



## Produce Petting Zoo a hit at Gearhart

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By Sue Cody

Third-graders sit quietly until they are asked who can name the five food groups. Hands shoot high in the air, they wiggle with eagerness and answer: grains, fruits, vegetables, protein and dairy.

Before them are tables laden with Oregon bounty: strawberries, grapes, lettuce, kale, celeriac, broccoflower, ginger, several squashes and spice bottles filled with quinoa, buckwheat and other grains.



Welcome to the OSU Extension and North Coast Food Web's Produce Petting Zoo at Gearhart Elementary School on Oct. 23.

Jessika Tantisook, executive director of the Food Web asks kids to focus on their last meal, thinking about how many food groups it contained and what colors were present. More color ensures more variety.

After being quizzed on their knowledge of nutrition, the kids are invited to touch, smell, listen and look at the array of locally grown products. Everything except taste or lick, says SNAP-ed Program Educator Kayla Warner.

"You wouldn't lick an animal at the petting zoo, would you?" Warner asks the class.

"No!" the students reply.

"We want kids to learn where food comes from," Warner says. She tells the students that all our food comes from the earth or from animals, and farmers are the ones who raise the plants and feed the animals.





"We need to remember that when we go to the store or the bakery or the pizzeria that all the ingredients came from a farmer who raised those animals or plants," she says.

All the produce in the petting zoo is from Oregon. Kids are asked if they know farmers or gardeners. SNAP-ed Outreach Coordinator Joyce Senior, from Costa Rica, asks what might grow there that does not grow here. Kids call out, "Coconuts!" "Mangoes!"

Touching the kiwi, smelling the celery root, shaking the bottles of grains, the kids are excited to share their experiences. Some like ginger, some are drawn to the berries, some raise a magnifying glass to inspect the squash.

At the end, each is given an apple or pear to enjoy.



## Background of nutrition education

World Food Day was created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to end world hunger. Celebrated in October each year, it focuses on the need for nutrition and food security for all.

Locally, the OSU Extension SNAP-ed program works to teach the community about healthy eating and actively living. The social campaign called "Food Hero," encourages people to try new things, make home-cooked meals using recipes on FoodHero, and fill out surveys.

The North Coast Food Web is a nonprofit that teaches cooking classes in the community, including the "Young Chef's Cooking Camp" for young adults ages 9 to 14, and usually occurs during spring break and the summertime."



Warner says, "I've learned that the more you involve kids in the meals you are cooking, the more likely they are to think about eating healthier and that not all their food comes from a box.

"The best part of working with kids in schools is showing that connection, the whole circle of where the food comes from and how it gets to us."

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