Farm and Forest Fair Educates Fifth Graders About Agriculture and Natural Resources

The Situation
The Clearwater Basin area of north central Idaho is famous for its diverse topography of mountains, prairies, and river valleys. A diverse business base of forest products, agriculture, and tourism is a reflection of the variety of natural resources in the area.

The population of the Clearwater Basin area represents a growing diversity of cultural and geographical backgrounds. Many residents, whether new to the area or employed in other industries, may be unfamiliar with the natural resource-based enterprises upon which the area economy is built. This unfamiliarity often leads to misunderstandings and friction regarding best management practices (BMP’s) and natural resource issues.

Our Response
An educational program relative to the natural resource-based industries in this area was developed. This program was presented in such a way as to help the public better understand public policy issues regarding natural resource uses. This educational program on agriculture and natural resources was targeted toward fifth grade school teachers and youth. The desired effect was to provide both with a balanced view of the importance and impact of natural resource-based industries on their lives and environment. Participants traveled around 9 stations in 9-minute intervals. This format was replicated four times over the course of two days. Stations consisted of either agriculture or forest based industry personnel who demonstrated/spoke about their particular area of expertise. Presenters were encouraged to make their presentations as hands-on as possible. Each student was given some sort of “souvenir” to take home (e.g. pencils, tree seedlings) to serve as a reminder of his or her learning experience.

Program Outcomes
Three hundred and seventy fifth grade students and twenty teachers plus many adult chaperones attended the 2004 Farm and Forest Fair. Twelve schools from a five county area participated.

Teachers, presenters, and group leaders filled out an evaluation two weeks after the program. On a scale of 1 to 4, 4 being very good, all categories evaluated received a 3.63 or better. All participants commented on the quality and value of the program. One hundred percent of the teachers and tour guides indicated they would like the program continue to be an annual event. Seventy-five percent of the
presenters indicated they would return the following year.

**The Future**
The Farm and Forest Fair will be offered again in 2005, with an invitation to the schools that did not participate this year. Future plans may include a larger format to allow more schools/students to participate.

**For More Information**
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