



SOW, GROW & KNOW

Fall 2007 Issue

Mini Grant Reminder

Want to spring your Ag lesson into action?
Apply for a mini-grant!

The White-Reinhardt Fund is a special project of the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, in cooperation with the American Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee. Mini-grants are offered to state and county Farm Bureaus in amounts up to \$500 for classroom education programs for grades K-12.

The purpose of this fund is to support projects that promote agricultural literacy. Louisiana has funded several projects in the past. For more information on how you can apply, contact your parish Farm Bureau office. This year's deadline has been moved up. The deadline for submitting applications to the state office is Oct. 15, 2007. Scholarship and mini-grant recipients will be notified by Feb. 1, 2008.



"Bee" in the Know!

Q: What happened to AITC teacher workshops?

A: Due to the 2007 National AITC Conference being held in New Orleans, we will not hold any workshops this year. Workshops will resume in 2008 and we will pass along the schedule as soon as it is available. Keep checking the Louisiana AITC website at www.aitcla.org for up to date information.

Q: How can I get past issues of Sow, Grow & Know?

A: Previous issues of the newsletter can now be found on the Louisiana AITC website at www.aitcla.org. Our newsletter keeps educators around the state up to date on projects, opportunities and upcoming AITC activities.

Q: How can I order educational AITC materials?

A: Contact Lynda Danos at lyndad@lfbf.org

Q: Why is it important to educate students on the importance of agriculture?

A: Because the students of today become the conscientious voters of tomorrow. Since most people live in urban settings, many find it hard to identify with agriculture. In reality, it is a thread that binds Louisiana together, whether through our unique cuisine, the cotton in our clothing, or products made from soybeans and much more.



AITC Teacher of the Year Brings Words to Life

By MICHAEL DANNA
Staff Writer

MERMENTAU-- Big-eyed Kindergartners stare up at Dawn Williams, their faces locked on the book "Tops and Bottoms" she holds in her hands. As she begins to read they listen with rapt attention, hanging on every word. The story is one of trickery, as a hare and a bear square off in the business world, partnering in, of all things, a vegetable garden.

But the lesson today isn't about how to succeed in business without really trying, as the bear finds out at the end of the tale. Instead, it's a lesson about the importance of agriculture. As a librarian, Williams, who was named the Louisiana Farm Bureau's 2007 Ag in the Classroom Teacher of the Year, has been using story time to teach a multitude of lessons, including those about farming. Her stories take these students at Mermentau Elementary to places far beyond their small hometown in southwest Acadia Parish.

The stories also help children grasp the concept that farmers feed and clothe the world. "Although it's a rural community, we don't have a lot of students whose parents are involved in agriculture," Williams said.

"So they don't have a lot of ideas about the food they eat and the clothing they wear. When you ask them initially where food and clothing comes from, they say Wal-Mart."

The AITC Teacher of the Year Award is reserved for teachers who incorporate agriculture into their daily lesson plans. Since 2000, Farm Bureau has recognized outstanding K-12 teachers who have excelled in bringing the lessons of farming to their classrooms.

"The most important thing about AITC is that it understands what teachers need to do their jobs," Williams said. "The learning materials provided by AITC have helped me tremendously. When you're truly an educator you go out and buy or find what you need to get your lessons across," Williams continued. "That's what I liked about the Ag in the Classroom program. There are a lot of free materials that I didn't even know existed."



STORYTIME. Dawn Williams reads a story to her class to help them understand the importance of agriculture. Photo by Jennifer Savario

Like most teachers, Williams said she finds rewards in her work. "I like the feeling of knowing that I taught a child something they're going to be able to take with them to the next grade and into real life," she said.

As the 2007 Ag in the Classroom Teacher of the Year, Williams attended the National AITC Conference in June in New Orleans. She also received \$500 cash and was the featured speaker at the Louisiana Farm Bureau State Convention which was also held in June.

Apply now for the 2008 AITC Teacher of the Year award. Details on page 2.

Ag in the Classroom Louisiana
P.O. Box 95004
Baton Rouge, LA 70895-9004



Got Ag in your Classroom? Find out how you could be the 2008 AITC Teacher of the Year.



Try this AITC lesson with your students for a "BERRY" fun result!



Find out what attendees thought about the 2007 National AITC Conference.



Application deadlines for mini-grants are almost here. Make sure you don't miss out!

There are a number of terrific resources for educators on the web. Here are just a few sites we found that offer teaching tools to help your students “dig in” to agriculture:

Farmology www.farmology.com

This website is chock-full of information on all things farming. Learn about the many faces of farmers and ranchers and there’s even a Farmer’s Hats reference activity you can download to share with your students.

Planting Science www.plantingscience.org

Learn about plant research and get to know some teachers and students from across the nation.

National Biodiesel Board www.biodiesel.org

Get the facts about biodiesel, including its positive impact on agriculture and how it reduces the health risks associated with petroleum diesel.

Agripedia www.ca.uky.edu/agripedia

The Agripedia website was created by the University of Kentucky to give students a multimedia resource about agriculture.



Materials Needed:

- Newspaper
- Apron
- Black magic marker or pen
- Watercolor art paper
- ½ cup fresh berries or frozen ones that have been thawed for each color of paint (Softer berries work best)
- ¼ cup of water for each type of berry
- potato masher or fork
- small bowl
- small strainer
- clean paintbrush
- water
- one small plastic container for each type of berry used



1. Cover your work area with the newspaper and put on the apron.
2. Using the magic marker or pen, draw a picture on the watercolor art paper. Set it aside to dry.
3. Put ½ cup of one type of berries into the bowl and add ¼ cup of water.
4. Mash with the potato masher until everything is juicy.
5. Set the strainer across the top of the tub. Strain the juice through it and into the tub. This is the berry watercolor.
6. Repeat the water, mashing and straining steps with the other types of berries.
7. Dip the paintbrush into one of the berry colors and brush it across a part of your picture.
8. Then, rinse the paintbrush in the water and try another watercolor.
9. When finished painting, let your picture dry.
10. Throw away any extra watercolors.



AITC National Conference: A “SPICY” Success!

By Pam Little



For almost 400 educators from across the country, recalling memories of the 2007 National AITC Conference will forever conjure up memories of a good time in the Big Easy. Conference attendees were quick to compliment the easy flow of sessions and attention to detail throughout the entire conference.

Mary Mills, a librarian at Zachary High School, was among eight educators attending the conference from her area. Mills is currently serving as an AITC liaison for the schools in East Baton Rouge Parish and was inspired by the things she learned during the conference.

“I believe that by teaching ag lessons in school, we will have students who are knowledgeable and appreciative of agriculture,” Mills said. “Over time, they will grow into adults who will effectively vote on issues affecting American farmers and ranchers. It needs to be our top priority to give our teachers access to these class materials so they can teach the importance of agriculture to their students.”

Tammy Fontenot, a special education teacher at Basile High School, also attended the conference and enjoyed exchanging ideas with other educators. Fontenot believes in helping her students become aware of their agricultural surroundings, but in a non-traditional way.

“I rarely teach directly from the books. I prefer to use hands-on methods and think outside the box,” Fontenot said. Fontenot is so hands-on and creative in her teaching, she even invites her husband, a farmer, to speak to her science class. “He’ll wear hip waders to class and bring crawfish traps to explain the crawfish production process,” she said. “It doesn’t get any more hands-on than that!”

Fontenot enjoyed the sessions and was overwhelmed by the conference as a whole. “Everything that I have done at this conference has given me something I can’t wait to bring back to my students,” Fontenot said. “Agriculture is a way of life that students need to learn about. They need to understand where their food and clothes come from.”

Becky Schultz, a kindergarten teacher from Bell City, Louisiana, said she’d give the conference an A-plus. Schultz felt the conference was fun, well organized, and offered a wealth of usable materials. “This has been an amazing experience for me,” Schultz said, “I’ve done so much and I’ve eaten things I’ve never eaten before.”



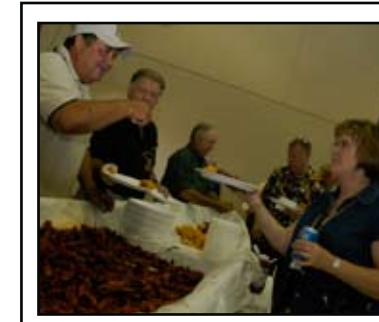
Conference kick-off



Alligator swamp tours



Workshops



Taste of Louisiana Dinner

For more conference photos visit www.aitcla.org

Schultz also said she loved the opportunity to visit with educators from all over the country. “I made friends with a tomato farmer from Maryland and a teacher from Canada,” Schultz said. “Just by engaging in conversation I learned that mosquitoes are living large in Canada as well as here in Louisiana.” Schultz also had the chance to explain to an Illinois teacher what it was like experiencing direct complications from hurricanes Katrina and Rita and how they affected area homes and businesses. “I explained to her how residents readily picked up and helped one another without publicity or fanfare,” she said.

With a smile, Schultz related how she can’t wait to plug in many of the new ideas into her kindergarten science classes. “I already know what I’m going to do first,” Schultz said. “First, I’m going to teach about crops grown below and above ground, then, we’re going to prepare a steaming pot of soup from cans in the classroom.”

The entire Louisiana AITC State Committee had a blast and can guarantee that every time a conference attendee uses an AITC lesson plan they will recall catching beads at the Mardi Gras Mambo, sampling Louisiana crawfish at the Taste of Louisiana dinner and being served up a heaping helping of good old Southern hospitality in the great city of New Orleans. ☺

“The purpose of teaching is to replace an empty mind with an open one.”
-Malcolm Forbes

2008 Teacher of the Year Applications



Each year, the AITC program recognizes a Louisiana teacher for their achievements and efforts in teaching students the importance of agriculture. Teachers integrating agricultural concepts into non-agricultural curricula and/or certified teachers currently engaged in classroom instruction at the Pre-K through 12 level are eligible for this award.

The winner will receive a trip to the National AITC Conference, June 24-28, 2008 in Costa Mesa, California (up to \$1,200). The winner also receives a \$500 cash award. Applications can be submitted online at www.aitcla.org and are also available for download on the website. The deadline for applications is March 3, 2008. This is a firm deadline with no exceptions. ☺