

Behind the scenes in your own backyard

Have you every stopped to smell the...Christmas trees, pecans, orchids, strawberries, wine, alpaca poo? Okay, maybe not the poo. What I mean is have you ever taken notice of all the things we produce here in Newberry County? We have a wonderful array of products and services right here in our own backyard. Unfortunately, many of our youth — scratch that — many of us have never taken the opportunity to see what these products and services are all about. Since public schools let out early the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, Newberry County 4-H decided to seize that opportunity. After all, “idle hands are the devil’s workshop” my momma used to say. We set up a Fall Mini Ag Tour, offering a behind the scenes look at some of this season’s must haves: Christmas trees and pecans. We were welcomed at a local Christmas tree farm and a pecan shelling facility. I’m guessing some of you reading this didn’t know we had one, or both, of those here in Newberry. The tour took 20 locals, youth and adults, 4-H membership not required, for the cost of one non-perishable food item per person — to be donated to a local food pantry.

Shine and Lee’s Christmas trees, located on US Highway 76 heading towards Clinton, holds a special place in my heart. It was once the daycare I attended as a tot. To me, I still smell cow patties and see kids flying kites in a field that is now filled with Leyland Cypress and Fir trees. But I suppose raising Christmas trees is less stressful than raising kids. They don’t talk back or want their teeth pulled and nails painted. Shine and Lee have made Christmas trees their retirement plan and have included their family in the process. This isn’t the first time they have welcomed 4-H on site to show us how these trees are grown, shaped, cut, jiggled (probably not the correct terminology), netted, and loaded onto the top of waiting station wagons. Shine even let the kids help make a wreath, garland, and swag before adding ribbons and drawing names to see who got to take the fresh, local creations home for the holidays. After grabbing a hot cup of cocoa and thanking the farmers and family, we piled into cars to head for our next stop: Smith Pecan Shelling Company. Clay Smith seems a

bit young to have the wealth of pecan knowledge he displayed on our tour, but he earned it fair and square with a lifetime of helping his dad and granddad. He even chuckled when he told our group about receiving a check for his work and how hard it was for a seven-year-old to cash a check. He beamed with pride as he told the history of his family’s company and showed off old black and white photos to the kids. Smith Pecan Shelling Company, located at 843 Fair Street in Newberry (near ISE), cracks, shells, and sells pecans and hulls. They don’t have to be local nuts, but they do have to be fresh. And they must be pecans. Clay walked us through the process, showing us how these old (but better than newfangled) machines work before letting the kids sort through a pan of nuts and shells to get a taste of a fresh pecan. As they chewed and sorted, he showed them one of those antique pecan crackers we all remember our grandparent’s having (I still have one). They giggled. Because who needs an antique pecan cracker when you have Smith Pecan Shelling Company in your own backyard.



Alana West
Contributing Columnist

Our first Mini Ag Tour was a success. We are extremely thankful for the number of small businesses in our small town that are willing to give us a behind the scenes look at what they do to provide us with what we love. By no means are Shine and Lee’s and Smith Pecans all Newberry offers. Newberry County 4-H hopes to make these tours a regular opportunity for locals. If you have an idea for a tour stop feel free to let us know. We’ll investigate. In the meantime, for more information on 4-H, please contact Newberry County 4-H Agent Alana West at the Newberry Clemson Extension Office: awillin@clemson.edu or 803-276-1091 x142.

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Alana West is the Newberry County 4-H Agent, she can be reached at 803-276-1091.