

# OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4912  
**PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 27, 2015

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Dana L. Bessinger, Ag in the Classroom State Coordinator, (405) 795-0121

## **Hundreds Attend Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom 2015 Summer Conference**

Getting a good stand of wheat for a farmer parallels a good start in the classroom for a teacher.

A farmer plants the wheat and if conditions are right will hopefully see a nice, green plant emerge that in turn will hopefully lead to a bountiful harvest.

Lisa Storm of Kingfisher on Monday presented the workshop “Hit the Ground Running” during the Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom 2015 Summer Conference which featured the theme, “Farmland, Farming Ground, Farming Minds!”

Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom is a joint project of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, 4-H Youth Development, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF), and the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

“My focus is to provide teachers some ideas from Ag in the Classroom and beginning of school ideas so that they can get their students engaged immediately,” said Storm, a former Ag in the Classroom Teacher of the Year. “You’ve got to have a strong beginning in the classroom. Some of the things we do in my workshop are about behavior and setting your routines so that you get your school year started off right.”

Storm said the goal is that a good start will lead to a great school year.

Dana Bessinger, Ag in the Classroom State Coordinator, echoed Storm’s objective.

“We bring as many teachers in the state as we can together to get them ready to start the new school year,” Bessinger said. “I taught school for 21 years and this is the part of the year where it’s exciting because you’re going back, but sometimes it’s a little bit difficult to get a jumpstart after your summer. So this is just a great time.

“We want teachers to feel like they are special, to feel like they are appreciated and to get some ideas and activities and fun things to do in their classroom and integrate agricultural literacy while doing that. We want them to go back excited about teaching Ag in the Classroom in their classroom this year.”

The conference attracted about 300 participants and was held at the Moore Norman Technology Center South Penn Campus.

Storm’s workshop included a project called “Three Sisters” about “three plants that help each other, corn, beans, and squash.”

Storm provided a handout that said, “‘Three Sisters’ gardening, a practice in American Indian communities across the continent, is what we now call ‘companion’ planting. Corn, beans, and squash, like sisters, are caring

friends that both give and receive. Sister Corn provides support for Sister Bean's climbing vines. Sister Bean absorbs and converts nitrogen from the air and makes this food available to the plants. Sister Squash's large prickly leaves provide shade to help keep the weeds down and pests away."

It also said, "Today's gardeners and nutritionists alike know that corn yields carbohydrates, beans provide protein, and squash gives us vitamins."

Also on Monday, Johnnie Keel, who teaches in Norman and her daughter Lori Newmark, presented the workshop "Put the A in STEAM with Ag." The workshop was designed to "Excite your students with hands-on science, technology, engineering, art, and math all using Ag activities that will have them wanting more."

In their workshop, the mother and daughter used plastic soda bottles in a demonstration called "Mud in the Water." They said the objective is for students to "learn about soil erosion and water pollution by building a demonstration model from pop bottles" and observing the results. Keel said this model is a way to show that when she added water to each of the three bottles, the flowers with roots will hold more soil than the other two and the one with mulch will hold better than soil alone.

In addition to workshops, Monday's conference included speaker Connie Whitmore, who teaches at Coyle Elementary and is Ag in the Classroom Teacher of the Year, a showing of the movie "Farmland" with a roundtable discussion, and other activities as well.

"It's so important for us to know and have that background about where our food comes from," Keel said regarding Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom. "I am a city girl so I have learned a lot of information from this myself.

"When it was raining so much I was thinking about the wheat, so I have developed that interest myself and so I'm hoping my students do too."

### **Five things you'll learn from Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom**

Fascinating facts about agriculture are plentiful. Following are just five of the seemingly countless facts provided by Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom.

- Many of the tribes located in Indian Territory were growing peaches well before Oklahoma statehood. Travelers through the area reported peaches as one of the foods offered by their Indian hosts.
- Beef is an important part of a healthy diet. About 50 separate nutrients are essential to good health. No single food contains all of these nutrients. For this reason, dietitians and health providers recommend consuming a wide variety of foods daily from several different food categories. One of the nutrients you need, Vitamin B12, can be found only in animal foods, such as beef. Beef also provides significant amounts of other important nutrients—protein, riboflavin, niacin, iron and zinc.
- Female swine are called sows. Sows give birth to litters of pigs twice a year. Each litter usually has eight to 12 baby pigs. Giving birth to baby pigs is called farrowing.
- Because wheat is such a versatile crop, it is being harvested somewhere in the world every month of the year.
- The chicken can travel up to nine miles per hour.

For more Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom Random Facts, go to <http://www.clover.okstate.edu/fourh/aitc/lessons/extras/facts/index.html> .

### Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom “Lesson” plans

Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom is a joint project of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, 4-H Youth Development, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, and the Oklahoma State Department of Education. For lesson plans to use in the classroom, go to <http://www.clover.okstate.edu/fourh/aitc/lessons/index.html> .

###

Photo captions: Lisa Storm of Kingfisher presented the workshop “Hit the Ground Running” during the Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom 2015 Summer Conference.



Lori Newmark is shown during a demonstration called “Mud in the Water” during the Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom 2015 Summer Conference.

