

AITC Blog
Early August 2010

If you “follow” North Carolina Ag in the Classroom, you know that late June and the month of July are among the busiest and most exciting times for those involved in the program. 2010 has certainly not been an exception to this phenomenon.

We concluded June with a wonderful trip to Baltimore, Maryland for the National Ag in the Classroom Conference. We were fortunate to have been able to share a few new features from The Old North State. NC Ag in the Classroom has completed a set of lessons for Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grades about cotton. These lessons were developed using grant funding from Monsanto and will be made available to all school systems in North Carolina. The lesson set is entitled, “Hi, Cotton!” and they have a representative character named “Hi,” of course. School systems using the lessons are eligible to receive three accompanying books for student use at no charge. There are two song parodies used to help students learn about the importance of cotton to our society. “Hi, Cotton!” helps student learn the names of all the states in the Cotton Belt and “The Ballad of Hi Cotton” is a history of this miracle plant.

Another teaching strategy shared for the first time in Baltimore is called “The Life Cycle of a Hen.” It happens to be one of those famous paper plate activities that allow children to demonstrate how the lives of plants and animals are indeed cyclical. There’s a song parody to accompany this lesson. To see and hear some very talented students performing the song, search YouTube for “The Hen Dance.” It’s a real treat and you might just want to add the steps to your repertoire.

We also shared our latest version of the “Commodity Christmas Tree” in Baltimore. This tree is usually showcased at “The Field of Dreams” exhibit at the North Carolina State Fair and features a very large Carolina grown tree with ornaments representing our state’s top agricultural commodities. The ornaments are actually made of one-gallon fish bowls. Here is the poster used with the tree in Baltimore explaining the project. The tree was a big hit and several state AITC contacts indicated they were going to R&D (rip off and duplicate) this for their

states' fairs.



COMMODITY CHRISTMAS TREE

- ◆ Part of "Field of Dreams" display at annual agricultural state fair; Christmas trees are a top NC commodity.
- ◆ Joint project of NC Farm Bureau and the NC Department of Ag and Consumer Services
- ◆ The "Field of Dreams" shows children crops grown on site; these are crops raised by farmers in NC.
- ◆ The exhibit simulates events from field to farmers market to grocery store.
- ◆ Tree has commodity ornaments with cash value each commodity brings into the state



Children gather commodities and learn about how they are raised.



North Carolina



Children "sell" commodities at the farmers' market

The last few days of June found both Louise and Ellen at the Carolina coast. Ellen was on Topsail Island for the annual family beach week and Louise was taking part in the National Farm Bureau Safety Conference which was held in Wilmington.

July was dominated by the annual issues of the “BIG” summer workshops. Both were held at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel in Durham and both were successful and fun!

July 12-14 we hosted K-5 teachers from 32 counties as we showcased ways to teach reading and science using agriculture as lesson content. There was a great deal of participant involvement and we were blessed to have several Ag in the Classroom Ambassadors on hand to assist and enrich the program. The teachers attending especially enjoyed the day of traveling workshops to the research farms at NC State University and the Raleigh Farmers Market.

Nutrition, fitness, and healthful living were the topics for the next workshop held July 19-21. Teachers were introduced to a number of instructional strategies designed to integrated health into core curricular areas. The traveling workshops took us to Maple View dairy farm and to McAdams produce farm in Orange County. A special treat was breakfast at Maple View as teachers were allowed to make their own omelets!

A month wouldn't be a month if we didn't take “The Farmer” and his rainbow to a county or new school system. June's recipients were Currituck and Lenoir. Our one and only July “TFGAR” event was in Cabarrus County. We met with elementary assistant principals to share the kits given to their schools by the local Farm Bureau. We are almost at the fifty county mark and are scheduling for more than eighty counties! That Farmer really gets around!

Louise enjoyed a jaunt to Henderson and Buncombe Counties on the 26th and 27th of July. Spending time with Farm Bureau friends and school administrators helped her to advance the mission of Ag in the Classroom and beat the heat just a bit.

It soon will be “back to school” time for teachers and students attending on regular school calendars. Here's hoping that the summer has yielded rest and some insight into the value agriculture adds to all our lives. All it takes is a drive through the countryside if you know what you are looking for....at.