By Terri Lang

In an effort to educate society on soil health, Jay Fuhrer, Soil Health Specialist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), travels around the state, the United States and to other countries. Fuhrer has been to Russia, South Africa, France, Germany, Australia and Canada.

During his travels, he meets with farmers and ranchers, agricultural experts and organizations, and students to discuss soil health.

“In our talks, we focus on gaining an understanding of the basics and benefits of soil health,” Fuhrer said.

In meeting with those groups, they learn from each other.

“We all gain from our discussions – learning about soil health management systems from those who are using those systems,” he said.

The group that Fuhrer was educating on Fri., Sept. 9, at the Welk Homestead Historic Site near Strasburg, were students from the local schools. Nearly 50 people attended the Agriculture Education Day.

Fuhrer questioned the students on the topic of soil health, and was impressed with their knowledge on the subject.

He focused on the role and benefits of soil organic matter, soil health indicators and assessments, and soil health management. Fuhrer demonstrated several variances in soil health and provided a hands-on approach to actually see the soil in action. Specific items he addressed were the carbon cycle, soil functions, infiltration and runoff.

Fuhrer commented on the nice location for providing this Agriculture Education Day. He is a native of Strasburg and graduated from Strasburg High School in 1972. His wife, Kathy, taught music at the Strasburg Public School from 1976 to 1979.

Historic Sites Manager Diane Rogness, who is with the State Historical Society of North Dakota, said they hope to have more programs next season at the Welk Site. She said if budgets allow, they plan to do a similar event next year and perhaps even expand it.

“Since this was our first summer of managing the site, we tried to get in as many activities as we could,” Rogness said. “We are already starting to plan for next year and we are excited about that.”

Students learn about soil health at Ag Education Day at Welk Homestead Historic Site

For the morning session, Mrs. Meg Vander Laan, science and chemistry teacher at the Linton and Hazelton-Moffit-Braddock Schools, accompanied 12 students from the Linton High School to the Agricultural Education Day. Mr. Lucas Moldenhauer, Science Teacher from the Ashley High School, brought eight students from his Environmental Science Class. Miss Kristi Tonnessen, Ag Teacher from the Wishek High School, brought four students.

Students learn about soil health at Ag Education Day at Welk Homestead Historic Site

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Health Specialist Jay Fuhrer had several examples demonstrating variances in soil health at the Agriculture Education Day.

Jay Fuhrer led the group to a nearby sunflower field, farmed by Gerard Schwab, for a lesson in management on infiltration of soils.

Jay Fuhrer points out the healthy soils and the healthy roots of the sunflower plant. He complimented Gerard Schwab on the good management of his soils.

Gerard Schwab provided some history on his field and his management of the soils using no-till equipment and crop diversity.

Students from grades seven through 12 at the Strasburg High School, along with their Science Teacher, Mr. Bill Malaski, attended the Agriculture Education Day at the Welk Homestead Historic Site.

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