

## Fall Virtual Field Trip

### Educational Objectives

Given the uniqueness of the 2020 school year many students missed out on their fall field trips to the farm and Ag Days. These events are vital to introducing agriculture to young children so finding a way to bring agriculture to students was imperative. Using available technology, ACES Extension Agents worked together to host virtual farm experiences for elementary students in the fall of 2020.

### Program Activities

Cotton, peanuts, pumpkins, and sunflowers were the crops highlighted during the field trips. In addition to the live stream, Extension agents filmed and edited short videos of each crop to educate participants on the growing process from seed to harvest. Packets were emailed to teachers and registrants across the state that included information about each day's activity, links to the short videos, and craft teachers could do with students in the classroom or at home. This allowed teachers to turn the field trip into a full lesson plan.

On the first trip, Allie Logan, Barbour County Coordinator, Jill Wachs, Barbour County 4-H FREA, and Sedrick Mack, Agronomic Crops REA, were joined by peanut farmer, Brandon Dillard, at the Wiregrass Research and Extension Center. Allie interviewed Brandon. Jill streamed live on Facebook and Sedrick filmed for zoom. Brandon discussed that peanuts are not nuts, but legumes. He also mentioned that the Wiregrass area in Alabama grows the most peanuts in nation. Participants were able to see a peanut picker working and how it separates the pod from the vine. The second trip Allie joined produce farmer John Aplin at his pumpkin and sunflower patch. Allie live streamed the interview and Megan Jones, Home Grounds Intern, interviewed Mr. Aplin. Megan and John stood amidst the sunflowers and told viewers that sunflowers come in many colors and varieties. They also talked about how sunflowers depend on bees to be pollinated. While they were talking about bees, a honeybee flew on the flower John was holding and we were able to get footage of the bee. The third trip was in a cotton field. Allie interviewed cotton farmer Walt Corcoran and Sedrick filmed the live zoom. Walk talked about how we use cotton in our clothing and even in dollar bills. He showed the participants how the cotton boll forms and opens up to reveal the fiber. He then showed off his cotton picker. Describing each part going from the front of the machine to the back. The fourth trip was to Paradise Pumpkin Patch. David conducted the interview and Sedrick Mack filmed. David and Deanna Cook with Paradise Pumpkin Patch discussed how pumpkins are grown in different areas and parts of the flower. They then took a tour of the pumpkin patch and animals. Those on the Zoom were able to see buffalo, camel, goats, sheep, cows, turkeys, and a zebra.

### Teaching Methods

The live stream Zoom took place over four Thursdays in October 2020. Agents streamed live on Zoom and the Barbour County Extension Facebook Page. Extension Agents joined the farmers from the field to provide students an inside look of what was happening on the farm. Agents asked farmers a variety of questions that taught students how the plants are grown, harvested,

and how we use them every day. We had at least two people monitoring the Zoom chat and video during the interview from their office. David Koon, Jill Wachs, and Jessica Kelton helped monitor the Zoom chat and video from the office. We also had a third person live in the field to communicate with the ones monitoring the video to help troubleshoot any technical problems.

Teachers were sent packet information with instructions for each day. The packets included fun crafts the students could do at home or in the classroom. Links to the videos about each topic were shared as well.

## Results

The whole series was much like running a live television broadcast. A total of 2,048 participants joined the zoom meeting from across the state. Each live Zoom lasted about 30 minutes. According to survey results, that was an adequate length of time.

## Impact Statement.

Live streaming an event like this took many moving parts. All agents involved work closely together to make the program a success and will continue to use the resources we have to educate the youth in our state about agriculture. Seventy percent of viewers would recommend the virtual field trip to a friend or colleague.

While students were not able to be out in the field during these trips, teachers were able to build up the virtual experience by decorating their rooms like a farm and some teachers provided a picnic for students in the classroom. Teachers also commented that students did not realize farms could be so different. By showcasing the different types of farms students were able to experience crops, machinery, and farming techniques they would not have been exposed to otherwise.

## Evaluation

The overall feedback on the program was highly positive, so much so, that we will be planning a spring virtual field trip series for 2021. A survey was conducted after the series, 88 percent of participants learned from the experience. Fifty-five percent responded they would use the virtual field trip as teaching aide and forty-five percent said it was likely they would use it in their classroom. Ninety-five percent of teachers that responded to the post survey said they were pleased with the agriculture topics presented. We advertised the event across the state on Facebook and to schools. In the post-event survey, forty percent of teachers heard about the event on social media. Another thirty-five percent heard about it from a friend.