a brief history/description of the coalition. All coalition members are listed and have a link to their organization/business web page(s).
- ◆ **Virtual Tours:** This page includes access to nine virtual tours that are reflective of the AA Festival sessions. The virtual tours include; Beef Production, Beef By-products, Food Safety & Nutrition, Dairy Nutrition, Baby Calves, Milking Process, Grain Production, Technology, Grain By-products.
- ◆ **Interactive Learning Lab:** This page links students and teachers to interactive web sites that are interactive.
- ◆ **Teacher Resources:** This page links teachers to a variety of resources centered around agricultural education.

TARGET AUDIENCE . . .

The intended audience for this project is elementary teachers and students grades K - 6, with special emphasis on fourth grade.

LOCATION . . .

**The Ag Awareness Coalition Web Site may be found at:
<http://ag4kids.unl.edu>**

The Ag Awareness Coalition Kiosk is portable and is primarily located at the University of Nebraska Agriculture Research and Development Center.

SPONSORED BY: Ag Awareness Coalition

IN COOPERATION WITH:

NU Institute if Agriculture and Natural Resources



Students learn about swine management and the many products and by-products of swine.



At the completion of the swine session, students are given the opportunity to taste a pork product.

COALITION MEMBERS . . .

American Dairy Association/Dairy Council of Nebraska
 Janice M. O. Strang - Program Director, Nutrition Ed.
 Educational Service Unit #3 / Gifford Farm Education Center
 Nancy Williams - ESU #3 / Gifford Farm Education Center
 Farmers National Company
 Jerry A. Warner - Chief Management Officer
 Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom
 Ellen Hellerich - Statewide Coordinator
 Nebraska Beef Council
 Amanda Young - Director of Consumer Affairs
 Nebraska Corn Growers Association
 Jill West - Projects Manager
 University of Nebraska Agricultural Research and Development
 Daniel J. Duncan - Director
 Deloris Pittman - Marketing & Promotions Manager
 University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension / Dodge County
 Tracy J. Behnken - Extension Educator 4-H/Youth
 University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in Douglas/Sarpy Co.
 Carol McNulty - Extension Educator 4-H/Youth
 Monte Stauffer - Extension Educator
 University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in Lancaster Co.
 Deanna Karmazin - Extension Assistant
 University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in Saunders Co.
 Lance Cummins-Brown - Extension Educator
 Bob Meduna - Extension Educator

COALITION SUPPORT . . .

Besides the Ag Awareness Coalition members' commitment to success, more than twenty agri-businesses, commodity associations, food industry companies and University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources departments have provided support to the Ag Awareness Coalition since its start in 1995.

The coalition functions primarily by utilizing volunteer time and securing funds through grant dollars and in-kind donations. Funding sources have ranged from \$6,750 to \$25, totaling

\$36,625 over the past seven years. In-kind support has been provided in a variety of ways. Local farm implement dealerships have provided display equipment, several food processors have provided free or discounted food products for the students, and area producers have assisted with festival presentations. In addition, the Ag Awareness Coalition members provide many hours of their personal and business expenses to support the coalition.

Grant dollars are utilized for festival expenses, such as; instructional materials and props, refreshments, breakfast and lunch for volunteers (tour guides, presenters and AAC members) and student transportation. The major expense to the Ag Awareness Coalition is transportation costs which covered more than 1,300 students (950 at fall festival and 400 at spring festival) during the 2001-2002 program year. With decreasing school funding and increasing transportation costs, many of the students attending the AA festivals may have not had the opportunity to attend without AAC's transportation funding support.

"A DAY ON THE FARM" . . .

another opportunity for Dodge County students

The First Annual "A Day on the Farm" was held in October 2001 at the Washington County Fairgrounds in Arlington, Nebraska. The half-day event served as a newly developed project for 300 (150 at a morning program and 150 at an afternoon program) Washington County third grade students to gain knowledge in agriculture.

Over the past two years, "A Day on the Farm" event has educated 678 Washington County students about the various aspects of agriculture and how it effects their daily lives. Recently, Washington County Extension and Dodge County Extension staff have agreed to join forces to educated both Washington and Dodge County third grade students. Plans are currently being made for the 2003 "A Day on the Farm" event that is scheduled for Thursday, May 1 and Friday, May 2 at the Washington County Fairgrounds.

Helping People To Put Knowledge To Work