



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & COMMERCE
Cindy Hyde-Smith, Commissioner



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Paige Manning, Director of Marketing and Public Relations
Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce
Phone: (601) 359-1163
E-mail: paige@mdac.ms.gov

Contact: Kristen Windham, Director of Public Relations
Rankin County School District
Phone: (601) 825-5590
E-mail: Kristen.Windham@rcsd.ms

Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and Mississippi Department of Education Celebrate Farm to School Week at Highland Bluff Elementary School

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) collaborated with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) to celebrate the fifth annual Mississippi Farm to School Week at Highland Bluff Elementary School in Brandon, Miss. Students dined with special guests including Mississippi House of Representatives Education Committee Chairman John Moore, Mississippi House of Representatives Public Property Committee Chairman Tom Weathersby, Rankin County School District Superintendent Dr. Sue Townsend, Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce John Campbell, Mississippi Department of Education Director of Child Nutrition and Healthy Schools Scott Clements, Flowood Mayor Gary Rhoades, Flowood Police Chief Richie McCluskey, and the Mississippi farmers responsible for growing some of the lunch menu items.

During the celebration, farmers including Amanda Sanderson of Waynesboro, Louis Guedon of Churchill, Randle Wright of Vardaman, Glyen and Portia Holmes and Holmes County Food Hub representatives of Durant, Gil Thompson of Mound Bayou, Doug Davis of Yokna Bottoms Farm in Oxford, and Becky Beard representing the Mississippi Poultry Association visited third-grade classrooms explaining the importance of agriculture and eating healthy fruits and vegetables.

The classroom visits allowed students the opportunity to get to know the Mississippi farmers who grow the food that is served throughout the school year in their cafeteria. Students also enjoyed a petting zoo with typical animals that are found on farms and a farmers market with a variety of produce that can be grown in Mississippi. "Education reaches beyond the walls of the school buildings. When we give students the opportunity to learn from the "real world" such as

the dedicated farmers from the great state of Mississippi, I believe we are fully enhancing the learning process,” stated Rankin County School District Superintendent Dr. Sue Townsend.

“Farm to School in Mississippi is a success that deserves to be celebrated. It provides fresh produce to schools and an educational experience for students while promoting the state economy,” said Scott Clements, Director of Child Nutrition and Healthy Schools for the Mississippi Department of Education. The Mississippi Department of Education and the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce have partnered for the past fourteen years to increase the amount of fruits and vegetables grown in the state that are served in lunchrooms across Mississippi. This program offers schools 17 varieties of Mississippi-grown fruits and vegetables including butterbeans, southern peas, sweet potatoes, yellow squash, butternut squash, zucchini, turnip greens, collard greens, cantaloupes, watermelons, cherry tomatoes, bell peppers, green beans, corn cobbettes, cucumbers, blueberries and broccoli crowns. “I am proud of the partnership between the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and the Mississippi Department of Education and the efforts made to purchase fruits and vegetables direct from farmers right here in Mississippi. This program has experienced growth in the variety and volume of Mississippi-grown produce offered to local schools over the past few years, which has benefitted both our farmers and local school districts,” stated Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Cindy Hyde-Smith.

The Mississippi Department of Education and the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce took part in other farm to school celebrations throughout the state. Representatives from MDE and MDAC attended special events at Poppo Ferry Elementary in Biloxi, Jackson Elementary in Pascagoula, and Reeves Elementary in Long Beach.

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The first full week in October was designated as Mississippi Farm to School Week by the Mississippi Legislature in 2012. Farm to School Week was introduced to encourage the serving of locally-grown and locally-raised agricultural products in school meals and to recognize the substantial economic and health benefits of farm to school programs. Farm to School Week draws attention to the vast number of crops that are grown in the state and serves as an educational tool to teach children where their food comes from.

Picture and Cutline Attached.



Third-grade students at Highland Bluff Elementary School in Brandon welcomed farmers and state and local officials to their school during Mississippi Farm to School Week. This celebration, a collaboration of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, the Mississippi Department of Education and the Rankin County School District, gave students the opportunity to meet the farmers that grow many of the fruits and vegetables that served in their cafeteria throughout the school year.