

# “Farm to You” exhibit teaches children about agriculture and health

By Trisha Gedon

STILLWATER, Okla. – Oklahoma school children are learning about how the foods they eat get from the farm to their dinner table and how this food is used for good health.

“Farm to You” is an interactive, walk-through display geared toward kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. The exhibit features ten stations that take the students from the farm and through the body.

“Farm to You” is a collaborative effort of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H Youth Development and agricultural education programs), Oklahoma State University’s Department of Nutritional Sciences, Oklahoma State Department of Health (WIC service) and Southwest Dairy Farmers. Since August 2008, the exhibit has taught more than 87,000 elementary students about agriculture, nutrition, physical activity and health in 71 counties.

Deana Hildebrand, OSU Cooperative Extension nutrition specialist, said it is important for children to know where food comes from and how their food choices are related to their health.

Poor eating habits and sedentary lifestyles among Oklahoma’s youth indicate the need to educate children on the importance of eating healthy and being physically active.

“The importance of the information available in this exhibit can be found in the major health issues prevalent in our target audience,” Hildebrand said. “Children in kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade don’t normally consume enough fruits and vegetables. They often have excessive calorie consumption and low physical activity levels which contribute to being overweight. This age group also has a high prevalence of dental decay, low consumption of milk and dairy foods and high rate of smoking among adolescent and teens. Being overweight as a child increases the risk of developing diabetes and cardiovascular disease later in life. Eating habits and lifestyle

practices develop early in life, so it's important to promote a healthy lifestyle at an early age. The Farm to You exhibit does just that.”

The 10 stations that make up the agricultural and health adventure include Farmer Pete's Garden, Pete's Chicken Coop, Pete's Dairy Farm, Pete's Fields of Grains, Mouth, Stomach, Small Intestine, Muscle, Bone and Skin. Groups of 10 students will spend about six minutes at each station participating in activities and learning about the relationships between agriculture, food and health.

Lisa Taylor, a registered dietitian, serves as the state coordinator for Farm to You, and she said the exhibit will travel to any part of the state.

“Any school that wants to have the exhibit should contact their local Cooperative Extension office first,” Taylor said. “The county office then contacts me and I schedule it and train the personnel”.

The school must have a 40-ft by 40-ft, 10ft high indoor space available, at least eight volunteers to set it up and take it down and nine volunteers to be station presenters. Ideally the school should have between 250 and 400 students available to walk through the exhibit.

“Many children don't know where food comes from and how their food choices are related to their health,” Taylor said. “This exciting adventure will help Oklahoma children make this connection.”

More information about Farm to You is available at [www.farmtoyou.okstate.edu](http://www.farmtoyou.okstate.edu), or by contacting Lisa Taylor at 405-713-1125, or [lisa.a.taylor@okstate.edu](mailto:lisa.a.taylor@okstate.edu)

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