The mission of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation is to engage youth, educators, and the general public to promote an understanding of the vital importance of agriculture in the lives of all Nebraskans.

If you would like to know more about how you can make a gift to support the work of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation, contact Lona Thompson at (402) 421-4780 or visit nefbfoundation.org.

Thank you to ALL of our volunteers who further agriculture awareness and enrich lives in your communities through your service.

The Foundation has an army of volunteers that share the importance of agriculture in all Nebraskans’ lives. The Promotion and Education Committee serves as an active, statewide voice promoting a positive public perception of agriculture to consumers of all ages. The Ag Reading Hour Program uses volunteers from across the state to read agriculture themed books to classrooms in their communities. And, the Ag Pen Pal Program connects farmers and ranchers with classrooms throughout Nebraska.

Randy Reinke of Antelope County Farm Bureau and Neligh-Oakdale FFA Chapter members read the 2017-2018 Agriculture Reading Hour Program book, Before We Eat, to Neligh-Oakdale Elementary students.

Jan Frenzen (back) and Paula Peterson (front) Promotion & Education Committee members share farm facts with fair goers at the Nebraska State Fair.

Opening the Barn Doors Through Technology

WINTER 2019

Your Investment Yields a Bright Future for Nebraska and Its Number One Industry

Making the Connection
Virtual Field Trips Feature Science, Careers

In 2016, the Foundation began offering virtual field trips to teachers in the Ag Pen Pal Program. 627 students attended virtual field trips with farmers that featured corn planting and harvest. The field trips allow farmers and ranchers to open their barn doors through technology to show students what happens on their farms and ranches. A farmer or rancher uses a tablet computer to connect with classrooms virtually for a live video-chat, allowing students to have their questions answered in real-time.

Creating Partnerships

Because of the success of the corn virtual field trips, Kyla Habrock, education director of the Nebraska Pork Producers, approached the Foundation about partnering on a series of virtual field trips to Nebraska pig farms.

“This enabled another Nebraska commodity to share the story of farmers across the state and the vital importance of agriculture to students,” said Habrock. Because of biosecurity practices, it is difficult for many people to go inside a pig barn. Virtual field trips allow pig farmers to invite students in, share real life examples of the care they provide, and connect agriculture to students, while protecting the health of the pigs in the barns.

At the same time the Pork Producers were contacting the Foundation to partner, Lauren Hogue, communications coordinator for DNA Genetics, saw a news video about the virtual field trips and contacted the Foundation to get involved. DNA Genetics is a sister company of Pillen Family Farms near Columbus. DNA Genetics works with pork producers to provide continuous improvement in genetic traits on pig farms across North America.

“We were looking for a way to broaden our exposure in the community we are in,” said Hogue. “By sharing what we do as pig farmers in our community, it opens the door for future careers and a way we can provide education to students about what we do.”

Aligned with state education standards

DNA Genetics, along with Union Farms near Ulysses, volunteered to host six virtual field trips this past fall. To make this program appealing to teachers, components of the field trip experience are aligned with Nebraska’s science education standards. Bringing technology into the classroom also appeals to teachers and students. Third grade students participate in a series of lessons related to pig farming. In each lesson, students gain knowledge related to solving the question, “How does a pig grow?”

During each 40-minute virtual field trip, Courtney Scharff, the Foundation’s director of outreach education, walks the students through the pig barn while interviewing the farmer. Lukas Fricke with Union Farms enjoys being able to share his story with the students while connecting with them through technology.

“With Ag Pen Pal, it is easy to travel thousands of miles, and have students actually visit a pig farm,” said Fricke. “It’s the easiest way to get a lot of students through our barns without having to spend a lot of money for travel or having to worry about biosecurity or safety,” says Fricke. “We brought 150 third graders through our barns in a little under 30 minutes just by connecting on Google Hangouts.”

This partnership shifts education from learning about a topic to figuring out why or how something happens.

1,375 students have attended a pig virtual field trip this fall, providing them a way to understand the real world, leading to a deeper knowledge of how pig farmers care for pigs, people, and the planet.

This project is sponsored by the Nebraska Pork Producers Association and Nebraska Corn Board.