

## PMC Holds Tour for Children's Summer Camp

Submitted by Leslie Glass, Secretary, Plant Materials Center, Bismarck

It's a Friday morning, and I am outside trimming the creeping juniper in front of the office. Over the sound of the sprinklers, I hear giggling and children's chatter. I look up to see more than a dozen children and a couple of adults walking up the road toward the Plant Materials Center office. Curious, I go inside and ask Wayne Duckwitz, PMC Manager, if we're giving a tour. He told me that United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) was bringing children on a field trip to the Plant Materials Center.

I learned that they had been attending a four-week learning adventure called "Horses on the Prairie." The camp is a hands-on learning opportunity according to Seth Zeigler, Camp Counselor. Seth is an Agriculture Education, Natural Resources student at the University of Minnesota. They teach many subjects such as geology, soil conservation, water, math, reading, art, and culture.

As a new employee at the Plant Materials Center, I was elated when Wayne asked me to help with the tour. I adore children, and this would be a learning opportunity for me as well. We loaded up the trucks with boxes, shovels, plant markers, sharpie pens, three teachers, and lots of children. Everybody was smiling and chattering.

Five girls were riding in the truck with me. We introduced ourselves and talked about our names. The children were 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> graders.

Wayne was driving in the lead. Robert Jones, Soil Conservationist Trainee (STEP) employee, was driving the van, and I brought up the rear in the red truck. Just before we arrived at the northwest fields, we slowed down and pulled over because there was a PMC tractor on the side of the road.

We stopped and waited. Then Earl Aune, Biological Technician, stepped slowly out of the tractor. He had been applying herbicides and was wearing a full, white, chemical suit, and face mask.

After speaking with Wayne, he started walking down the road toward us. All of a sudden, one of the girls in the back seat points to Earl and exclaims "WHITE MAN!"

We burst into instantaneous, genuine laughter. Earl approached our vehicle, walking down the road, ominously in his white suit, and stopped and stuck his head in the window. Then the girls really laughed! It was priceless. Laughter is a universal language with no boundary, color, or race.

When we arrived at the first collection point, we handed out shovels, plant markers, boxes, and sharpies. Each child had a job. Wayne explained how



**Wayne Duckwitz, explains to children and camp counselor's how to collect the native prairie grass**

to collect the native prairie grass taking care to protect the root system. "Horses on the Prairie" counselors Seth Ziegler, Butch Thunderhawk, and Mark Mindt, also instructed the children in plant collecting and marking.

Wayne explained about the different types of grasses, while Butch and Mark talked about culturally significant uses of plants. The children dug, labeled, and boxed the plants. I took pictures of the children with their little fingers in the warm soil.

We gathered many species such as sweetgrass, Tomahawk Indiangrass, prairie cordgrass, western wheatgrass, purple prairieclover, big bluestem, little bluestem, and blue grama. We drove and walked from one field to the other collecting the different grasses. I saw how much the children enjoyed their experience. They asked many questions and appeared to be very interested in what they were doing. They were so enthusiastic, it was contagious!

Once the digging was complete, we loaded up and headed to nearby UTTC to transplant the grasses. At a gazebo near one of the college buildings was a planting demonstration box, one of the "Horses on the Prairie" projects.

Sweetgrass and little bluestem were planted near the college's sacred Medicine Wheel. After the children left, Butch Thunderhawk, United Tribes Technical College instructor, explained its

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meaning. He explained the significance of the four sacred colors, (red, yellow, black, and white), directions, and animals. He also spoke of the many trees sacred to Native Americans, such as the cedar, Juneberry, chokecherry, and cottonwoods.

In the center of the sacred medicine wheel was a single cottonwood tree, an historic cottonwood from Smith Grove along the Missouri River. I could have listened to Mr. Thunderhawk for hours; he was so interesting and informative.

It was simply the best! It was an educational outreach activity that fit the Agency's mission of Natural Resources Conservation. I hope to have the opportunity to join in on many more of the educational outreach activities that the NRCS provides to the public.

I smiled for the rest of the day.



These five girls rode on the tour with Leslie Glass, PMC Secretary

***It's a misnomer that our talents make us a success. They help, but it's not what we do well, that enables us to achieve in the long run. It's what we do wrong and how we correct it that ensures our long-lasting success.***

*Bernie Marcus  
Founder of Home Depot*

## North McHenry County SCD Hosts Grazing Tour

Submitted by Doug Dragseth, District Conservationist, Towner FO

The John and Marie Marshall ranch northwest of Towner was the site of the North McHenry County SCD Range Tour held on July 6, 2006. One hundred and ten participants from over nine counties attended the



**Kevin Sedivec discussing the importance of different forbs**

a day of informational presentations and share their experiences with other producers.

The morning started with Myron Lick, Turtle Lake, ND, discussing his experiences in converting cropland to pasture and extending the grazing season to improve waste utilization. Gabe Brown, Bismarck, ND, spoke about his experiences with integrating livestock into a no-till cropping system and also the conversion of CRP into a planned grazing system. Trevor Atchison, Pipestone, Manitoba, spoke on techniques for utilizing swath grazing in a no-till cropping system to decrease wintering costs and alternative wintering facilities. David Herzig, Burlington, ND, gave a presentation on utilizing irrigation for grazing, including the use of turnips as alternative forage. Ken Miller, Mandan, ND, explained different structural practices available to increase grazing distribution which included shallow pipelines and cross fences. After the noon meal, Kevin Sedivec, NDSU Rangeland Management Specialist, discussed ways to manage pastures during drought conditions.

Following speaker presentations, participants were transported to a nearby range site with horse drawn wagons and a flat bed trailer. Jeff Prince, NRCS State Rangeland Management Specialist; Jodi Forman, NRCS Area I Rangeland Management Specialist; and Kevin Sedivec, NDSU Rangeland Management Specialist; conducted a field tour identifying different range plants and discussed grazing effects on the native plant community.

Producers attending the tour received a ranchers guide to Rangeland Management and a three-ring binder with related information.