

# Third-graders experience agriculture field day

By **Charlie Kanzig**  
Correspondent

Central Oregon has a rich agricultural history, but for many young people the connection to farm and ranch life is much-changed from the past. That is part of the reason Sisters Elementary School third-graders visited the Deschutes County Fairgrounds for the Central Oregon Agricultural Field Day on Friday, March 24.

Since agriculture is one of the foundations of Oregon's economy, there are countless academic applications within the industry. Jessica Jansen, executive director for the Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation based

in Corvallis, says the purpose of her organization is to provide educators opportunities to use agriculture as "another lens in which to apply learning in a variety of subject areas."

The event included third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders from throughout Central Oregon.

According to Austin Miller, education programs coordinator for the Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation, "Agriculture is simply too important for students to not have an understanding of where our food comes from, how the environment works, and how we use our state's beautiful resources."

Sisters Elementary School teachers Kirk Albertson, Danielle Pulliam, and Deirdre Kanzig, along with eight parent volunteers, helped the students navigate the various stations which focused on many of the facets of agriculture.

2017 Oregon Dairy Princess Kiara Single was a favorite, sharing fun dairy facts and demonstrating "cow jewelry" such as ear tags and necklace identifiers, while the petting zoo featuring a calf, a ewe and lamb, a pony and horse, and was also a very popular attraction.

Some of the stations

were very interactive, including a bicycle-powered grain-grinding station which included information of the health benefits on whole grains. Students learned how to more accurately understand how to read food labels to identify whole grains, and they enjoyed sampling whole-grain pancakes along the way.

In a day where processed foods are the norm, students discovered more detail into the supply chain and where the food they eat and products they buy come from. In a relay, students were tasked with identifying whether products came from the earth, the farm, the store, or the factory.

Glenda Hyde, a Sisters resident who is a senior instructor for the Oregon State University Extension program, did a skit with the students about the relationship of hygiene to food safety at home, including proper hand-washing, how to clean different types of produce, appropriate refrigeration, and safe preparation surfaces.

Many students climbed aboard a brand-new red Massey-Ferguson tractor, while also being educated about tractor safety, which even included learning that it is unsafe to text while

operating a tractor. Students used their own birthdates to draw symbols in order to learn how ranchers brand animals, including the wild horses in south-eastern Oregon.

The Deschutes Basin Board of Control, whose motto is "Connecting Oregon's water, land, and environment," works with eight water districts in the region to help manage water conservation, which helps protect fish and wildlife through healthier rivers.

It's always fun to get to bring something home from a trip, and many of the third-graders left the trip sporting seed germination necklaces which included a bean seed wrapped in a wet cotton ball contained in a tiny ziplock bag.

At the Oregon Ag-Link station, blindfolded students tried to identify Oregon-grown products such as mint and garlic by smell alone.

Future Farmer of America (FFA) students from around the region, attired in their iconic navy blue blazers, played a vital role in the success of the day, helping



PHOTO BY CHARLIE KANZIG

A little hands-on activity...

with teaching and making sure everything was running smoothly. "The FFA students stood out impressively" said Kirk Albertson. "They were stellar."

This field trip ties into other learning the third-graders have been doing with the Seed to Table program in Sisters. The students recently planted cilantro, beets, and spinach that will be transplanted at the farm operated by Audrey Tehan on the north side of town. A harvest of some of the produce is expected in June before school is out.

"We are providing hands-on learning that will enhance the students' future education as well as being practical for their personal lives," said Danielle Pulliam.



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Journey Keeton grinds wheat grain using a stationary bike.

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