



Setting the PACE

► by *Susan Rhode*, director of communications and public relations

Educating youth one slice at a time

There I was ... standing in the middle of the American Royal complex in Kansas City, Mo., surrounded by more than 700 giggling fourth graders. No, it wasn't a bad dream. It was the Ag Day Pizza Party, an event for grade school students to learn more about the safe, wholesome food they eat every day and, more importantly, where it comes from.

Ag Week event

The event was on March 13, National Agriculture Day, which is part of National Agriculture Week. I had the opportunity to help with the event through my involvement with the local National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) chapter. I was one of many volunteers who gave their time and talents to bring the world of agriculture to these students.

A lot of things amazed me during this daylong adventure, but what amazed me most was the diversity of the students. The students came from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Some were outgoing, and some were very shy. But by the end of the day, they had all been introduced to the world of agriculture.

Schoolchildren from both Kansas and Missouri were invited to participate in the special Ag Day celebration. Not surprisingly, they were excited to be out of the classroom for the day. But once they arrived, you could tell they were truly interested in the products that came from the farm and in learning more about the people who produced them.

Many of their teachers and administrators were grateful for the chance to share this experience with the students.

"Most of us teachers have never even been

on a farm, so it makes it difficult for us to teach these lessons to the students," one said. "But what these students learn and see here today will stick with them longer than anything we can teach them in the classroom."

All of the teachers received a kit of educational materials from the Missouri Farm Bureau to use when they returned to the classroom, building on the things the students learned at the pizza party.

Willing sponsors

Agricultural commodity organizations from both sides of the state line participated in the event, setting up "stations" that the students rotated through to learn about each product, how it was produced, and how it contributed to their lives.

The children were also treated to a magic show by Rex Getz, a magician who amazes children with tricks, but at the same time teaches them about agriculture and life on the farm.

But the best part of the day was the trip to the pizza tables, where a piping-hot slice of pizza, representing all the basic food groups, was waiting for each student. They were also treated to a carton of milk and an ice cream sandwich. All the food was donated by local

Volunteers and sponsors

Ag Council of America
Agriculture Future of America (AFA)
American Royal
Dairy Farmers of America
Farmland Industries
Kansas Beef Council
Kansas City Missouri School District FFA
Kansas Corn and Grain Sorghum
Kansas Department of Agriculture
Kansas Farm Bureau
Kansas Pork Producers Council
Kansas Soybean Association
Kansas Wheat Commission
Midwest Dairy Association
Missouri Beef Council
Missouri Corn Growers Association
Missouri Department of Agriculture
Missouri Farm Bureau
Missouri Pork Producers Association
Missouri Soybean Programs
Missouri Vegetable Growers
MO-KAN NAMA
National Agricultural Center and Hall of Fame
North Kansas City School District

businesses and served by volunteers.

This project was a real team effort with many volunteers and sponsors (see table). It was successful only because people from all parts of agriculture came together with their knowledge and resources to make it happen.

The event would not have been possible without the help of these groups. Hats off to all of them for their commitment to teaching youth about agriculture. That one-day trip to the American Royal might have been the only opportunity many of those children will have to learn about agriculture, and it will likely help form their attitudes about farmers and where their food comes from for the rest of their lives.

Do some checking in your local community to see if there's an Ag Day project with which you can become involved. Your state farm bureau or any of the state agricultural commodity organizations is a great place to start. Who knows? Maybe you could be the person to establish an event like the Ag Day Pizza Party and show others how rewarding and easy it is to Set the PACE!

Susan Rhode

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► **Sue Holbert** (left), Kansas Beef Council; and **Cheri Good**, Kansas Pork Producers, teach students about the importance of eating meat every day to get the required amount of protein, iron and zinc in a healthy diet. Speakers representing other commodity groups — including milk, corn, soybeans, wheat and vegetables — also worked with the students.



The Last WORD ...

I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession, a duty.

— *John D. Rockefeller*