

November 2015

By Erich Thurow, Chairman D200 Education Foundation

It's not often that a field trip actually takes students to a field, but a few weeks ago the District 200 Education Foundation funded a trip that did just that. One of the first projects we funded this school year was called "Seeds, Soil and Life Cycle to Products They Produce." Kim Beystehner, a special education teacher at the Verda Dierzen Early Learning Center submitted the request to fund the project, which involved preparing for and participating in a field trip to the Von Bergen's County Market and farm.

Mrs. Beystehner's students, along with Nikki Kunde's Kindergarten class worked together to prepare for the trip and together the two classes explored and learned on their September 30<sup>th</sup> field trip. In the classrooms, the students developed interest and knowledge about farming and plants and trees that grow in our region of the country. Students learned how agricultural science and farm production has changed dramatically over the years resulting in increased farm yields and better time management through the use of state of the art machinery.

Students compared similarities and differences in farming through reading "Farming Then and Now." Their awareness was heightened through life cycle observations, which they represented in drawings, writings and math explorations, and they expanded their vocabulary at the same time.

On the day of the trip to the farm and market in rural Hebron, the students experienced first-hand the results of being knowledgeable about the earth and growing practices. They learned about the hard work needed to grow our food, soil conservation and irrigation that yield plants used for our food and seasonal decorations. Mrs. Bobette Von Bergen gave a presentation to the students explaining how the harvest impacts their daily lives. Following the presentation, the students boarded a wagon for a ride into "the field" to explore the lifecycle of pumpkins and to pick produce: pumpkins, gourds and mini Indian corn.

For a relatively small grant, just a few hundred dollars, these students were able to see how the Von Bergen farm and our area's agricultural community affects our lives. There is no telling how this experience will impact these students. Mrs. Beystehner summed it up very well when she told us, "The Von Bergens love for the land, teaching and sharing generously with others, especially the children, invites seeds of opportunity to be planted in our youth for the possibility that some may choose to be the next generation in farming."

The Education Foundation is proud to have helped! If you have any questions, please contact me at [ekthurow@owc.net](mailto:ekthurow@owc.net) and plan on joining us to celebrate the 2016 Award of Excellence recipient in February.