



*Youth tasting a garlic scape
at Free Spirit Riders/Garden.*

Extension Connection

Monthly Highlights – August 2013

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Ripon High School Hispanic Students

Through a collaborative partnership with Ripon High School, Miguel Gonzales and Carmelo Dávila are working with Spanish Teacher Kat Griffith to form a registered 4-H club with a group of Hispanic students at the High School. In June an excursion was chaperoned with several of these students (and some new ones) to Madison. Youth played active leadership roles in coordinating this event by helping secure adequate turnout, deciding what they wanted to see in Madison and why, etc. In Madison they first visited the farmer's market which was organized around the Capitol Building. Then they toured the Capitol Building discussing Wisconsin political history and learning some facts about the building's construction. Later they walked through the University of Wisconsin campus and had lunch at the Memorial Union. This excursion allowed participants to observe differences between Ripon and Madison and to appreciate the opportunities for education and positive entertainment that exist in a college town. They also learned important facts about our State Legislature and its history.

Youth in Action Leadership Week

From July 29th to August 2nd Miguel Gonzales was a coordinator, presenter and chaperone for a yearly event in Fond du Lac called Youth in Action Leadership Week. This event helps youth become familiar with important issues in their community, as well as the organizations that exist to address them. The aim of the event is to encourage youth to take ownership of their community and foster in them a sense of civic and social responsibility. Before the event was held, Miguel was part of the planning committee for this event and secured the participation of the Solutions Center of Fond du Lac, All About Life Rehabilitation (also in Fond du Lac) and the Fond du Lac County programming unit of the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP). Through this week-long event, middle school-age youth help plan a service project to be carried out at a local public interest organization. There were a total of four service sites/projects to choose from. One project allowed youth to prepare a meal for residents of Solutions Center—the only homeless and domestic abuse shelter in Fond du Lac—with help from WNEP Educator Sharon Woolhether, and another allowed youth participants to interact with elderly clients of All About Life Rehabilitation, many of whom have limited social interaction on a regular basis. Youth participants were guided through an activity that allowed them to explore their personality traits and behavioral tendencies, especially as they relate to other people. The activity, discussion and presentation emphasized the importance of acknowledging and accepting differences between people, and being flexible and patient in social interactions with others. This event culminated in a recreational trip to Mt. Olympus waterpark in Wisconsin Dells.

Junior Master Gardeners

On July 23rd, the Junior Master Gardeners (JMG) Program went on a field trip to the Free SPIRIT Riders/Garden and Produce with Purpose Farm. At Free Spirit Riders/Garden, youth learned about herbs, flowers, sensory gardening and composting. At Produce with Purpose Farm, they explored the farm, its produce and taste tested fennel and rainbow colored carrots. JMG, a partnership between Master Gardeners and WNEP (Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program), is an opportunity for youth to have hands on experience with “seed to dinner plate” gardening. Currently, participants include Boys & Girls Club youth, as well as other interested youth in the community. Future sessions will involve: donating grown flowers to senior centers, preparing healthy meals to be served to parents and an “end of the season” celebration.

Teaching Youth How Market Animal Project Fits into Real-World Agriculture

As consumers show greater interest in the attributes of the products they purchase for food, their interest in the wellbeing of the animals raised by producers and food safety has come to the forefront. Over 170 youth exhibitors showed market animals this past year at the Fond du Lac County Fair. However, we must not forget that our youth livestock exhibitors are also considered producers. The market hog, steer, lamb, or meat goat these youth raise to show at the county fair will ultimately end in the food chain.

This past summer, UW-Extension Dairy & Livestock Agent Tina Kohlman provided Meat Animal Quality Assurance (MAQA) Training for nearly 100 4-H and FFA members to teach them how their market animal for the county fair fits into real-world agriculture and their role as a producer of a safe, wholesome meat product for the consumer. To sell a market animal at the Fond du Lac County Fair, livestock exhibitors must be MAQA Certified.

What once began as a quality assurance program for pork producers now has been adapted for youth market livestock exhibitors to learn about their role in food safety and animal well-being. The educational program promotes ten good production practices to promote a wholesome and safe meat product which was cared for in a way to ensure animal well-being. All ten of these good production practices utilized by commercial producers are the same practices which livestock exhibitors are trained to follow in raising their fair animal. By incorporating the good health, nutrition and management procedures commercial operations use, youth exhibitors are able to efficiently raise an animal, minimizing the effects caused by disease and poor health. For the exhibitor/producer, this means they can raise an animal faster to finish weight with less financial cost. For the consumer, this means a safe product raised with minimal animal health drug use. Topics addressed include proper use, handling and recording use of animal health products and providing good animal husbandry (housing, feeding, handling and managing) to minimize the effects of disease with their animal.

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