Chambersburg Area Middle School Agriculture Students Learn Through Experience

Chambersburg area middle school students started the school year with many new opportunities. Students from each school gained experience, skills, and knowledge through their involvement in the Chambersburg FFA.

On September 15th about a dozen students served at the annual Franklin County Fall Farm Fun Fest. This year it was held at the Rotz Dairy Farm and the Rotz composting business on Pine Stump Road. Members helped sell and serve food, direct parking, and tour the facilities.

Leadership is a key component of the FFA . FFA officers from both middle schools joined the CASHS FFA officers along with officers from other chapters at the Adams-Franklin-York Area FFA Leadership training conference in Gettysburg. On September 27th students learned skills that will help them as they each serve in officer positions such as; president, vice-president, reporter, treasurer, and secretary. Each officer session was led by a Pennsylvania FFA Association State officer. After the training the students shared a pizza dinner together.

CAMS South students had a chance to sharpen their abilities to compare individual dairy animals to the ideal dairy animal. Over 20 middle school members joined the high school FFA members in participating in the Harrisburg All American Dairy Judging Forum held as part of the biggest dairy show in the country. Students had to correctly rank groups of dairy cattle from most desirable to least desirable. They also had to take a written test on dairy knowledge and evaluate dairy cattle by their records.

CAMS North FFA members learned about the varied livestock industry by competing in the Stockman’s contest held as part of the Keystone International Livestock Show in Harrisburg. On October 5th over 20 CAMS students joined the high school students as they competed with students from 6 different states. Each contestant had to be able to judge quality beef cattle, hogs, sheep, dry hay, and meat. They also had to identify livestock breeds, equipment, feeds, and meats. Students took a written livestock knowledge test and a written quality assurance test.

The ground was wet and the air was cold, but around 50 CAMS North and South students joined CASHS and students from the tri-county area to compete at South Mountain Fairgrounds. This event held on November 1st brought students from all over in one of five different events. Events included Aquatic Resources which covered PA amphibians, reptiles, fish, and other water life as well as equipment and knowledge. The Wildlife career development event involved identifying PA wild mammals, birds, wildlife foods, wild bird calls, and wildlife knowledge. The Agronomy event involved identification of field crops and common weeds and various seeds of PA. Students also evaluated soils for crops and identified other crop pests. Apple judging tested students’ skills in identifying PA apple varieties, judging quality apples, and identifying disease and insect damage on apples. Tractor safety required students to demonstrate safe tractor operation through a specially designed tractor safety course and complete a written tractor knowledge test.

Members of CAMS North and CAMS South FFA had the privilege of participating in the annual Pennsylvania Farm Show in Harrisburg. Each school had two FFA Demonstration teams. Each team was required to write a 15 minute script on how to do something related to agriculture. The members then had to work together and practice for their presentation. A total of 20 members were involved. On January 8th the students demonstrated at the show and out of a total of 25 teams placed as follows: “How to Build a Wood Duck Nesting Box” – 11th, “Calf Care-The Future of Your Herd”- 15th, “How to Make Homemade Ice Cream”-17th and “Ecosystem in a Box”-20th.

We still have a busy time ahead of us with competitions at Bermudian Springs High School in Floriculture, Job Interview, and Milk quality and Products. Also we will compete at James Buchanan High School in Junior Prepared Public Speaking, Horse Judging at Gettysburg, and Meats Judging in York. There will be a day at South Mountain Fairgrounds for: Poultry Judging, Forestry, Land Use, Nursery/Landscape, and Veterinary Skills.