

3rd Graders Listen, Look, Learn at McNay Field Day

More than 300 students from Clarke, Lucas, Warren and Wayne counties participated in the 10th annual third-grade field day held at Iowa State University's McNay Research Farm near Chariton Sept. 22-25.

Theme for this year's event was *Agriculture-Road to the Future*. Schools participating included Chariton, Clarke Community, Corydon, Lineville-Clio, Mormon Trail, Murray, Seymour and Southeast Warren.

Students, teachers and chaperones arrived at the farm via school busses at 9:30 a.m. and spent a full morning rotating through sessions on farm safety, nutrition, entomology, renewable energy, livestock and crop production, water quality, agricultural careers and more. The field day also featured a hay wagon tour of the farm and a complimentary noon lunch.



Pre- and post-event surveys showed strong improvement in the students' knowledge of field day topics. For example, beforehand, only 28 percent were able to correctly identify coal as a non-renewable energy source; afterward that figure rose to 71 percent. Beforehand, 36 percent were able to identify Lady Beetles as a beneficial insect compared to 87 percent afterward. Likewise, nearly 70 percent of teachers attending said the field day improved their knowledge of Iowa agriculture and indicated they would find ways to incorporate ag issues into their classrooms in the future.

Roger Heim, Lucas County Extension Council chair, said the 3rd grade field day serves an important role despite the fact that most of southern Iowa is considered "rural." "Contrary to popular belief, many families in our area are actually a generation or two removed from farming," said Heim. "It's really important that we keep our young people informed with some hands-on learning opportunities regarding production agriculture."

Brandi Boyd, FFA advisor and vocational agriculture instructor at Clarke Community High School, seconded that notion, estimating that over 60 percent of her students come from non-farm backgrounds. Volunteers from four area FFA chapters assisted with the field day presentations.

Sponsors, in addition to ISU Extension, included Clarke, Lucas, Wayne and Warren County Farm Bureaus; county cattlemen's associations in Clarke, Lucas and Warren counties and the Iowa 4-H Foundation.

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For more information regarding this and other Iowa State University Extension programs and services, contact Karen Pattison, 4-H and Youth Field Specialist at 641-342-3316, kpatti@iastate.edu, or your local ISU Extension county office.

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