

# Local Link *Teachers Explore Agriculture Classroom Connections*



## EXPLORING AGRICULTURE

Left: Teachers learned about the full circle of agriculture with a tour of Destihl Brewery during the 2018 Summer Ag Institute. Spent grain from the brewery is fed to livestock including the dairy cows at Ropp Jersey Cheese and some of the cheese is served in Destihl's restaurants.

Right: Kacy Stark, teacher at Eugene Field, takes a combine used to harvest crops for a test drive during the 2018 Summer Ag Institute.

**S**eventeen local teachers had the chance to learn about "Illinois Agriculture: Born, Built, Grown" at the 2018 McLean County Summer Ag Institute held in early June.

The six day professional development workshop highlighted the importance of agriculture to the state's history, current economy and its future in connection with the celebration of Illinois bicentennial.

"The on-site experiences were tremendous - from the Peoria Lock and Dam to Owen's Nursery for the horticulture piece to all the different farms we toured," says Deb Rettig, a teacher at Corpus Christi Elementary. "I walked away with so many resources I can take and use in my classroom."

Participants also toured Precision Planting, Illinois State University Research Farm, Destihl Brewery, Roy Houff, Ropp Jersey Cheese, PrairiErth Farm, Sugar Grove Nature Center and the McLean County Museum of History.

"The goal is to provide teachers with experiences that give them background knowledge about food and farming," says Bridget Caldwell, McLean County Ag in the Classroom coordinator. "Then we provide resources to incorporate agriculture with science, technology, engineering, math, literature and social science lessons."

"One of the resources I plan to use is the book 'L is for Lincoln,' as the year long theme for my fourth graders" says Rettig, who teaches fourth and fifth grade social studies and science. "The book is full of Illinois facts about agriculture, famous people and more. It's a perfect fit for the bicentennial year."

Each of the participants also received a copy of "Illinois Chronicles: The Story of the State of Illinois from its Birth to Present Day." The bicentennial book features newspaper articles about key moments in the state's history including agricultural innovations and inventions created in Illinois.

The workshop provided teachers with professional development credit hours and the option to earn three hours of graduate level course credit through University of St. Francis.

McLean County Ag in the Classroom, a program of the McLean County Fair, provides free lessons, supplies and materials to local schools.

During the 2017-18 school year, the program provided supplies, books and lesson kits to 241 classrooms and reached 8,781 students kindergarten through twelfth grade.

To learn more about McLean County Ag in the Classroom, check out the resource guide at [www.mcleanaaitc.org](http://www.mcleanaaitc.org) or find us on Facebook and Pinterest. To request materials, please contact us at [aitctablet@gmail.com](mailto:aitctablet@gmail.com).



learned about food & farms through McLean County Ag in the Classroom lessons.