

Memo to kids: Food comes from a farm

The Hunter Farm draws thousands of visitors each year, many of them students

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By Caroline McMillan

As soon as the farm visitors take their seats on hay bales in the covered wagon, they hear their main learning objective: All food comes from a farm.

"We have to drive that point home to them," said Nancy Anderson, mayor of Weddington and owner of The Hunter Farm, located down Providence Road a couple of miles past Interstate 485. "People in our generation - we either lived on a farm, we had grandparents on a farm, our aunt and uncle had a farm, or we drove by a farm. Kids these days think their food comes from the grocery store."

Five generations of the Hunter family have lived in the farmhouse, built circa 1868. In 2001, the family placed the land in the Catawba Lands Conservancy, a land trust that permanently protects the farm from development.

They have strawberry pickings in the spring, and in the fall, they plant new strawberries and harvest pumpkins.

Hunter Farm gets 6,000 to 7,000 visitors each fall. They host birthday parties, weekend outings for families, church trips and school field trips.

Because of the convenience, many visitors are from south Charlotte schools.

Last Thursday, a kindergarten class from McAlpine Elementary took a field trip to Hunter Farm.

Their wagon made several stops on the farm tour. The kids saw a dairy cow get milked. They fed sheep and goats, and even gathered an egg from a chicken's nest.

"They're learning about farms at school and making butter," said chaperone Sarah Moyer, whose son Toby, 6, is in kindergarten at McAlpine Elementary. "But some of these kids have never seen farm animals before. How many kids get to see a cow get milked?"



McAlpine Elementary kindergarteners got to feed sheep and goats on their recent field trip to The Hunter Farm, off Providence Road. Hunter Farm gets 6,000 to 7,000 visitors each fall.

"It's all hands-on out here," said Marion Nunn, mother of Ashlyn, 6.

After seeing the cows, sheep, goats and chickens, the kids shell corn off the cob. And at the final learning station, the pieces start coming together, Anderson said.

They crack the egg, put it with the milk, grind the corn and - voila - they've made corn meal.

"They sit down, and we have boxes of corn flakes and tacos," said Anderson. "They realize, 'Oh yeah, I eat that!' If you like French fries, they were probably fried in corn oil."

At the end, each kid goes home with his own small pumpkin.

The Hunter Farm gang sees a lot of repeat visitors.

Beverly Woods Elementary in south Charlotte sends classes to Hunter Farm every year. Recently, a kindergarten class and special education class went on a day-long trip to the farm together.

"It's so close and they don't have to spend so much time on a bus," said Beverly Woods Principal Caroline Horne.

"I'm impressed by how they made it an educational experience," said Jo-An Lattanzi, one of the school's Specialized Academic Curriculum teachers. "The students actually got to get really close (to the animals). It's not like a zoo, where the animals are 30 feet away."

By the end of each trip, the importance of farming really starts to hit home, Anderson said. As the wagon carting the McAlpine Elementary kindergarteners circled back to the farm's entrance, the denim-clad Anderson hopped on the back.

"Did you guys get lost on your ride?" she asked the kids. "Did you stop by the grocery store, or where did all that food come from?"

"No!" the kids yelled in unison. "It's from the farm!"

"That's right," said Anderson.

"All the food in the school cafeteria, all the food at your home, and all the food at the grocery store - it all came from a farm."

Want to go?

The Hunter Farm is located at 13624 Providence Road.

Farm hours are: Monday-Saturday: 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Sunday: 1-7 p.m. (Last ride leaves at 6:30 p.m.)

\$6 children, \$8 adults, free for grandparents and children under age 2.

Group rate: \$5.50 person, reservations only.

More info: 704-846-7975.

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2010/10/27/1780064/memo-to-kids-food-comes-from-a.html#none#ixzz13mKezZyQ>