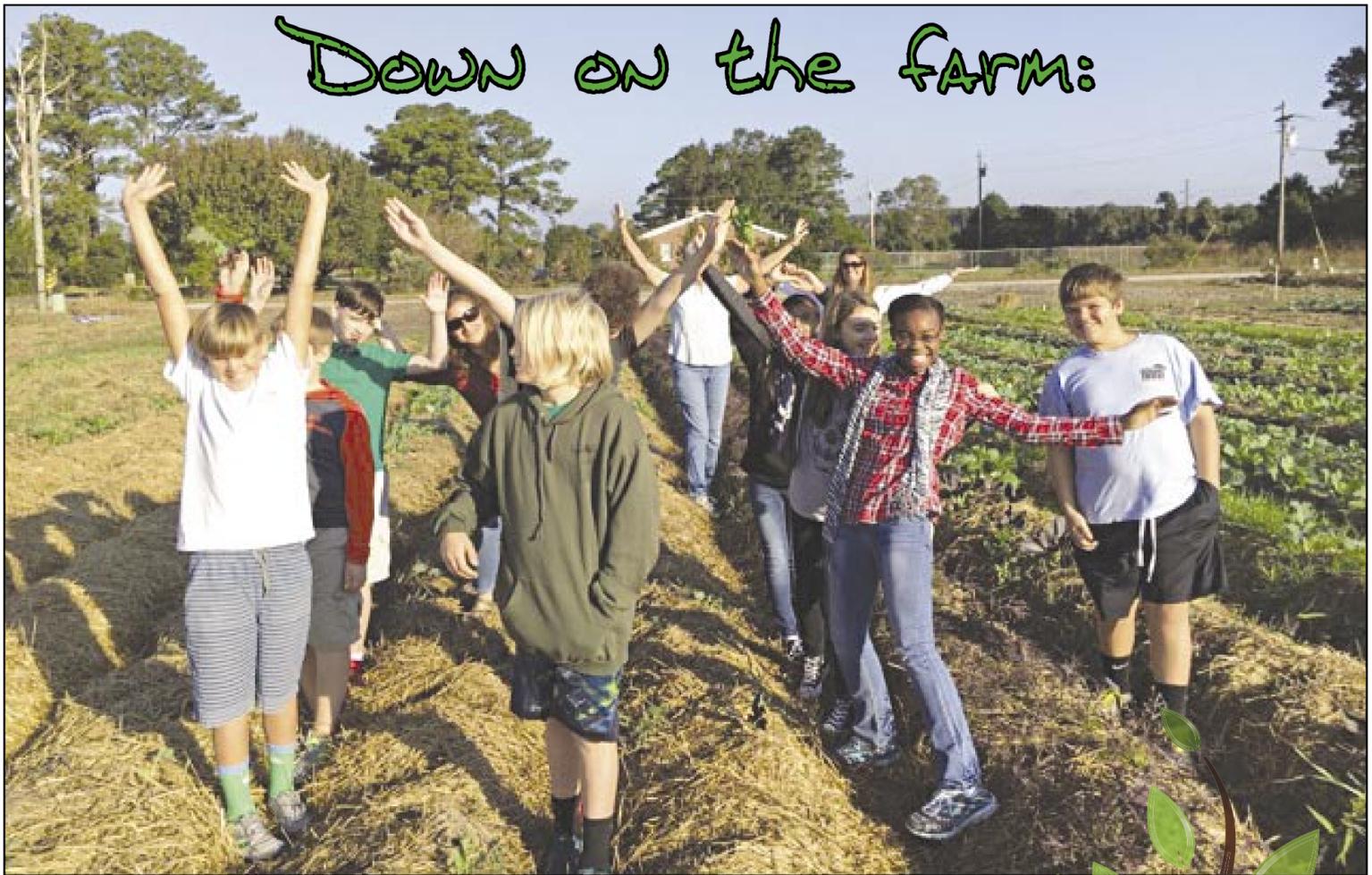


Coastal Living

MEGAN SOULT, EDITOR



Morehead City Middle School students tour the Underground Farm and Learning Center during a field trip. They learned about organic produce, compost and other farming techniques. (Contributed photo)

Sixth grade students tour county agricultural site

BY MOREHEAD CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL SEAHORSE STUDENTS
NEWS-TIMES

Editors Note: Megan Soult, Coastal Living editor, collaborated with students who attended a field trip at Underground Farms to write this report. Contributing to the article are Ben Rike, Jackson Sproul, Jaysa Raynor, Aydin Thompson, Joy Miller, Ayden Casper, Erik Bleck, Francesca Hasenauer and Colin Walley.

Morehead City Middle School science students experienced their school lessons in a natural setting with a field trip to the Underground Farm and Learning Center off of Highway 101 north of Beaufort on Oct. 31.

Each student at Morehead City Middle School has a special class period where they rotate through classes that offer extra support in targeted areas or opportunities for enrichment through problem-based learning scenarios.

The group of students, also known as the Seahorse team, were working on a beautification and gardening project at the school. They cleared the overgrown plant beds, prepped areas for planting and researched what plants would be appropriate for the area to plant in the fall and developed a plan prior to planting.

The field trip took the lessons off the textbook page and into a real-life setting as the students toured the farm.

Josh Potter and Penny Hooper, Underground Farm and Learning Center members, led the tour and explained how the farm works.

The farm has two locations, one in Smyrna and one north of Beaufort. Those who work on the farm grow various types of produce using the waste from fish, as well as compost to increase its sustainability footprint.

The students learned about aquaponics and hydroponics and how the farmers used the techniques to grow their produce.

Aquaponics is the combination of aquaculture and hydroponics, the soil-less growing of plants, that grows fish and plants together in one system.

While at the farm, the students could see how the produce was placed in the ground. Plants were placed in rows with ditches on the side of each row for water to collect. The farmers used straw for mulch to keep the produce warm and to prevent weeds.

They also learned about photosynthesis and how compost helps plants grow.

To help get a better feel for how photosynthesis works, the students participated in an activity where they each represented a stage of the process that converts light to energy.



Penny Hooper shows Morehead City Middle School students a pile of compost during their field trip to the Underground Farm and Learning Center off Highway 101 north of Beaufort. (Contributed photo)

In addition, students were introduced to different plants that were grown on the farm, such as mustard, cilantro, red Russian kale and more.

Jackson Sproul said the mustard had a spicy, sharp taste, but he liked it.

Both the red Russian kale and the cilantro were spicy.

Ben Rike said the cilantro only tastes good with other things.

They also learned about soil, preventing erosion, germination, organic farming and vermiculture.

The students were able to take vegetable samples from the farm, allowing them to plant the produce in the school garden bed or to eat at home.

Visiting the farm taught the students valuable lessons in both gardening and life on the farm. The students learned that there is more vegetable variety available than food found in local grocery produce isles. They also learned the importance of organic, locally grown produce for the community.

The students are planning to make another field trip the Underground Farm and Learning Center later in the spring when they start learning about life science.



Students get a closer view of compost during their field trip. (Contributed photo)

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Don't forget ...

A holiday trunk show and gift shop fundraiser will be open until 5 p.m. today and from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. tomorrow at meeting room 1 in Carteret Health Care's rotunda.