Partnerships Fuel Success Of Volunteer Conference

The Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation hosted Making the Connection: An Agricultural Literacy Conference sponsored by the Nebraska Corn Board on May 25 in Kearney.

The one-day conference brought together 67 farmers, ranchers, educators, and community volunteers from across Nebraska to learn how they can lead agricultural literacy activities in their communities.

“Making the Connection met a need identified by many agriculture organizations, and the Nebraska Corn Board was happy to sponsor a day that showcased the strong partnerships between Nebraska commodity groups, the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation, and Nebraska Extension,” said Kurtis Harms, director of communication at the Nebraska Corn Board.

The workshops offered included subjects on food labeling, alternative proteins, how to share the agriculture story on and off the farm, education vs. advocacy, and consumer misconceptions. The conference also featured a variety of mini workshops with hands-on activities to promote agriculture at county fairs, ways to connect with your community, tips for recording impactful videos on social media, and 4-H and extension activities that are offered statewide.

“It was uplifting to be around others who share the same passion and commitment to agriculture,” said farmer, Anne Meis.

According to Megahn Schafer, executive director of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation, the conference was a great way to re-energize volunteer’s eager to make a difference post-pandemic.

“Thanks to the support of the Nebraska Corn Board, a great turnout of Nebraskans who are passionate about agriculture now have additional tools to promote and strengthen Nebraska’s number one industry,” Schafer said.
Summer Camp Success

“Summer Camp Success” said Megahn Schafer, executive director of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation. “Some are surprised to learn it comes from plants and livestock. Introducing them to the very start of healthy, delicious food is one of the primary functions of Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom camps. They learn what it takes to grow the food they love to eat.”

Daily themes included Barnyard Breakdown, Farming Frenzy, From Farm to Table, and Bound on the Farm. In addition to exploring the farm and interacting with the animals, a day at the farm included activities such as creating a simulated ration for cattle out of tasty snack items, pollinating paper flowers with rhubarb dust, and making ethanol.

“Children jump right into farm activities when they are here and learn to love and appreciate the hard work that goes into getting food on the table,” said Megahn Schafer, executive director of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation.

Schafer said, “Children thrive at the camps, away from electronics, and in the elements where they can truly be kids. It’s a great investment in the next generation’s health and the support for agriculture as they grow older.”

Not everyone can make it to the farm, so Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom brought farm camp to town for children in summer programs at Millard Public Schools, the Lincoln Children’s Museum, Cardinal Club in Ashland, and Ivy League Child Care in Lincoln. The team also hosted a day camp at the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation. Campers extracted DNA from a strawberry, tracked the components of their picnic lunch from the farm to table, and enjoyed ice cream they made themselves. At the Lincoln Children’s Museum, a full-week day camp was supplemented with weekly activities for the school-age program and agriculture make-and-takes for guests of all ages.

This summer, 1,047 students participated in a Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom camp or club!

Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom camps and clubs are growing rapidly thanks to partnerships with many organizations. The organizations seek quality programming, and Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom aims to expose more Nebraska kids to Nebraska’s number one industry. “It is a win-win for all our missions, and the kids are having a great time,” said Schafer.

“It is human nature to fear what you don’t know. As people lose the connection between the land and their food, it opens the door for them to lose faith in the food system,” Schafer said. “Exposing our children to agriculture will make them more informed and thoughtful adults who are confident to make positive choices for their families and communities.”

With support from Lancaster County Farm Bureau, the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation hosted eight Nebraska teachers and volunteers at the National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference “Field of Dreams,” June 29 – July 1 in Des Moines, Iowa. Becky Streff, a fifth-grade teacher at North Bend Central Elementary in Dodge County received an all-expense paid trip to the conference as the recipient of the 2021 Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher of the Year award.

“I walked away from the conference with a multitude of ideas and lessons I can bring into the classroom and into the community,” said Streff. “I am currently working on a pollinator project at our school. Going to the conference allowed me to come up with even more ideas to build into the curriculum for reading, social studies, writing, and science.”

“The conference allowed me to feel energized and inspired with new quality ideas for student learning. I am ready for the adventures of a new year and so excited for next year’s conference,” said Streff.

Five Nebraska teachers received $1,000 conference scholarships from Lancaster County Farm Bureau. “This was a great way to support teachers who show an interest in bringing agriculture into the classroom. We are excited to hear teachers left the conference inspired to be even more involved with Nebraska Agriculture in the Classroom. Our board believes this was a smart investment in the future of Nebraska and agriculture,” said Larry Hudkins, Lancaster County Farm Bureau president.

“Teachers who recognize the benefits of incorporating agriculture are such important partners in the Foundation’s mission,” said Megahn Schafer, executive director of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation. “It was fun to see the ‘A-ha!’ moments throughout the conference as teachers realized how agriculture concepts can fit into their current lessons and provide a meaningful connection to our state.”

Lancaster County Farm Bureau Supports Teachers

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