

# I'm Off to St. Louis, Missouri

As you read this article I will be in Missouri attending the National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference. I'm looking forward to learning what the other states are doing to promote agriculture in the classroom and bring back new ideas to try on the local and state level.

What is Agriculture in the Classroom? Throughout much of the history of the United States, agriculture and education have been closely related. During the decades when most Americans lived on farms or in small towns, students often did farm chores before and after school. Indeed, the school year was determined by planting, cultivating, and harvesting schedules. Old school books are full of agricultural references and examples because farming and farm animals were a familiar part of nearly every child's life.

In the 1920's, 30's and 40's, as the farm population shrank and agricultural emphasis decreased in school books and educational materials, educators focused on agriculture as an occupational specialty, rather than an integral part of every student's life. Agriculture education was mainly offered to those few students wanting to make a career of agriculture.

During this period, a small nucleus of educators and others persistently pushed for more agriculture in education. They recognized the interlocking role of farming and food and fiber production with environmental quality, including wildlife habitat, clean water, and the preservation and improvement of forests. They kept interest in agriculture and the environment alive during a period when interest by the public as a whole was decreasing.

During the 1960's and 70's, as experienced agriculture, conservation, and forestry organizations realized the need for quality material, many excellent films, literature, and classroom teaching aids were financed and produced by businesses, foundations, nonprofit groups and associations, as well as state and federal agencies. There was, however, little coordination of effort or exchange of ideas among the groups and no central point for national coordination.

In 1981, at the invitation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, representatives of agricultural groups and educators came to a meeting in Washington, D.C. to discuss agricultural literacy. A national task force was selected from this group. Representation came from agriculture, business, education, and governmental agencies, some of whom were already conducting educational programs in agriculture. This new task force recommended that the U.S. Department of Agriculture be the coordinator and that it sponsor regional meetings to help states organize their own programs. They also urged the Department to encourage the support of other national groups.

As a result, in 1981 the USDA established Agriculture in the Classroom, which has the endorsement of all living former Secretaries of Agriculture, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, the National Conference of States Legislatures, most of the Governors of the States, and the major agricultural organizations and commodity groups. Significant progress has been made through these partnerships of agriculture, business, education, government and dedicated volunteers.

West Virginia Summer Agricultural Institute - The first WV Summer Agricultural Institute was held in 1997. The Institute ran Sunday noon through Friday noon. The Institute was open to any teacher in West Virginia who taught grades Kindergarten through Eighth grade. Early attendance averaged 12 teachers from across West Virginia. For the first six years of the West Virginia Summer Agriculture Institute Dr. Mary Beth Bennett was in charge of the Institute from planning to conducting, teaching and evaluating the program with input from the West Virginia Farm Bureau. Dr. Bennett, in consultation with agents from the area where the Institute was held, developed the program, contacted guest speakers, arranged tours, arranged meals and lodging for participants and a banquet to host sponsors, developed educational activities and evaluation tools, and gathered resources in sufficient numbers to send participants home with materials to teach, and coordinated the effort.

The overall purposes of the institute were to: (1) increase teacher awareness about agriculture; (2) to give teachers the tools to teach their students about the importance of agriculture in their daily lives; (3) to encourage an understanding of agriculture on local, national and international levels; and, (4) to increase awareness of important issues relating to agriculture. The institute goal was to increase awareness while making learning fun for both students and teachers. The institute also taught that agriculture touches our lives on a daily basis and is a wonderful mechanism by which to teach.

An attempt was made to create a schedule, which was very aggressive, participatory and engaging, while focusing on the agriculture of the area where the Institute was held. Examples of improvements, which were made, were spreading tours out throughout the week and allowing time for the teachers to share how they might use the materials being discussed.

In 2004 the Summer Ag Institute went through a restructuring and it was decided to offer a condensed version of the program. In 2005 a revised, shorter version of the Summer Ag Institute was held at Lakeview Resort with 80 teachers attending the two day program. In 2006 and 2007 a similar program was offered at the Morgantown Ramada Inn. In 2008 we were back at Lakeview.

We just completed hosting 65 educators at the Ramada Inn in Morgantown for the 2009 West Virginia Summer Agriculture Institute. I taught a class and a Make n' Take at the Summer Ag Institute this year. The week before that I helped at Tri-County 4-H Younger Camp Program where I taught a Knitting class and took care of 174 young people from the Tri-County area. You can bet that I used my Ag in the Classroom materials and taught our youth about the importance of agriculture in all our lives. I will continue to support Ag in the Classroom at the local, state and national levels and look for innovative ways to spread the word about agriculture. Living on a farm was a great way to grow up. I have never regretted choosing agriculture as my career.

### ***Bloomin' Bash at Hillbilly Daylilies***

A fun event for the whole family to benefit Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Eastern Panhandle. This July, Hillbilly Daylilies will present their first-ever "Bloomin' Bash" to benefit Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Eastern Panhandle. Hillbilly Daylilies, located in Bunker Hill, WV, specializes in field grown daylilies and every July invites customers to visit and experience over 350 varieties of daylilies in peak bloom. Customers are able to purchase the daylilies of their choice and Hillbilly Daylilies digs and prepares them on the spot. The Bloomin' Bash, being held on July 11th, will not only showcase thousands of beautiful flowers in bloom, but also gives visitors the chance to participate in several educational workshops ranging from growing a kitchen herb garden to encouraging pollination in your own back yard. Hillbilly Daylilies owner and event coordinator, Lisa Giles, is excited about this inaugural event, "We have worked very hard to make this a fun event for the whole family. With the educational workshops for adults, fun garden projects for the kids, live music, vendors, and food, there really is something for everyone. And, it is a great way to support Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Eastern Panhandle." Admission is \$5 per person and children under 5 years old are admitted free. Gates open at 9am and the event lasts until 6pm. Food and ice cream will be available from Texas BBQ and Rock Hill Creamery with live bluegrass music by Sleepy Creek and Skystone. Antique Tractors and Steam Engines will be on display and daylilies will be for sale. The Berkeley-Jefferson Master Gardener Association will be on hand giving out lots of gardening info and answering questions. Workshops for adults include Growing a Kitchen Herb Garden 10am; Rain Barrels 11am; Native Plants in the Home Landscape 12pm; Composting 101 1pm; Pollinators in Your Backyard 2pm; and Growing Herbs to Use and Enjoy 3pm. The kid's tent will be hosted by Denis Scott, WVU extension agent, and will hold fun garden projects. For more information and to pre-register for workshops: call 304-229-6698 or visit their website at [www.HillbillyDaylilies.com](http://www.HillbillyDaylilies.com). Hillbilly Daylilies is located at 1105 Giles Mill Road, Bunker Hill, WV 25413.

### ***July 18, 2009-Food Preservation Workshop***

The Berkeley-Jefferson Master Gardener Association in cooperation with the WVU Extension Office, is planning a Food Preservation Workshop on July 18 from 9-11 AM. The workshop will be held at Trinity Episcopal Church on King Street in Martinsburg. Trinity will be the host for this event. Master Gardeners Louise Finch, Maggie Keeler, Mary Palmer and Melanie Files will make presentations on the Master Gardener organization, drying foods, vacuum sealing of frozen foods, and cold storage. Sue Flanagan of the WVU Extension Office will present information on pressure canning and boiling water bath canning. The event is open to the public; however, preregistration through Sue Flanagan's office is required so that we have adequate materials for those attending. If you have questions, please contact Melanie Files at [mafilesretired@verizon.net](mailto:mafilesretired@verizon.net).

### ***Berkeley County Youth Fair Dates to remember***

- Poultry Blood Testing - Saturday, July 18, 2009 from 9:00 am to 11:00 am.
- Goat Health Check - Thursday, July 9th 5:30 - 7:00 pm. This health check is for Breeding Stock only - No Market Goats need to attend. For additional information regarding this health check contact Michelle McDonald at 304-676-1601.
- 62nd Annual Berkeley County Youth Fair dates are August 3 - 8, 2009

### ***Garden Tips***

Prune pine trees

Turn compost

Plant late tomatoes

Plant late cabbage, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts

### ***Until next time ...Happy Gardening and Farming!***

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