SchoolHouse Chicks

Program Area: Education and Ag Promotion (EAP)
County Farm Bureau: Frederick County Farm Bureau
State: MD
Membership Category: 1,001-3,000
Year: 2013
Phone: (301) 473-1666
Email: rlediger@juno.com
Program Description: In an effort to create an exciting and interactive way to teach life science to school children, the "SchoolHouse Chicks" program brought science and agriculture to the classroom.

The objectives of the program were to:

- Provide schools an opportunity to meet and interact with farmers in the community.

- Allow students and teachers to experience the excitement of seeing chickens develop and hatch.

- Encourage the non-farming public to visit the county fair and meet with a wide variety of farmers.

- Foster an ongoing sense of pride-of-ownership among those classes hatching eggs by allowing each classroom to select and name a bird to be shown in the county fair as a classroom project.

Farm Bureau volunteers visited each classroom three times throughout the duration of the project. During the first visit, live adult chickens were brought into the classroom. Students discussed chicken history, nutrition and how to tell which chickens will lay different colored eggs. In addition, an incubator with fertile eggs was set-up in
the classrooms.

During the second visit, classes were taught to candle incubate eggs to determine if the egg is fertile. Brooder supplies were left in preparation for the hatch.

The final visit occurred when the teacher determined that the chicks were ready to return to the farm. Farm Bureau volunteers collected the incubators, brooder supplies, chicks, program attendance information and two chick names voted on by the class.

Finally, the chickens were entered in as livestock project at the county fair on behalf of the classes who raised the chicks. A show was held, and each chicken was awarded a large rosette ribbon with an attached superlative such as "Most Colorful" or "Most Likely to become Teacher's Pet." Show judges were recruited from county 4-H youth. Rosettes were attached to pens at the beginning of the fair and were given to teachers at the conclusion of the fair.

Incubators were placed in 48 classrooms representing 20 schools this past year. Teachers estimated that a total of 5,789 students and 492 adults viewed the incubators and chicks at their schools during the 2011-2012 school year. The broad appeal of this program is evident in the variety of classes that have requested it. The program was invited into a variety of different classrooms including preschool, high school, home school, after school programs and needs schools and classrooms.